



Friday @ the Center: February 9, 2007

Keeping Effective Office Hours

Do you sometimes wonder whether office hours are a waste of time? What's their purpose? How can you keep them from becoming merely complaint sessions? How can you help students who just "don't get the material"? You are invited to attend a faculty luncheon workshop, led by yours truly, on the topic of "How to Keep Effective Office Hours." This will take place on Tuesday, Feb. 20, from 12:30 to 1:50 in the Library Seminar Room. Please email Jaclyn Stockton if you would like to attend so that we might order enough lunch for everyone (stockj1@spu.edu).

February Grant Advisor Available

The February edition of *The Grant Advisor* is now available and can be accessed through on-campus computers at <http://grantadvisor.com/tgaplus/>. It contains 20-25 full program reviews and over 300 listings of grant and fellowship programs. Why not browse through it to see if it generates any ideas?

Writing for Everyone: Part 2

GLOBAL TIP: In giving any kind of formal writing assignment—the kind that will be turned in and graded—be very specific about the type of writing you are assigning. Students sometimes find the differences in genres among disciplines, courses, and professors confusing. Clearly identify the primary purpose of the piece: is it an argumentative essay making a claim and supporting it; a report that describes a particular process or event; a summary of another piece of writing; a reflective essay that explains a personal opinion, reaction, or thought; or something else? Acknowledge to students that writing has different purposes, and those different purposes lead to different kinds of organization and evaluation. Try to use key words in the assignment such as *analyze, argue, define, summarize, explain, prove, survey*, etc. Encourage your students to think about the rhetorical situation in which they are writing: A lab report? A summary of a book? An analytic academic essay? An industry report?

FINISHING TIP: The second most frequent punctuation error in college writing, according to Lunsford's research, is **vague pronoun reference**. Pronouns such as *he, she, it, they, this, that, which*, and *who* should refer clearly to a specific antecedent. Students tend to make two kinds of these mistakes: 1) Writing a sentence in which there is more than one word to which the pronoun might refer, and 2) Using a pronoun that refers to a word that is implied but not explicitly stated. Pronouns should refer back to the last noun preceding them in the sentence. Here are some examples from my own student papers: "Cora spends the last few weeks of **Addie's** life with **her**, and **she** makes sure that everyone knows all that she is sacrificing." (I suspect the *she* refers to

Cora, but I'm not sure!) "None of his hard work is directed toward any material goal of his own, yet **it** is clearly a central part of his life" (the goal? the hard work?).

STRATEGY: Ask students to circle all the pronouns in a paper and draw an arrow to the antecedent for each one. If they can't find the antecedent, or the reference isn't clear, they can neatly write in a correction. This saves you grading time on this finishing error this week!

Advising Q & A: Changing Advisors

Q: Is there a way to find out online how a student is progressing in regard to Common and Exploratory Curriculum?

A: Yes, you can do that via the online degree check. Log into **Banner**, click on **Faculty and Advisor Menu**, then to **Advising Menu**, and go down the **Advisee Degree Check**. If the student is one of your official advisees, his or her name should be accessible via the pull-down box. Otherwise, you can just input the student's ID number in the text box below. Do note that, while it's a great tool, it's not always 100% accurate. Feel free to always check with the corresponding academic counselor in Student Academic Services for clarification.

Don't forget the Palmer Lecture on Monday, and the Marston Lecture on Thursday!

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