

Professor Bill Wolff
College Composition 2: The Rhetoric of War
Overall Comments on Essay #1 Rough Drafts

1) Introduce all the main ideas so the reader knows what you are talking about

It is absolutely essential when writing papers in college and beyond that you introduce the majority (or all depending on how many) of your main topics early in the paper so the reader has a context from which s/he can understand what you mean in the paper. If, for example, you are interested in using the ideas surrounding the Just War theory, then you should briefly mention what that idea means in your introduction. Example: “In his essay, A.J. Coates discusses the Just War theory, which provides countries with guidelines which they should use when entering into wars with other countries.” Certainly the definition is more complex than that, but this is in the introduction; and when you briefly define terms early in the paper, you are then able to define them more and more specifically without the reader getting confused. Do not assume that the reader can follow your train of thought—be clear with what you are trying to say. It is always better to over-explain and then delete some than to under-explain and not be able to add. When introducing ideas in your introduction, you **MUST** make sure those ideas remain consistent throughout the essay. For example you cannot begin the essay by saying that England was Realist and conclude that England acted Just; the two are not the same. Essay writing is circular; if you find that you come to a conclusion at the end of the paper that contradicts what you have at the beginning you have to do either of two things: 1) change the beginning so its fits with the middle and end; or 2) change the middle and end so they fit with the beginning.

2) Introduce and discuss quotations

When using quotations in your essays—which you **MUST** do and will become more and more comfortable doing—you must introduce them and then discuss them in at least two ways. Example of using a quote:

According to Coates, “realism is too inclined to see war as an extension of politics: an understanding that establishes the normality of war. Where the realist sees a continuum of politics and war, the just war theorist sees a radical disruption; and where the realist recognizes only pragmatic necessity, the just war theorist contemplates a moral tragedy” (98). The realist’s concern for the political overshadows any form of moral reasons for entering into combat. Interestingly, Tuchman’s discussion of England’s hesitation to enter the war shows both the Realist and Just War traditions in the same government, something which makes it quite difficult to specifically locate theirs, and perhaps, any countries war philosophy is one theory.

The above example does 4 things: a) it gives Coates credit for his part and places the quote in the context of the essay; b) it gives the full quote; c) it explains the quote in the sentence after the quotation; and d) it alludes to the over-riding idea of the essay in the last sentence, which is, in this case, the relative ease of locating a country in a war philosophy. All 4 parts **MUST** be employed each time you use a quotation in your essay, though depending on your goals at that part of the essay, they may be employed in various degrees.

3) **Narrow down your subject matter and then expand on it**

Because the essays we read and the essay topics that you are given are so broad in scope and in idea, it is very easy for you to get overwhelmed by all the ideas and in your panic to choose the important ones, use all of them instead. Using too many examples or ideas or terms is NOT a good thing. Only choose the ones that are going to best help you make your point in your essay. Your essays will be more interesting if you use one or two main ideas that the author gives you. For example, the idea that Belgium was acting in a Just manner is quite broad enough for a 4 page paper (books have been filled on the subject); you do not need to discuss militarism or why Germany entered the war as well. That will just muck everything up. Yes, mention Germany and its war philosophy to help show why Belgium entered the war and how Germany's actions help show Belgium to be Just. When you do that Belgium's actions are still your main subject; Germany and militarism are just helpers. It is always better to explore and expand on one idea as much as you can then to list 5 ideas and not discuss them enough. Furthermore, when introducing an ambiguous point, such as whether or not Belgium could be "successful" in defending herself, you must define what you mean by successful. Certainly you can see that defining it as "destroying and beating back Germany" and defining it as "keeping Germany occupied and fighting in ways it wasn't prepared for" will lead to two different conclusions in your essay. The reader needs to be aware of how you are reading history and the texts; be as specific as possible.

4) **Don't merely summarize**

All through high school you wrote book reports, which were essentially summaries of the books you read. You might have written similar pieces in CCI. In this class summary (or, more specifically, undirected summary) is a bad—very bad—thing. When you summarize an author's ideas throughout your essay you show the reader that you have read the text, but that really is about it. Remember, I have read the text as well and know what the author says. I am much more interested in reading your own ideas about the subjects. That does not mean, "I liked this and not that because so and so. . . ." What it means is that you take an idea or term from one essay and use it to discuss another essay. For example, when you use the Coates' ideas on Realism to discuss Tuchman's description of France deciding to move its front line back 10 kilometers from the front line then speculate as to what that says about France's true motivations for engaging in war, you are using your own ideas because (and this is key) Coates does not discuss Tuchman in that way. Or, you can do it the another way. You can take Tuchman's discussion and show how Coates' definitions are too narrow and that we cannot pigeonhole countries into concrete war philosophies. Yes, you may summarize briefly Tuchman's discussion, but that is *directed summary*, employed for the sole purpose of moving your own ideas forward. In either case, it is YOU who is doing all the work and you who is putting the pieces together in order to make a point. When you do that you are not merely summarizing; you are exploring and arguing.

5) **Use proper format**

All papers must be written in Times New Roman font size 12, double spaced, with 1 inch margins all around. All papers must have the author's name on it in the upper left hand

