Supporting Students' Writing in Your First Year Seminar, August 17, 2018

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**Responding as Readers**

Comments that we, as readers and experts, think are perfectly clear and transparent may be assuming too much of our students. They can therefore come off as vague, bewildering, or even rude.

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| Rather than writing … | Aim for … |
| This is ungrammatical | * I’m having trouble with this sentence. There’s something about it that makes me stop. * I’ve read the sentence twice now but I’m still not sure what’s going on … Something may be off with the syntax. Try reformulating the sentence, or maybe break it up? |
| Comma splice AGAIN! | * This is the second time I’ve noticed this syntax. Technically it’s called a “comma splice.” Some teachers call it a “run on” or “fused sentence.” See what you can do to understand comma splices, and talk to me if you have questions! * I notice you have a tendency to use “however” as a coordinating conjunction, but traditionally “however” is used as a conjunctive adverb. If you’re like “what?!”, don’t worry. This is a common technical confusion that I’ll address in class! To prepare, you may want to read up on “coordinating conjunctions” v. “conjunctive adverbs” v. “subordinating conjunctions”, but again we’ll address in class. |
| Wrong word | * This word made me stop. Why do you say “social” agenda? That’s a positive term to me, but you seem to be using it in a negative way. * I don’t really know what “peer review” means here. |
| No thesis statement! | * OK, I’m through the first paragraph but I can’t really say what you’re going to focus on. Is it the public perception, or the corporate model? * By this point in the paper, I would have expected a better idea of what you’re paper will argue in particular, but it’s feeling a bit vague. |
| repetition | * I think you already said this? Or did I get it wrong? Is there something different about this point from the point you were making above? |
| no transition | * I’m having a hard time making a connection between this paragraph and the one above. Is this connection you’re making that X and Y are both individualistic? That’s my guess, so try to be clearer about the relationship. * OK, as a reader, I’m really quite lost here – I don’t know where you’re taking me. |
| You should have said this already | * Ok, got it. Now I see what you’re saying. I’m going to go back and re-read to see if I missed something. (Note: I did re-read and I do think you need to make this point about X earlier.) |