

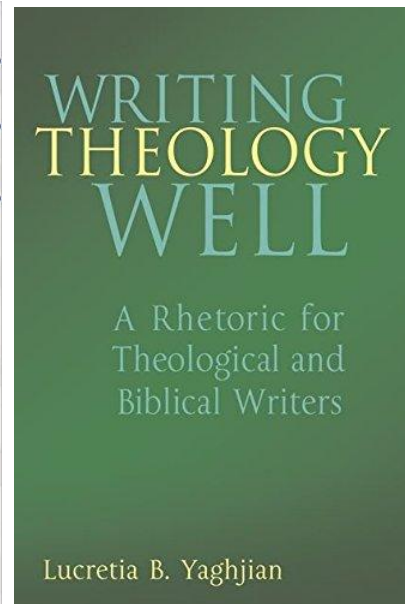
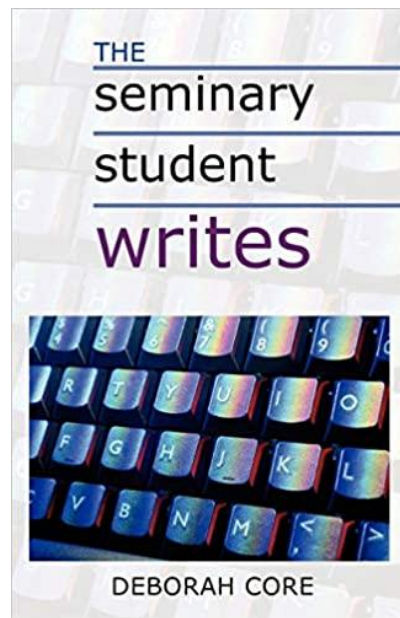
Writing Reflection Well



**What is
Seminary to
you?**

Challenges of Seminary

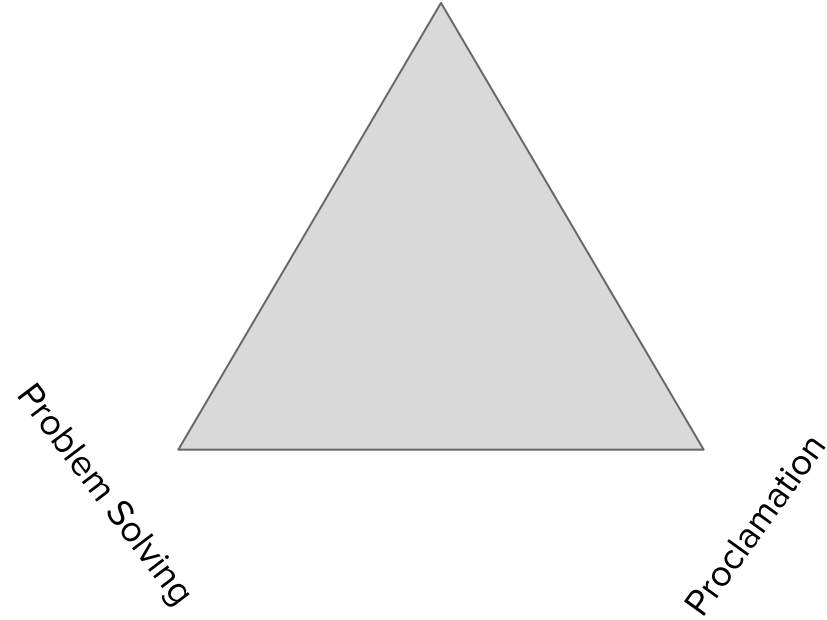
- You have been out of the classroom for awhile
- You need to read on a level you have not encountered before
- You need to write on a level you have not encountered before



What is Theological Reflection?

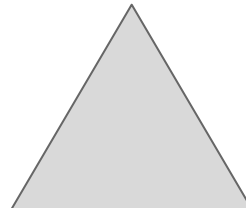
- The writer (yourself) who is “reflecting.” To reflect is to mirror yourself, to see what you are thinking about an experience, event, question, or subject, in light of the theological imagination.
- Theological Imagination is the “active mind thinking, questioning, dreaming, creating, construing, constructing, critiquing, speaking, and writing in the conceptual language of theology.”*
- Theological reflection **appeals** to experience, or “to the particular issue, question, problem, or text that we are trying to make sense of, as the starting point of reflection.”*
- It is to engage in a creative process, characterized by problem solving, and ending with a proclamation.*

Creative Process



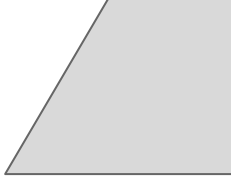
1. Identify a question that comes out of or arises from experience
2. Describe that experience in writing to identify the crux of the question
3. Correlate the experience and the question with the Christian tradition, story, symbols
4. Construct a new imagination of the experience that emerges from the writing process

Creative Process



**Yaghjian, Lucretia. Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers. New York: Continuum, 2006., 20-1.*

“What the phrase “Theological reflection” seems to add to the notion of theology as such is an explicit intention to bring actual current experience to bear on an understanding of Christian symbols so that they may in turn illumine actual experience and practice. For this reason theological reflection frequently transpires as some form of problem-solving.”*



Problem Solving

- Explain and analyze the problem in the light of current experience.
- Reflect on the problem in conversation with christian tradition
- Devise proposals for a solution of the problem, which may retrieve or reinterpret tradition toward a re-formed and reinvigorating praxis
- Conclude with an appeal to the reader that reasserts the gravity of the problem and the urgency of providing a solution*

Writing is a form of proclamation:

“What is invoked here is the powerful proclamation of a writer’s voice, but we are listening for another voice that might, if we stay respectfully out of the way, inspire and authenticate what we are given to say in the face of the mystery that inspires us...to write theological reflection is ultimately to give voice to that voice by writing in your own voice, in hope that it will reflect the mystery that inspires it...”*

**Writing a theological reflection paper that will
satisfy you and the professor for whom it is
written**

Pre-writing

- **Read the Assignment**
- **Reflect on the Task**
- **Prepare**
- **Find a place to write**

Freewriting: Finding Out What You Want To Say

- The purpose of freewriting is to help find out what you want to say and what you do not want to say
- Reread what you have written to begin to see thoughts and ideas that will shift your writing to respond to the assignment
- The freewriting draft is not the final draft. It is rough, short in places, and is really an inner monologue rather than written for an audience, an academic audience
- This freewriting becomes a bridge to what you really want to say

"If I waited
for perfection,
I would never
write a word."

(Margaret Atwood)

Outlining: Making a Path

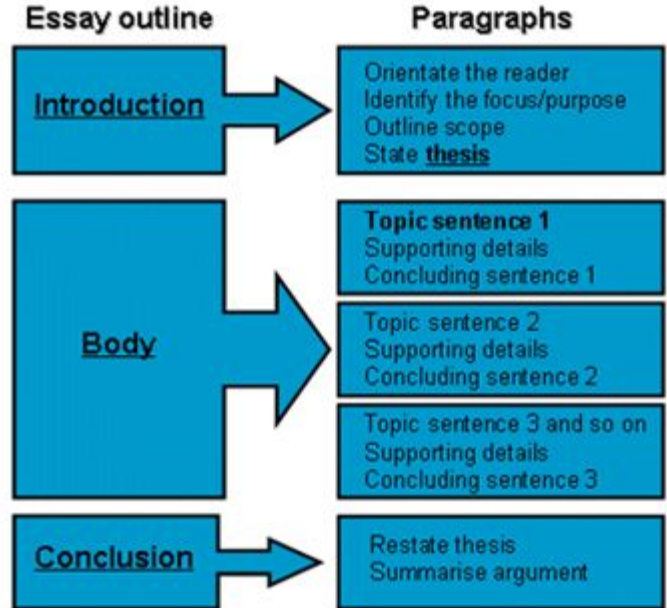
- Allows for a preliminary path for writing by walking through the progression of your ideas in a brief yet sequential form
- The outline works well when you have an idea of what you want to write, but need to flesh it out before writing a first draft.
- It helps by becoming exploratory, allowing you to look at, reflect, change, or reject the outline

Outline

- I. Intro
- II. First point
 - A. Detail
 - B. Detail
 - C. Detail
- III. Second point
 - A. Detail
 - B. Detail
 - C. Detail
 - D. Detail
- IV. Third point
 - A. Detail
 - B. Detail
 - C. Detail
- V. Conclusion

Draft 2: From Freewriting to Structured Writing

- Re-defines the question or topic in the introduction
- Discarding unnecessary material
- Develops a form for the remainder of the content
- Develops the essay with the structure into a coherent narrative with a beginning, middle, end.



Writing Introductions

- You need to have a funnel paragraph. It begins with a broad statement, narrows down through the sentences that follow, until the central idea of the paper is expressed



New medical technologies are raising many troubling issues today. Doctors are able to save lives in ways unheard of just a few years ago. But these medical miracles do not come without cost, and today many questions emerge about who gets care and how much care is appropriate. Among the most troubling issues is the question of neonatal care for very premature babies. This paper will look at the ethical issues involved in saving the lives of these infants.

Body of the Paper: Writing Paragraphs

- Paragraphs are units of thought
 - Paragraphs are clusters of sentences that support an idea
 - The central idea to be supported tends to be in the beginning of the paragraph
 - The central idea may also bind together several paragraphs
 - You should have multiple points that relates to the whole of your essay/paper
-

Body of the Paper: Writing the Concluding Paragraph

- All writings needs an effective ending
- Think about where the content of the writing has led.
- What is the logical outcome of the essay?
- How do you want to affect your reader, and what ending will best accomplish that goal?

Body of the Paper: Writing the Concluding Paragraph

- Look to the future thought: it asks the reader to consider the outcomes related to your subject matter
 - Explaining the significance of what you have discussed or argued:
 - Why does this issue matter so much?
 - What are the implications of your argument?
 - Pull it all together for your reader, not in a way that insults the reader's intelligence but in a way that shows the reader connections.
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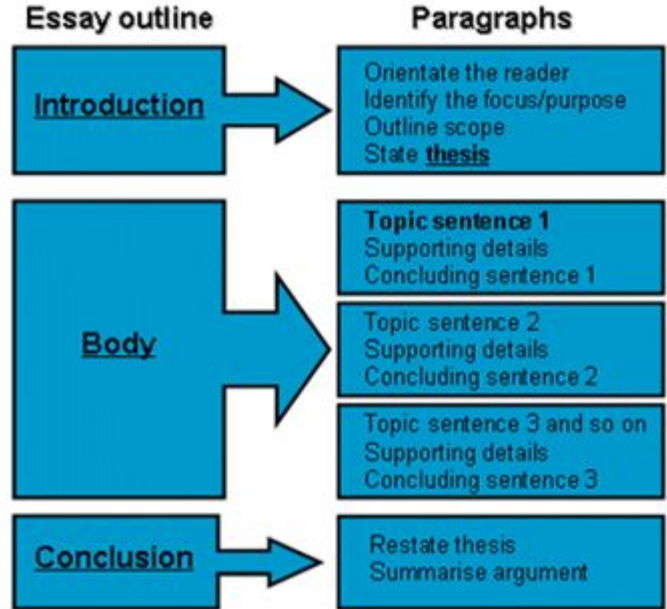
Karkainen's *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World*, is a work of love, showing his passion in the detail of his work. In truly desiring authentic engagement, he synthesized the various christian themes within systematic, constructive, liberative, reformed, and liberal values in evangelical theology. He has also invited the other in hospitable dialogue by being sensitive to the proclivities of other religious traditions as well as his own. His view of the Divine in the Trinitarian formulation of God is tantamount to his understanding of religious engagement, and that engagement is not hostile but hospitable; as the divine so opens to the world, the christian tradition so to is open to engagement by way of a journey.

As I reflect on Karkainen's work, I do have a question that I am left wondering. Hospitality in its richness, as held within a Trinitarian mode of invitation, response and engagement, still has not dealt with the culmination with hospitality and engagement. I propose that it is what Whitehead speaks of when he speaks of mutual immanence, that one no longer thinks on one's own, but thinks with the two or three (echoing a form of Matthew 18:20, "when two or three are gathered..."); one no longer rejects the other, but works within them. That is why instead of deterministic statements that are a front to thought becomes styles of engagement.

As we progress, we move towards a unity of religions, a history of human engagement with God. In order to do this however, it is imperative that we act in the space of hospitality, engaging in authentic relationships by way of witness and response, taking the other seriously as well as our own. This ultimately leads to the creative advance, imaginative generalization, that has depth and width, that creates, once again, a space for hospitality, dialogue, engagement.

Final Draft: Writing So That Others Will Want To Read It

- It must be reader centered, writing that effectively communicates with the audience without the author there to fill in the gaps.
- The final writing goal is to anticipate issues and problems and respond to it by filling in or correcting any errors in writing.

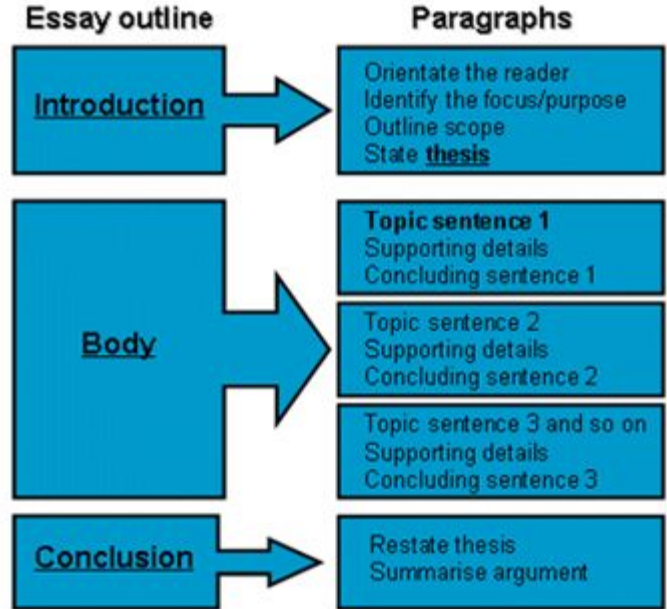


Body of the Paper: Rewriting

- The key to success: Revision
 - Does my writing do what the assignment asked?
 - Does my writing prove the point or carry the topic as I intended?
 - Does my writing move in a clear, organized pattern, with an effective beginning and end?
 - Have I left out important points or major supporting ideas?
 - Have I wandered off my topic in distracting ways?
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Reviewing, Revising, and Refining

- Is it clear?
- Is it concise?
- Is it coherent?
- Is it considerate?
- Is it correct?



Links

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