**Paragraph Structure, Topic Sentences and Transitions**

To prepare you for this class, you should have read the student guide about organizing your writing (how to paragraph effectively). Remember that you must present your essay in a logical way if it is to be interpreted as you mean it to be by your reader(s). A big part of this is invested in writing paragraphs that each present one main idea.

**Activity 1 (10 minutes)**

Take part in a class discussion by thinking about the following question: “**What makes a good piece of writing?”** *Hint: Think of as many things as possible (not just those that relate to paragraphing, and structure).*

Your instructor will brainstorm the class ideas on the blackboard/whiteboard, but you should do the same so that you can refer to your notes later.

**Activity 2 (25 minutes)**

Take out the sources that you brought with you (which relate to the current scientific controversy that you are going to discuss in your essay); you should have brought at least two, and these should preferably be primary sources.

Take 10 minutes to write a paragraph about each one so that it could fit into the essay you are writing. Use the brainstorm/notes you took from Activity 1 to help guide your writing. Do not worry too much about writing long paragraphs at this point, but try to make sure you only talk in depth about the one main point of the source you are using in each one.

In the remaining five minutes, try to write a topic sentence for each paragraph; remember that this should act as a mini development statement (or a signpost) that tells a reader what they can expect to read about in the coming paragraph. Lastly, try to add some transition words/phrases to link all the sentences smoothly together.

\*\* Make sure you include a citation for your sources (at least one per paragraph) \*\*

**Activity 3 (15 minutes)**

Swap your writing with a partner, and read each other’s work. In the first 10 minutes, make notes on their writing (being constructive) that will help them improve it. Some things to focus on include:

1. Is there only one main point per paragraph?
2. Does each topic sentence serve as a good signpost? Is it clear from this one sentence alone what the author is going to talk about in that paragraph?
3. Does each sentence transition smoothly into the next one?
4. Are any of the transition words/phrases confusing?
5. Does the writing follow a logical path?
6. Are there any confusing terms used (overly complex words, or science jargon)?
7. Are the citations formatted correctly?

For the last five minutes, you should take your piece of writing back and begin to improve it based on the feedback your partner gave you. If you do not finish all of these improvements by the end of class, you should complete them as homework; you should try to complete a first draft of your essay soon after this class anyway.