

Sample Sketch/Working Outline

Here is a sample of a Sketch/Working Outline assignment generously donated by a fellow student. This sample is not intended to give you hard and fast rules, but to suggest a workable format that meets all of the expectations of the assignment. This is a student paper and is not “perfect”--the student still did a lot of work to clarify his/her argument for the final draft--but it demonstrates to me that the student has done some careful research and some good thinking, and has dedicated time and effort to the process. This outline is detailed enough that I was able to see clearly where the student was going, what evidence s/he would use and how s/he would use it, and I was therefore able to give solid, concrete advice. **NOTE: this outline is much longer than yours will be. Your outline should consist of 4 pages: 1 sketch outline; 2-pg working outline; 1 preliminary bibliography.**

NOTEWORTHY:

Sketch Outline

- *the working thesis clearly identifies the **WHAT** and **SO WHAT** aspects of the argument. You may not wish to present it in this way, but your working thesis should nevertheless clearly indicate both aspects of the argument.
- *the Movements of the argument are logical and demonstrate a clear comparison between the texts. You may wish to organize your paper around themes instead of by text, but you will want to be sure that the Movements or “verses” of the essay are clearly delineated.
- *the Movements have clear, parallel titles. The titles summarize the Movements, proving to me that the student has a clear sense of why the information is grouped in this way. Also, the titles reveal a clear **BASIS OF COMPARISON**: the function or purpose of Death.
- *the Conclusion indicates how the writer will summarize the material and suggests the general implications of the study.

Working Outline

- *the **working thesis** is here written out in a pretty manageable sentence. You will refine the working thesis for the final draft to accommodate the changes you made to the argument.
- *each Movement or “verse” contains concrete representative examples from the primary texts
- *each Movement includes representative quotations from critics (secondary texts) in a way that makes it clear how the essay uses the critics’ insights.
- *each Movement has a Conclusion section in which the student states the **SO WHAT** of that stage

Keep in mind that the working outline is a **WORK IN PROGRESS**. I would expect the essay to evolve and change as you work through the thinking and reading process. Be sure, therefore, to include any questions that you are still working on, any issues that you feel may be pertinent, even if you don’t know as of yet how they will fit in. You might include this stuff in a separate section. What I want to see is evidence that you have taken this process seriously, and that you have tried to stretch and exercise your own intellectual, organizational and research skills. Everything you do here early on will contribute to a stronger essay.