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21L.001 Foundations of Western Culture: Homer to Dante
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Prose Issues to Watch for in Analytic Writing

1. Repetition of words, phrases, or clauses that mean nearly or exactly the same thing. In the following examples from your summaries, one of the italicized words or phrases should be cut, or the two combined into one. (Be careful if you see a lot of *and*'s or *or*'s in your prose; they often mean that you've failed to decide which formulation you prefer.)

a. Karma has *always* been a staple in both the religious and superstitious factions of our society *in both the past and the present*. (The opening "always" makes the last phrase superfluous.)

b. To prevent "extreme" revenge, the role of kin *was largely expanded and given responsibilities*. (To expand the role of something *is* to give it responsibilities.)

c. Miller's theory *is well supported with outside information*; he *backs up his statements with relevant data*. . . . (These two clauses mean very nearly the same thing; the author should either make clearer how they differ, or eliminate one in the name of concision.)

d. This thought process *ruled Ancient Greece and governed how citizens acted towards each other*. (Again, the clauses are so similar in meaning that they should be combined into one.)

e. There are usually negative *consequences that follow*. . . . (Consequences by definition are things that follow; get rid of the last two words.)

2. Vague, baggy phrases that mean so little as to be dispensable. The following italicized examples can be either eliminated or folded into later, more precise phrases.

a. Miller and Blundell each were *in a sense* not concerned at all. . . . ("In a sense" doesn't change the meaning, it just weakens the assertion.)

b. The Icelandic sagas tend to advocate *certain views and beliefs that are dissimilar to contemporary values*. Among these is respect for revenge as a just and moral recourse. (Cf. "The Icelandic sagas tend to respect revenge as a just and moral recourse, a position starkly at odds with contemporary values.")

3. The solution for 2b involved combining two sentences into one, also an effective process for dealing with short choppy sentences with repeated elements. (This has the secondary benefit of making your prose more complex and interesting to read.) See if you can combine the following sets of sentences into a single one.

3a. The Icelandic method of controlling revenge had its faults, such as allowing revenge in the first place, but regardless it worked. If it hadn't worked, everybody would be dead. Everyone would have taken revenge for the smallest things.

3b. As hard as it may be to do, at some points Blundell did flood the reader with too many quotes and supportive information. However, it was just that, supportive. Therefore, I had no problem with the amount of citations that she made in her introduction.

3c. The “eye for eye” (29) mentality allows the injured person the pleasure of inflicting pain on their enemy. Moreover, it restores his or her lost honor whilst attempting to keep retribution at a minimum.

4. The wordiness caused by using a clause when a phrase would suffice, or a phrase in lieu of a single word.

a. [I]f a friend entrusts money to a patron expecting nothing in return, that patron would exalt that person publicly and come to his or her aid in a time of need, *even if in doing so the patron must be subject to an undesirable experience*. (How could this clause be rewritten as a shorter phrase?)

b. When people failed to seek revenge for grievous wrongs they were viewed as weak or *they were thought to lack honor*. (Again, turn this clause into a phrase.)

5. Sentences that simply repeat claims or information already put forth.

a. Blundell argues that it is the nature of humans to respect their friends and abhor their enemies, even to the point of justified harm if necessary. *Blundell displays that “natural” and “great” pleasures come from benefiting friends and defeating enemies*. (This second sentence adds no essential new information to the first, so it should be cut entirely.)