WHAT IS STYLE?

When you hear an instructor in college talk about your style, they are not talking about designer labels or fashions. Usually, they are talking about the ways in which you compose and communicate your thoughts to others (through writing, designing, and even speaking).

Style refers to the way a person composes something in relation to the type of discourse he/she is asked to create. And, good STYLE is essential to college writing.

TYPES OF STYLE
According to classical Greek and Roman scholars, there are essentially three types of style which exist and are perpetuated in college composition (Lanham):

1. The Attic, or unornamented, brief style.

2. The Asiatic, or ornamented, full style.

3. And, the Rhodian, somewhere between (1) and (2).

Most of the compositions created in college are essentially Attic or have an unornamented, brief style.

Because college compositions are often concerned with an unornamented and/or brief style of composing, we have adopted some conventions or principles which become important considerations for you to observe.

THE ATTIC-COLLEGE STYLE
The Attic-college style is often concerned with five conventions or principles, which make use of heavily governed grammatical nuances, patterns of proper English usage, and considerable rhetorical techniques.

We call these conventions or principles, the five C's of Writing. And, they are:

1. Clarity

2. Coherence

3. Concision

4. Consistency

5. Creativity

Clarity is concerned with every message being clear to the audience; that is, there are few errors on the surface which hinder the message or slow the reader. Additionally, the message is clearly understood.

Coherence refers to the idea that everything within the message makes sense, is logical, and is sane (as opposed to insane or "not quite on this planet with us").

Concision refers to the idea that your message is mostly brief, not wordy or fluffy. In other words, you say what you need to say… no more than necessary.

Consistency refers to the consistent use of similar structures (such as the different forms of parallelism), rhythmic nuances, and the organization of the ideas within the message. In other words, things need to have a good rhythmic flow (not choppy), and must have a definite organization. Additionally, consistency refers to using things like formatting correctly and which are consistent with any source documentation guidelines.

Creativity refers to the notion that your message is unique and not plagiarized. In other words, although you are confined to a few notions in terms of maintaining clarity and the other conventions discussed here, you create a distinctive document. Do not make your document into something which seems more poetic or crafty, especially if you are writing something referential, expository, argumentative, or even professional. If you need your writing to be understood, then keep in mind that it should not obscure the message.

SUBJECTIVE, OBJECTIVE, AND INCLUSIONARY STYLE
With these principles/conventions in hand, you will undertake the practice of composing subjective, objective, and inclusionary documents using a voice and style appropriate to each.

Subjective Style refers to the use of a personal tone which maintains the author's own opinions, feelings, biases, and perspectives on a topic or subject matter.

Subjective Style tends to be used to compose forms of discourse such as personal narratives or letters of intent. This type of style thrives on the first-person perspective (e.g., I, we, etc.)

Objective Style refers to the use of a neutral tone which attempts to avoid the author's own opinions, feelings, biases, and perspectives on the topic or subject matter as much as possible.

Objective Style tends to be used to compose forms of discourse such as argumentative essays, reports, and proposals. This type of style thrives on third-person perspectives (e.g., he, she, it, they, or the actual/proper names of things, places, people, or ideas).

Inclusionary Style refers to the use of an inclusive or inclusionary tone which attempts to include the author and the audience's supposed opinions, feelings, biases, and perspectives on the topic or subject matter.

Inclusionary Style tends to be used to compose marketing materials, advertisements, and other forms of discourse. This type of style thrives on second-person inclusionary language (e.g. you, our, us, etc.).

Some supposition on the part of the author is important in order to maintain a good inclusionary style. With the inclusionary style, you must consider your audience's needs, desires, assumptions, and personal preferences. Then, you must use your own inferences about these facets to construct a document which appeals to the audience.

<u>LEVELS OF STYLE</u>
Style is workable into all of the different levels of composing:
The Word Level
The Sentence Level
The Paragraph Level
And, the Document Level

Each level maintains its own set of rules for composing.

For example, word-level elements of style restrict the use of vague or common forms of language which you might hear someone say to you in an informal circumstance. Additionally, these elements provide for important attributes such as specificity, formality, and descriptiveness.

The sentence-level elements of style restrict the use of the passive voice, wordy sentence construction, and other facets of language which tend to limit the meaning, the flow of ideas, or the rhythm.

The paragraph-level elements of style tend to restrict the radical changing of the attributes of a paragraph, such as mood, tense, and even voice/speaker. Moreover, these elements require the careful and methodical assembling of sentences in order to make meaning accessible and consistent.

Finally, the document-level elements of style advocate for things such as organization, source documentation, and other elements which are crucial and customary conventions found in college composition.

Regardless of how many different ways you apply style to your writing, you must try as much as possible to adhere to the five conventions and preserve a mostly unornamented, brief style.

Note: If you instructor advocates that you learn about Asiatic style or the ornamented, full style, then be prepared to undertake a rigorous study of rhetorical techniques and ornamentation. Oftentimes, the study of the Asiatic style of composing is reserved for more advanced students of composition, but sometimes it is not.