Responding to and Grading Student Writing

Part I.

Please read the Management 202 assignment. Then, with a partner, discuss the following:

What is the goal of the assignment?

What will be the characteristics of a good paper for this assignment?

If the instructor has budgeted about fifteen minutes per paper, what should h/she select as priorities for commenting?

Part II.

Now, please read the three commented-upon drafts (A1-3, B1-3, and C1-3). Then, with a partner, determine for each commented-upon draft the following:

How long do you think it took to read the paper and write these comments?

What is the focus of the comments?

Do the comments complement the goals of the assignment?

Has the instructor focused on “higher order” issues such as understanding of content, reasoning, and supporting evidence?

How do you predict the student will go about revising this paper?

Are the comments likely to nudge the student through Perry’s stages of intellectual development?

Which of the three commented-upon drafts is most likely to yield significant revision?
Management 202
Writing Assignment Number 4
Jack Daniel Distillery (Daft, pp. 94-95)

Requirement: Basing your analysis on the three theories of ethical criteria discussed in class, present your conclusion about the best action(s)—from an ethical standpoint—that Jack Daniel Distillery could take in regard to the “thick slop” situation as it exists at the end of the case.

This assignment may be up to the three pages long, and it will include a revision cycle. The first draft is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, February 23, and the revised version is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, March 7.

Reminders:

1. The Jack Daniel Distillery Case is in Management on pages 94-95.
2. You must reach a definite conclusion about what you think the Jack Daniel Company should do based primarily on an ethical analysis of the situation.
3. Your conclusion must deal with what Jack Daniel Distillery should do in regard to the “thick slop” situation as that situation exists at the end of the case.
4. Your ethical analysis of the case should be based on the three theories of ethical criteria presented in class.
5. Due Dates:

   First Draft  Thursday, February 23, 1989
   Revised Version  Tuesday, March, 1989
managers of The Jack Daniel Company must find an ethical way to resolve a conflict between the company and local farmers who were promised free "thick slop." [Explain "thick slop" and its relevance to farming.] Also explain the "dry house" method of getting rid of slop.]

Jack Daniel managers had promised by giving them free "thick slop" to feed their cattle. There also existed an expressed agreement between farmers and Jack Daniel to continue this arrangement on the grounds that the farmers would substantially improve the environment. [You might explain their motivation - the Company.]

end of the bargain, but Jack Daniel's backed out of the deal as a result of economic problems. The question that arises here as to whether Jack Daniel's refusal to supply the farmers with cattle feed longer efficient is completely unethical. [The distillery's decision can be evaluated on the basis of theories: The Utilitarian Theory, the Theory of Rights and the Theories of Justice, can all be used to establish whether or not Jack Daniel's action is ethical.

According to The managers of The Jack Daniel Company...]

When considering the Utilitarian Theory, one can see that there does exist an ethical problem. The consequence of Jack Daniel's actions is that the farmers receive no feed for their cattle, and as a result there is severe tension between the farmers and the distillery. Jack Daniel's obviously backed out of the deal, and the question that arises here is whether this action is producing the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Apparently, this situation is more efficient for Jack Daniel's but it is definitely not producing the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Their action falls short of helping the community, and the farmers are damaged in this
situation. The "dry house" method of getting rid of slop is more economical, but under
the Utilitarian Theory this alternative method is unethical.

According to

Under the Theory of Rights, one can conclude that Jack Daniel's behavior is
unethical. The Theory of Rights states that humans have moral rights that should be
respected in all actions and situations. The Jack Daniel distillery made a deal, albeit
informally with the farmers in the area to provide them with thick slop if they made
improved environmental improvements. The farmers succeeded in fulfilling this requirement, but
Jack Daniel's failed to comply with the agreement. The farmers relied on Jack Daniel's
to their detriment by making investments in the environment for which they received no
compensation. According to the Theory of Rights, Jack Daniel's

action is considered

unethically.

When considering the Theories of Justice, one can also see that Jack Daniel's
action was unethical. The Theories of Justice are built on the premise that any should
produce a fair distribution of the benefits and burdens when coming together in a working
situation. It appears that the farmers and the distillery came together to make
improvements in the environment. Benefits were to be received by both parties, but
agreement. However, when economic problems surfaced, economic problems surfaced. Instead of sharing this burden, Jack Daniel's dumped the
burden entirely on the farmers. Additionally, according to the Theories of Justice, there
should be a consistent administration of rules and practices. Jack Daniel's traditionally
provided the farmers with thick slop, and they should ethically continue to do so.

The local farmers had a moral right to expect the other party to honor a mutual agreement.
especially since there was an agreement between the two groups. Jack Daniel's should make some restitution for their action because they are in a position of control.

The restitution should be made in the form of providing the farmers with the thick slop as originally agreed. The farmers made environmental improvements and consequently Jack Daniel's should hold up their end of the bargain. Because Jack Daniel's hit an economic slump, they should consider charging a price for the "thick slop" that would be fair, the farmers and also help the distillery. Jack Daniel's could provide the greatest good to the greatest number of people by providing the farmers with the cattle feed for a low price, they would be respecting the rights of the farmers by doing so, they would share the burden of the economic problems and they would provide restitution for their action. According to the Utilitarian Theory, the Theory of Rights and the Theories of Justice, Jack Daniel's acted unethically and should remedy the situation by going back to their former way of getting rid of slop by giving it to the farmers.
Jack Daniel’s is facing an obvious ethical dilemma with regard to the “thick slop” situation. Jack Daniel’s had clearly established a relationship with the farmers in the area by giving them free “thick slop” to feed their cattle. There also existed an expressed agreement between farmers and Jack Daniel to continue this arrangement on the grounds that the farmers make substantial environment improvements. The farmers upheld their end of the bargain, but Jack Daniel’s backed out of the deal as a result of economic problems. The question that arises here is to whether Jack Daniel’s refusal to supply the farmers with cattle feed longer efficient is completely ethical. The situation can be reviewed and compared against three ethical criteria. The Utilitarian Theory, the Theory of Rights and the Theories of Justice can all be used to establish whether or not Jack Daniel’s action is ethical.

When considering the Utilitarian Theory one can see that there does exist an ethical problem. The consequence of Jack Daniel’s actions is that the farmers receive no feed for their cattle, and as a result there is severe tension between the farmers and the distillery. Jack Daniel’s obviously backed out of the deal and the question that arises here is whether this action is producing the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Apparently this situation is more efficient for Jack Daniel’s, but it is definitely not producing the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Their action falls short of helping the community, and the farmers are damaged in this
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burdens
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\[\text{You have some good points here, but to improve this paper, you need to clarify your sentences. You need to clarify your thesis and argument, too. Proofread.}\]
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You’ve made a compelling case that JD acted to some degree unethically & should make restitution. To make your good argument even stronger, you could focus your thesis (by qualifying it and by specifying on which grounds JD was unethical) & move your thesis to end of 1st pt (where reader usually expects it). You could also refine your argument throughout by explaining more specifically the part of the thesis (maybe not all of it) that is
Conclusion: A Review of General Principles (for Writing Comments on Students' Papers)

The following list summarizes the main principles of commentary discussed in this chapter:

General Procedures

1. Comment first on ideas and organization: encourage students to solve higher-order problems before turning to lower-order problems.

2. Whenever possible, make positive comments. Praise strong points.

3. Try to write an end comment that reveals your interest in the student’s ideas. Begin the end comment with an emphasis on good points and then move to specific recommendations for improvement.

4. Avoid overcommenting. Particularly avoid emphasizing lower-order concerns until you are satisfied with higher-order concerns. If writing lacks focus or a thesis statement and a plan for supporting it, it is premature to worry about paragraphs or sentence structure.

5. As you read the essay, indicate your reaction to specific passages. Particularly comment on the ideas, raising queries and making suggestions on how the argument could be improved. Praise parts that you like.

6. Resist the urge to circle misspellings, punctuation errors, and so forth. Research suggests that students will improve more quickly if they are required to find and correct their own errors.

Marking for Ideas

7. The end comment should summarize your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the writer’s ideas. Challenge writers to deepen and complicate their thought at a level appropriate to their intellectual development.

Marking for Organization

8. Use marginal comments to indicate places where structure becomes confusing.

9. Praise good titles, good thesis statements, good transitions, and so forth.

Marking for Sentence Structure

10. Although I recommend against marking or circling sentence errors, you might consider placing X’s in the margins where they occur. When you return the papers, either withhold a grade or lower the grade until students who made substantial numbers of errors have reedited their work. Most students should be able to find and fix a majority of their errors. Students with severe sentence-level problems may need to seek personal tutoring.

11. Note places where sentence-level problems cause genuine unclarity (as opposed to annoyance). Marginal comments such as “Tangled sentence” or “This passage is garbled” help the writer see where problems occur.

Some Further Principles

12. Try to make comments as legible and as straightforward as possible. As anyone knows who has looked at papers graded by a colleague, teachers’ comments are frequently difficult to decipher. They are often unintentional examples of first-draft writing—clear to the writer but baffling to others.

13. Whenever possible, use one-on-one conferences instead of commenting on papers. Perhaps my most frequent end comment is this: “You’re making real progress. Please see me so that I can help you move to the next stage.” An invitation for personal help is particularly useful when the student’s problems involve higher-order concerns.

14. Finally, think of your commentary as personal correspondence with the student, something that makes your own thinking visible and permanent. Try to invest in your commentary the tone of a supportive coach—someone interested in the student as a person and in the improvement of the student’s powers as a writer and thinker.

Conclusion: A Review of Timesaving Strategies (for Coaching the Writing Process and Handling the Paper Load)

The traditional way to coach writing is to make copious, red-penciled comments on finished student products—almost universally regarded among composition specialists as an inefficient use of teacher energy. The comments seldom lead to improvement in student writing, and the thought of grading stacks of depressingly bad student essays discourages teachers from assigning writing. This chapter suggests ten different strategies for coaching writing, aimed at improving the quality of final products while reducing the amount of commenting time teachers need to devote to papers. Here is a nutshell review of the ten strategies discussed in this chapter.

1. Design good assignments.
   Assign exploratory writing; consider using microthemes.
   Create assignment handouts specifying task, purpose, audience, criteria, desired manuscript form (see pages 83–86 for details).
   If your goal is thesis-based writing, consider using one of the three assignment strategies in Chapter Five, pages 87–90.

2. Clarify your grading criteria.
   Create a scoring guide or peer review check sheet.
   Hold an in-class norming session (see Chapter Nine, pages 158–159).

3. Devote a class hour to generating ideas.
   Create a small group brainstorming task.
   Have members of pairs interview one another.

4. Have students submit something to you early in the writing process.
   Consider asking for a prospectus, a question-plus-thesis summary, or an abstract.
   Use these to identify students who need extra help.

5. Have students be the first readers of each other’s drafts.
   Require peer reviews (either response-centered or advice centered).
   To preserve class time, consider out-of-class peer reviews.

6. Refer students to your writing center (or lobby to start one).
   Recognize the value of writing centers for all writers, not just weak writers.
   Stress the usefulness of writing centers at all stages of the writing process.

7. Make one-on-one conferences efficient.
   Focus first on higher-order concerns (ideas, focus, organization and development).
   Begin each conference by setting an agenda.
   Develop a repertoire of conferencing strategies.
   Consider using idea maps and tree diagrams.

8. Consider holding group conferences early in the writing process.

9. Use efficient methods for giving feedback on papers.
   Comment on late drafts rather than final products (or allow rewrites).
   Make revision-oriented comments, focusing first on higher-order concerns.
   For microthemes, use models feedback in lieu of traditional comments.
   When time is at a premium, use a grading scale or a scoring guide instead of making comments.

10. Put minimal comments on finished products that will not be revised.

Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom.