

## **Sample #1 – Academic Writing for an Online Course**

### **Who's Watching You?**

How safe are you? Hopefully you know better than to share personal information, like your phone number, with total strangers online. But maybe that's not enough.

You're thinking of buying a new digital camera. You look online to do some research, comparing prices, digital zoom vs. optical zoom, and video capability. Then you check into Facebook and you see an ad in the corner for digital cameras at one of the national electronics stores.

Or maybe you're making travel arrangements online to visit your cousin in Florida. The next thing you know, you're seeing ads for places to go and things to do while in Florida.

What's going on? Who knows what you're doing online all the time? And how do they know it?

Most websites you visit will place a small piece of computer code on your computer, called a "tracking cookie" or simply a "cookie." Companies use these cookies to collect data about your web-surfing habits every single day. The company's cookie may also track where else you're surfing, like on their competitors' websites. Often they sell that data, including your IP address (including the city you're in), how long you were on the site, and what you searched for. It's legal as long as they tell you what kind of data they collect and how they use it.

When and where do they tell you? On their "Terms of Use" page. Usually it's a small link at the bottom of their home page labeled "Legal," "Privacy Policy," "Terms of Use," or something similar. As long as they have the information posted somewhere on their site, it's legal; it's up to you to find and read the Terms of Use and agree to them.

And then you say "I never agreed to any website's Terms of Use!" Oh yes you did – you just didn't know it. Usually, the Terms of Use say something like this:

*By using this Website you fully accept the terms and conditions contained in this notice. If you do not accept these Terms and Conditions you must immediately stop using the Website.*

But you never read that, did you? You went to the website, searched for a digital camera, or a new pair of shoes, or airfares, and you gave them permission to collect and sell all that data to other companies who market more products to you. . .because you never looked at the Terms of Use.

[© 2012 FlipSwitch]

## **Sample #2 – Academic Writing for an Online Course**

### **Using Microsoft Excel for Budgeting and Creating Charts (Excel Certification Course)**

In Unit 4 you were introduced to a variety of ways to present your data visually by creating charts and using illustrations. In Unit 5 you will gain more practice with visual presentations of data. You will be combining skills you learned in Units 1-4 to produce more complete presentations.

Throughout this unit, you will be creating a set of worksheets for your own film production company. Your first charts will be based on a film production budget and will show budgeted vs. actual expenses (Lesson 21). Filmmaking is expensive and your hypothetical company needs more money, so you will soon be meeting with investors. You will need to provide information about the company's finances, and charts will provide snapshots of information:

- comparing your company to your competitors (Lesson 22)
- showing last year's financial summary (Lesson 23) and your company's projected growth (Lesson 24)
- forecasting the investors' return on their investment - R.O.I. (Lesson 25)

So ... you have a small independent film production company. Congratulations!

When you hear about the latest multi-million dollar blockbuster, the money involved seems overwhelming. Many films cost over \$100 million to produce, and it's not unusual for some films to cost over \$200 million. Your big question is "Why do movies cost so much to make?" Two related questions are "Who are all those people listed in the credits at the end of a movie and what do they do?" In this lesson, as you work with a budget for a small independent film production, you will begin to get answer to these questions.

Although your company is small, the budget will give you an overview of all that goes into creating a film. In this activity you will develop a budget for your film and create charts comparing budgeted vs. actual expenses.

Your small production company isn't ready to compete with the big studios in Hollywood. You don't have hundreds of thousands of dollars to spend on special effects or big-name actors. You just want to make some short films and maybe a documentary or two. You have some basic equipment and friends who share your vision for filmmaking. So where do you start?

There's a saying among filmmakers: Story is King. Simply put, no superstar actor or special effects can save a boring story. It's all about the story. So here's your story:

- You have friends, you have some gear, and you have an idea for a movie.
- You will write the script in the evenings and on weekends. When it's ready, you plan to shoot the film over two weekends - just four long days.
- You plan to operate on a shoestring budget, working with almost all volunteer labor (meaning friends and family).
- Your cast and crew won't be paid. They will work to be listed in the credits, to get some experience, and to get a copy of the finished film on DVD. And you've promised to feed them.
- You have budgeted for some specialized parts of the process (some equipment rental and visual effects), but you haven't really planned much beyond this.
- You read somewhere that too many independent filmmakers forget to plan for marketing and distribution, so you planned ahead and actually budgeted for this.

Welcome to the world of independent filmmaking on a micro budget.

[© 2012 FlipSwitch]

### **Sample #3 – Academic Writing for an Online Course Comparing Atheistic Existentialism with Christianity**

People want their lives to matter; they want significance. How do they get it? The answer to that question depends on their worldview.

In this module, Atheistic Existentialism will be contrasted with Christianity. Their answers to foundational worldview questions (as presented in Module 1) will be considered, and both worldviews will be examined in the context of decisions people make regarding family – who defines *family*, what makes a family, and is marriage really necessary?

Like Secular Humanism, Atheistic Existentialism is another derivative of Naturalism. It is based upon many of the same foundational principles as Naturalism and Secular Humanism:

- Everything is matter.
- There is no God.
- Right and wrong are determined by the individual.

With so much in common with both Naturalism and Secular Humanism, how is Atheistic Existentialism different?

### **What is Atheistic Existentialism?**

To help understand Atheistic Existentialism, additional definitions may help to clear away some of the fog:

"Life has no ultimate meaning. Each individual must determine the meaning they wish to assign to life. . . life is absurd, partly because we have freedom and ability but operate in a context of chaos and meaninglessness" (Barna, 2003, p. 51).

"Existentialism's major interest is in our humanity and how we can be significant in an otherwise insignificant world" (Sire, 1988, p. 111).

*Choices, Choices. . .*

How can humans be significant? This brings us again to the worldview questions first introduced in Module 1. For the Atheistic Existentialist one of the key questions is, *Do humans have value and significance?* The short answer is Yes, but explaining why takes some work.

Humans create their own value by making choices. Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the leading voices of Atheistic Existentialism explained, "At first he [man] is nothing. Only afterwards will he be something, and he himself will have made him what he will be" (as cited in Sire, 1988, p. 113). This concept needs further clarification.

"For human beings alone, existence precedes essence; people make themselves who they are. . . Each of us makes himself or herself to be human by what we do with our self-consciousness and our self-determinacy" (Sire, 1988, p. 113). By this, the existentialist means that a person has physical existence – they have been born – but they are not fully human until they begin to make conscious, willful choices. Schaeffer (1990) explained the same concept when he wrote, "Existentialism stresses the need to make vital choices by using man's freedom in a contingent and apparently purposeless world."

This idea impacts the field of ethics. Since making conscious, willful choices is what makes one fully human, then actions are the ultimate determiner of right and wrong: "Because our actions reflect our choices, they are right, by definition" (Barna, 2003, p. 51).

A man can either choose to help a little old lady across a busy street or he can choose to push her into the traffic. Either action is right, so long as he makes the choice of his own free will. Making the choice is what matters – it validates his *humanness*. In other words, only by making *vital choices* does a person create their own value.

[© 2009 Grand Canyon University]

## **Sample #4 – Academic Writing for an Online Course**

### **Living on a Budget**

So what exactly *is* a budget?

It's a way of creating categories, like "Housing," "Transportation," and "Food" and assigning a certain amount of money to each category. It's simply a way of telling your money where to go every month – instead of wondering where it went.

Create your budget *before* the month begins, based on the income you expect to receive that month. By planning ahead, you can remember to budget for special events and occasional purchases, like birthday or graduation gifts.

If you haven't been out on your own, paying your own way just yet, you'll be in for a rude shock once you realize just how expensive this thing called life really is! Lots of people have no idea how much they actually spend each month. If that's you, then you might find it helpful to keep every single receipt for every purchase you make over the next month or two, and then total them all up at the month's end.

And if you're new to the idea of living on a budget, how do you know where to start? How much should you assign to each category?

Here are some general guidelines. These numbers are percentages of your *take-home* pay. Each person's situation is different. The cost of housing varies widely, depending on where you live and also on whether you're living alone or with roommates. Living with a roommate can help you save, because you'll be able to share some of your costs, like utilities, cable TV, and Internet access. **Remember that these percentages are just guidelines.** Also, if your income is very low (or very high), the percentages will be different.

<b>Recommended Percentages</b>	
Charitable Giving	5-10%
Housing (rent, mortgage)	25-35%
Utilities (incl. renters' or homeowners' insurance)	5-10%
Food (groceries & eating out)	5-15%
Transportation (incl. car insurance, gas, parking, maintenance, and repairs)	10-15%
Saving	5-10%
Clothing	2-7%
Entertainment	5-10%
Debt Repayment (car loans, credit cards, college student loans, etc.)	5-10%

You might be surprised to see charitable giving included on the list, especially for someone who's just starting out and watching every penny. But the fact is, generosity is a habit that has to be practiced, like a muscle that has to be worked in order to grow stronger. If you say "I'll give to charity when I make more money" then you'll probably *never* give. You'll always find yourself saying "I need to make more – and then I'll give."

Pick a charity that you believe in – a local animal shelter, the American Cancer Society, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, or your church or synagogue. Where you give doesn't matter; the amount you give doesn't matter; developing the habit of giving *does* matter.

Another area that may come as a surprise for a young person is savings. The idea of "paying yourself first" is another good financial habit to develop now – not later in life.

Once the two practices of giving and saving become habits, you'll become more and more comfortable with living on 85-90% of your income. It's just getting into that habit that's difficult!

[© 2010 American Virtual Academy]

## **Sample #5 – Academic Writing (Course Syllabus) for an Online Course Old Testament Survey**

This course consists of ten units that will give you an overview of the Old Testament. The first two units cover the time from Creation to Joseph, units 3-5 cover Israel's exodus from Egypt through the time of the Judges, units 6-8 cover the time Israel was ruled by kings, and the last two units cover Israel's captivity and return. You are going to learn a great deal by reading the lessons, answering the questions, and completing other assignments. You will also take five unit tests for each semester of work, and type out written projects to be graded by a Bible teacher. Approximately 30-40% of each semester grade will come from the unit tests, 30-40% from the quizzes, 10-15% from the lessons, and 25-30% from the written projects.

Be sure to pay attention to the vocabulary lists, the Tiny Tutors, slide shows, and side bars. The games and internet connections are optional, but you may find them helpful. If you open **Reference** in the list of assignments for each unit, you will find a complete list of all vocabulary words and memory verses for the unit, as well as other study helps.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Keep up with your daily Lesson Plan. If you fall a day behind, work extra hard to catch up the next day. If necessary, your parent can call the Academy and ask to have your Lesson Plan adjusted to allow for days you were unable to work.
2. Save this syllabus, and from time to time view the outline below to see which assignments are coming. You may want to gather information ahead of time for a written report.
3. Please remember that when you are asked to memorize a Bible verse, you must memorize it exactly as it appears in your lesson and Reference section. If you type it as it appears in any other Bible version, your teacher will not be able to compare, and will deduct points.
4. You must pass the 80% threshold for each lesson before you can go on to the next lesson, and before your teacher can see any "Help" notes you left with questions in the lesson. If you are stuck, you may send a message to your teacher using the regular Messages button, or call the Academy.

[© 2009 Alpha Omega Academy]