

## "Comprehending the Assignment"

**1) Understanding the topic.** Most of the papers you will write for SBCC begin with an assignment sheet and some suggested topics. Read the assignment sheet carefully to make sure you understand what your professor's expectations are.

- a) Is he or she giving you a topic or suggesting some possibilities?
- b) Are you supposed to do outside research?
- c) How long should the paper be?
- d) Are you supposed to summarize something you have read, or come up with a thesis or argument of your own?
- e) Are you expanding a topic that you only touched on in class, or are you trying to get a better grasp of course materials by expressing your own point of view?

**2) Defining terms.** If you have read the assignment carefully and are still not sure what is required of you:

- a) Ask the professor to clarify terms.
- b) Consult dictionary regarding any words you do not fully comprehend. For example: ideology, paradox, synonymous, analogy.

**3) Analysis.** Look at all sides of the question. Organize your thoughts into an outline: pros, cons, similarities, differences, compare and contrast, etc. Make sure the assignment is clearly understood as well as your own thesis. Know the relationship between the assignment and subject.

**4) Choosing an assignment.** Sometimes the professor may ask you to write a paper on a topic of your choice. You will need to think about the material you have covered and any questions the course may be trying to address, including vital questions you have about the topic. Here again, you should be clear about what is expected of you. What choices are available that piques your interest? How much of the paper should be a synthesis of other people's ideas? What does the professor see as the goals of writing the paper? What will you learn from writing?

**5) Sources.** Are there sources that can back up your thesis with research and credible examples to illustrate your point? You may want to use library and on-line sources to support your research.