LECTURE: REVISION, PROOFREADING, EDITING, REWRITING

Unless your name is Mozart, you probably don’t create perfect essays right off the bat. Most of us have to write and rewrite, add, delete, make corrections in grammar, spelling, mechanics and organization over the course of several drafts before we come up with an essay that we consider to be “finished.” Sometimes, as in an essay final exam, you WILL have to hand in your first draft as a finished product. Most of the time, however, you will be expected to make changes to your initial effort before you hand it in for a “final” grade.

Make sure you understand the terms:

1. Revise – Revising means reorganizing or adding/deleting ideas.
2. Proofread/Edit – Proofreading or editing means checking for grammatical correctness, accuracy in spelling and mechanics and so on. Though important, this step is less critical than revising your ideas and adding support for your thesis. Spellchecker and grammar checkers, tutors, peer editors can help in this area. Reading in your second language will help make your writing more native-like.

3. Rewrite – Unless you are taking an in-class essay final, be prepared to write and rewrite each assigned essay (and each summary!) several times. You can learn something new about your subject and about effective writing with each successive draft. Get started on each project early, so that you have time to revise, proofread, and rewrite. Allowing your paper to “rest” for a while before you do your final revision (in anticipation of handing your essay in) may help you to “catch” errors or inconsistencies that you missed earlier. Remember: do not wait until the last minute to get started!