WRITING AN EFFECTIVE TITLE, SUBTITLE, and EPIGRAPH

Problem: Writers often omit or underuse the helpful tool that is an essay title. Feeling stuck, writers may give up on generating a title, or merely label their essays by assignment sequence ("Paper #2") or task ("Core 1 Argument"). An absent or non-specific title is a missed opportunity: titles help writers prepare readers to understand and believe the paper that is to follow.

Solutions: REMEMBER THE FUNCTIONS OF A TITLE

As composition and rhetoric scholars Maxine Hairston and Michael Keene explain, a good title does several things:

> First, it predicts content and provides considerable reason(s) for reading.
> Second, it catches the reader's interest. A good title is able to astonish and intrigue the reader.
> Third, it reflects the tone or slant of the piece of writing.
> Fourth, it contains keywords that will make it easy to access by a computer search.

THINK OF TITLE-WRITING AS A PROCESS, AND ALLOW YOURSELF TO
        . Like any piece of writing, an effective title does not appear in one magic moment; it takes brainstorming and revising. Richard Leahy's "Twenty Titles for the Writer" exercise helps writers slow down and engage in the process of title-writing:

<u>Twenty Titles for the Writer</u>

1. Copy out of your draft a sentence that could serve as a title.

2. Write a sentence that's not in the draft to use as a title.

3. Write a title that is a question beginning with What, Who, When, or Where.

4. Write a title that is a question beginning with How or Why.

5. Write a title that is a question beginning with Is/Are, Do/Does, or Will.

6. Pick out of the essay some concrete image—something the reader can hear, see, taste, smell, or feel—to use as a title.

7. Pick another concrete image out of the essay. Look for an image that is a bit unusual or surprising.

8. Write a title beginning with an -ing verb (like "Creating a Good Title").

9. Write a title beginning with On (like "On the Titles of Essays").

10. Write a title that is a lie about the essay. (You probably won't use this one, but it might stimulate your thinking.)

11. Write a one-word title—the most obvious one possible.

12. Write a less obvious one-word title.

13. Write a two-word title.

14. Write a three-word title.

15. Write a four-word title.

16. Write a five-word title.

17. Think of a familiar saying, or the title of a book, song, or movie, that might fit your essay.

18. Take the title you just wrote and twist it by changing a word or creating a pun on it.

19. Do the same with another saying or title of a book, song, or movie.

20. Find two titles you've written so far that you might use together in a double title. Join them together with a colon [:].

Most of the time, the hook and the reel are two different pieces, <u>split across the title and subtitle.</u>
Take 3 examples: