



*About  
the  
Author*

Martin Itzkowitz earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in English at New York University. He has taught writing, literature, and theatre at colleges such as the University of Minnesota, Temple University, and Pennsylvania State University, and has taught in the Glassboro State College Communications Department since 1986.

He has published articles, reviews, and poetry in journals ranging from *Seventeenth-Century News* to *Salome*. Active in theatre since 1971, he has performed in and directed several dozen community and professional productions and also worked professionally in radio, television, and films.

# *Sentence Outlines for Research Papers*



*Martin Itzkowitz*

A sentence outline, completed to the third level of hierarchy (I.A.I., etc.) and submitted several weeks before a research paper is due, can improve the quality of the final product.

Unlike the topic outline, a sentence outline compels students to articulate their thoughts completely—indeed, prompts them to discover ideas in the first place. It also permits students to see more clearly the distinctions between subordinate ideas and those of like magnitude, thus enabling them to improve the organization of the paper in progress. Finally, a sentence outline more effectively reveals whatever deficiencies there may be in the general development of a thesis and in its specific support.

Properly done, such an outline may be one-quarter to one-third the length of the finished paper and, because of its thoroughness, may be considered the ABD (all but draft) stage of the research.

Early submission of the outline enables instructors to guide students through their projects more effectively—to indicate strengths and weaknesses, to offer highly concrete suggestions, and to head off at the intellectual pass those who stray from theme and thesis. At the very least, such an approach may eliminate the worst unwanted surprises and, to that extent, minimize the all-too-familiar Kierkegaardian approaches to term paper reading—fear and trembling, and sickness unto death.