Organizing Ideas

You've listened, you've taken notes, you've found articles, you've found books, and you've read, you've collected other people's ideas, you've developed your own ideas, and now you're overwhelmed!

There are methods available to you to help you organize all this information and all these ideas. If you're having trouble, you can always speak to your professor or contact the staff of the writing center. But to get you started, here are a few tips:

- Pretend you have to teach a class on this material. What is the information your students will need to have first—the background? Jot down those pieces of information on a piece of paper. What is the central problem or question you are addressing? Jot those down next. What are you bringing to the conversation? Those things next, along with your evidence. Structure your whole "class" as a lesson plan. Don't bother yet with complete sentences—the sooner you start writing *anything*, the better!

- Pretend you are putting together a web page about this subject. Web pages— including this one—are often structured as outlines, with the most important information featured in big letters at the top of the page, less important information displayed less prominently, and subsidiary information put in links to other pages. Outlines and web pages help you visualize how all the material goes together. They help you see what is most important, and what is secondary or tangential.