

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History
Semester I, 2020-2021

HISTORY 710: Dissertation Writing Workshop

Thursday 11-1

Office hours: Tues. 5:15-6pm.; Thurs. 3:45-5pm

Ofc hours link: <https://us.bbcollab.com/guest/4b709fe0bfb84c4eb389f4154967c408>

Prof. Desan

Ofc hours in BBC Room on Canvas

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History 710 functions as a writing workshop for dissertators. The course will focus on practical writing issues, including questions of style, structure, narrative, and argument. We will examine how to structure a chapter effectively; how to compose efficient and powerful introductions; how to fashion narrative that marshals evidence and analysis in an approachable and convincing way; how to apply for post-docs; and how to compose and submit an article. We will also share information on how to develop effective writing habits and practices. Finally, about half of our sessions will be devoted to peer review so that you will receive direct feedback from your fellow students and me. ** NB this syllabus is a work in progress. I will change the dates and topics according to student demand, after our discussion in the first class-session on Sept. 3.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participants can be at any stage in the dissertation-writing process, but must commit to presenting at least one chapter for peer review at some point during the semester. We will divide the course into groups for peer reviews so that each dissertator also reads 4 chapters by his or her fellow students. Chapters certainly do not have to be perfect(!), but they should be complete, ready to present, and less than fifty pages long, including notes.

READING falls into four categories: 1/ sample dissertation chapters, articles, or proposals by former UW grad students (who are all now successful professors); 2/ excerpts from writing manuals; 3/ sample articles; 4/ each other's dissertation chapters. I am posting readings on Canvas unless people want Copy Center coursepack. For the peer review chapters, we will most likely exchange via email.

I attach a list of books on writing at the end of the syllabus.

Credit Hours and Work Load: The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week); dedicated time reading; writing your dissertation; individual consultations with the instructor; and other student work as described in the syllabus. You will spend most of these 135 hours working on your own dissertation.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

Immediate goal: Write and, if possible, revise a dissertation chapter

Longer term and broader goals: Improve personal writing practices; Develop a stronger and more powerful writing style; Acquire command of various narrative and analytical techniques for history writing; Improve oral communications skills in critiquing others' work; Think about range of structural choices for writing a long project; Build on your existing grant-writing skills; Broaden your historical knowledge and exposure to diverse methodologies from reading fellow students' work.

Instruction during Covid-19:

Students' Rules [Rights, & Responsibilities](#)

During the global Covid-19 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community.

To protect ourselves, students and professor all agree to the **UW-Madison [Badger Pledge](#)** and to **UW-Madison [Face Covering Guidelines](#)**: While on campus all employees and students are required to wear [appropriate and properly fitting face coverings](#) while present in any campus building unless working alone in a laboratory or office space.

Face Coverings During In-person Instruction Statement (COVID-19):

Individuals are expected to wear a face covering while inside any university building. Face coverings must be [worn correctly](#) (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. If any student is unable to wear a face-covering, an accommodation may be provided due to disability, medical condition, or other legitimate reason.

Students with disabilities or medical conditions who are unable to wear a face covering should contact the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) or their Access Consultant if they are already affiliated. Students requesting an accommodation unrelated to disability or medical condition, should contact the Dean of Students Office.

Students who choose not to wear a face covering may not attend in-person classes, unless they are approved for an accommodation or exemption. All other students not wearing a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements will be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) and will not be allowed to return to the classroom until they agree to comply with the face covering policy. An instructor may cancel or suspend a course in-person meeting if a person is in the classroom without an approved face covering in position over their nose and mouth and refuses to immediately comply.

Quarantine or Isolation Due to COVID-19

Students should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 [symptoms](#) and [get tested for the virus](#) if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Students should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

Week 1: (Sept. 3) INTRODUCTION

Week 2: (Sept. 10) DISCUSSION OF A SAMPLE DISSERTATION CHAPTER

We will dissect a sample chapter of a dissertation. As a point of comparison, I have also uploaded the parallel chapter in the book that grew out of the dissertation. Read the dissertation chapter more carefully and skim the book chapter.

Thomas G. Andrews, Chap. 4, "'Into the Dusky Depths': Labor, Nature, and Colorado's Coal Mine Workscapes," from his dissertation" in *"The Road to Ludlow: Work, Environment, and Industrialization in Southern Colorado,"* (UW, 2003), 336-401.

Thomas G. Andrews, "Dying with their Boots On," in *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008. (book based on dissertation)

Also compare the Table of Contents of his dissertation (in scan with chapter) to the Table of Contents of his book

Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing your Doctoral Thesis*. N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1998, 32-62. For those at the mid-point in writing: also read 63-79.

Week 3: (Sept. 17) DISSERTATION STRUCTURE AND WRITING PRACTICES

Come to class prepared to discuss 1/ your own writing practices; 2/ the outline of your dissertation and any structural issues you are having; 3/ three history books with compelling structures.

Paul J. Silva, *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2007, 11-47, 59-76

Lynn Hunt, "How Writing Leads to Thinking," *Perspectives on History* (February 2010)
<http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/february-2010/how-writing-leads-to-thinking>

Fellow students' dissertation outlines. No more than 2 pages per outline.

Week 4: (Sept. 24) APPLYING FOR POST-DOCS

Sample 1: Classic post-doc proposal task, including discussing a 2nd project

Terence Peterson. "Hearts and Minds: French Decolonization and the Origins of Counterinsurgency, 1945-1965" for the "Social Science or Humanities International Security Fellowship," Stanford University, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/content/cisac-fellowship-program#ssh>

Sample 2: Two proposals to show evolution from dissertation to post-doc proposal. Also with letter

Nicolas Abbot, 1/ "Household, Family, and State: Negotiating Sovereignty and Sarkar in the Awadh *Nawabi*, 1775-1840" for Ohio State Center for Historical Research, dissertation fellowship in their "Family, Kinship, and Households" theme (2015-2017)

2/"Sarkars into States: Language, Family, and Politics in Early Colonial India" for post-doc at Leiden University, sponsored by IAS, International Institute for Asian Studies, <https://www.ias.asia/fellowship-application>

Sample 3: Post-doc application in letter form [no proposal; more like a job letter]

Honor Sachs, Letter of Application about “Not the Best Poor Man’s Country: The Social World of the Eighteenth-Century West” for the Cassius Marcellus Clay Postdoctoral Fellowship at Yale University.

Sample Spreadsheet by Katie Jarvis, compiling information on post-docs, including application requirements, etc.

Grant Writing Advice:

Advice on Grant writing by emeritus prof. Thomas Spear, 2p. typescript

Karen Kelsky, “Part VIII: Grants and Postdocs” in *The Professor is In: The Essential Guide to Turning your Ph.D. into a Job* (N.Y., 2015), 337-360. Or “Dr. Karen’s Foolproof Grant Template” at <http://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/05/dr-karens-foolproof-grant-template/>

Christina Gillis, “Writing Proposals for ACLS Fellowship Competitions,” from the ACLS, http://www.acls.org/uploadedfiles/publications/programs/writing_fellowship_proposals.pdf

Frank Solomon, “On the Art of Writing Proposals,” from the SSRC website, <https://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/7A9CB4F4-815F-DE11-BD80-001CC477EC70/>

Week 5: (Oct. 1) FIRST ROUND OF PEER REVIEW

This useful chapter on writing includes a check-list to go over before you submit an article, or in this case, a chapter for review:

Wendy Laura Belcher, “Editing your Sentences,” *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Los Angeles: Sage Publishing, 2009, 235-65

Week 6: (Oct. 8) STYLE

We may have a visit from a writing instructor.

Consider working through these chapters from Joseph M. Williams, revised by Gregory G. Colomb. *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2012, Chapters 2 [Actions] & 3 [Characters]

William Zinsser, *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006, 6-16, 67-94

Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012, 48-62, 76-98

Week 7: (Oct. 15) PEER REVIEW

Any individual submitting a chapter should remember to use the Belcher check-list chapter, listed in Week 5 above.

Week 8: (Oct. 22) WRITING INTRODUCTIONS (to whole dissertation and to chapters)

Read these sample introductions:

Introductions to whole dissertations:

Erik Jensen, "Images of the Ideal: Sports, Gender, and the Emergence of the Modern Body in Weimar Germany" (UW, 2003), 1-21

Holly Grout, "Beauty Marks: The Production, Practice, and Performance of Femininity in France, 1880-1939" (UW, 2008)

Chapter Introductions

Ken Jassie, "From Restorer of French Liberties to the King of Conspirators: The Reign of Louis XVI during the Revolution, 1789-1793" (UW, 1994), 232-236

Nancy K. MacLean, "Behind the Mask of Chivalry: Gender, Race, and Class in the Making of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s in Georgia" (UW, 1989), 263-66

Robert Lewis, "The Society of the Stadium: Urban Modernity, Sports Spectatorship and mass Politics in France, 1893-1975" (UW, 2007), 55-58

Read: Brief advice on how to write introductions: Wendy Laura Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Los Angeles: Sage Publishing, 2009, 209-219. (These comments on article introductions apply well to chapters as well.)

Recommended on how to position your own interpretations vis-à-vis others' work: Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010. [Not on Canvas]

Week 9: (Oct. 29) PEER REVIEW & CHOOSING ARTICLES

Any individual submitting a chapter should remember to use the Belcher check-list chapter, listed in Week 5 above.

Week 10: (Nov. 5) ARTICLE-WRITING

How to craft and submit an article, choose a journal, etc. In addition to discussing what makes a strong article, based on your readings, we will also examine a dissertation chapter to article in action.

David Ciarlo, the saga of an article from "Consuming Race, Envisioning Empire: Colonialism and German Mass Culture, 1887-1914" (UW, 2003). TBA

Come to class prepared to suggest and describe a well-written article. We can put them all on Canvas if desired.

Wendy Laura Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Los Angeles, Sage Publishing, 2009, 43-98 = Chapters on "Starting Your Article" and "Advancing Your Argument."

Week 11: (Nov. 12) FREE TO WRITE OR PEER REVIEW

No class

Week 12: (Nov. 19) PEER REVIEW

Any individual submitting a chapter should remember to use the Belcher check-list chapter,

listed in Week 5 above.

Week 13: =THANKSGIVING no class

Week 14: (Dec. 3) PEER REVIEWS

Any individual submitting a chapter should remember to use the Belcher check-list chapter, listed in Week 5 above.

Week 15: (Dec. 10) PEER REVIEWS

Individuals submitting chapters should remember to use the Belcher check-list chapter, listed in Week 4 above.

USEFUL BOOKS ON WRITING

Dissertation Books

Bolker, Joan. *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing your Doctoral Thesis*. N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1998.

Roberts, Carol M. *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin, 2010.

Single, Peg Boyle. *Demystifying Dissertation Writing: a Streamlined Process from Choice of Topic to Final Text*. Sterling, Va.: Stylus, 2010.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. *The Clockwork Muse: A Practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999.

General Books on Style or Writing Practice

Becker, Howard S. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007.

Clark, Roy Peter. *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*. N.Y.: Little & Brown, 2006.

Fish, Stanley. *How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One*. NY: HarperCollins, 2011.

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Boston: Shambala Publications, 1986, 2016.

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Scribner, 2000.

- Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1994.
- O'Conner, Patricia T. *Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*. New York, NY: Putnam, 1996.
- Prose, Francine. *Reading Like a Writer*. N.Y.: HarperCollins, 2006.
- Silvia, Paul J. *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2007, new ed. 2018.
- Strunk, William & E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Illustrated by Maira Kalman. N.Y. Penguin, 2007. New, illustrated version of the classic work.
- Sword, Helen. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- . *Air & Light & Time & Space: How Successful Academics Write*. Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007 (7th ed.)
- Williams, Joseph M. revised by Gregory G. Colomb. *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. 4th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2012.
- Winokur, Jon. *Advice to Writers: A Compendium of Quotes, Anecdotes, and Writerly Wisdom from a Dazzling Array of Literary Lights*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1999.
- Zinsser, William Knowlton. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

Beyond the Dissertation

- Belcher, Wendy Laura. *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, 2009.
- Germano, William P. *From Dissertation to Book*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Germano, William P. *Getting It Published: A Guide for Scholars and Anyone Else Serious About Serious Books*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Rabiner, Susan and Alfred Fortunato, *Thinking Like Your Editor* NY, 1999