History 710: Dissertation Writing Workshop

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Fall 2023
Humanities 5245
Wednesdays, 11:00-12:55
Link to Course Canvas

Prof. Emma Kuby (she/her) **Humanities 5126**
emma.kuby@wisc.edu **Office hours: MW 2:00-3:00, and by appt.**

Grad 50% - Counts toward 50% graduate coursework requirement

Overview: Welcome! This graduate seminar is intended to provide a collegial, semi-structured context for students to make major progress on their dissertations over the course of the semester: the goal is for you to draft and (ideally) revise a full chapter or equivalent amount of text. We will focus on developing concrete daily practices that can help you organize your ideas, manage your time, and craft robust, stylish academic prose. We will also think strategically together about parlaying dissertation writing into compelling postdoc proposals, publishable articles, and (maybe eventually!) great books. Students at all stages of the dissertation-writing process – including those who have taken this class before – and with any kind of post-dissertation career goals are welcome; each participant must be prepared to workshop a full chapter draft at some point in the semester.

Course objectives: The chief aim of this seminar is to empower each participant to compose a significant piece of the dissertation by providing space and support for academic writing. In addition, students can expect to learn how to:

- Sharpen their writing skills, cultivating lively and distinctive scholarly "voices"
- Establish regular, sustainable writing habits that encourage both productivity and (at least some degree of) enjoyment
- Give and receive constructive peer feedback on major scholarly projects
- Approach History dissertations as constituting a distinct genre of writing guided by clear but flexible expectations, and situate dissertations in relation to works in other genres like monographs, journal articles, etc.
- Craft effective fellowship proposals that persuasively marshal the dissertation project to make a case for further support/funding

Requirements and credit hours: 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 learning activities. These hours include our Wed. 11:00-12:55 meetings. Students can expect to spend the bulk of their work time for this course engaged in writing their own dissertations. Accordingly, there is a light overall reading load. Assigned texts include (1) advice on writing in academia/the humanities/history; (2) sample dissertation chapters and related materials (e.g. postdoc applications) produced by former dissertators; and (3) your classmates' chapter drafts. Materials in categories (1) and (2) are all available through our course Canvas page; we will likely use email to exchange chapter drafts. (Note: full versions of nearly all of the dissertations that we are reading bits and pieces of this semester are available via ProQuest Dissertations. So, if you're interested in seeing more elements of any particular model, you can easily find it.)

As for writing, you must submit a full chapter draft of no more than 50 double-spaced pages one week ahead of your scheduled workshop date. ("Full" means the sections and citations are all there, not that they are polished to a high sheen of perfection!) Other, (much) smaller writing tasks are included in the weekly schedule; they include structured written comments on 3 classmates' draft. Participation in all class sessions and one turn leading a peer workshop are also required.

Assessment: The real feedback that you receive in this workshop will come in the form of written comments and oral discussion regarding your dissertation project. History 710 is a credit-granting course, however, so a grade also has to be assigned. This grade is not a judgment of the "quality" of your dissertation! It is, instead, determined according to the following formula:

- 50% – your completion of the following the following course requirements: workshopping a full chapter draft (20%), providing written comments on three other students' chapter drafts (20%), and facilitating one workshop discussion (10%). You will receive full credit for all thoroughly performed assignments.
- 50% – your participation in the collective endeavor of the class. Participation takes into consideration both (1) regular, well-prepared attendance; and (2) meaningful, constructive contributions to class conversations and peer workshops.

Students with disabilities: The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (UW-855) require the university to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities to access and participate in its academic programs and educational services. I am also personally committed to inclusive pedagogy. Please talk with me early in the semester to request instructional accommodations in this course – I will work directly with you and in coordination with the McBurney Center to make appropriate arrangements. (Note that you will not be required to disclose your disability to me, only your accommodations.) Please see me if you have questions about disabilities – this is important for you, and for me.

Diversity and Inclusion: Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Academic Integrity: By virtue of enrollment, you agree to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Ph.D. students in History are expected to adhere to especially high standards of academic honesty and transparency. The use of generative AI (ChatGPT) is not acceptable in this course.

A Note on Guests: Although you are always welcome to invite a committee member or other mentor to your own workshop session, keep in mind that there are real advantages to preserving this space for peer feedback. Consider whether you would be better served by having separate conversations with those interlocutors. (In-person guests only, please; hybrid workshops are just too messy.)

Course Schedule: *Note the schedule is tentative and subject to change as students sign up for workshop and peer review dates. I will post a revised final version after the workshops are set.*

WEEK 1: 9/6 – Greetings and Goals

(No readings or assignments)

WEEK 2: 9/13 – The Dissertation (Chapter) as a Genre

Do: Email me (1) your preferred workshop date and one or two alternates; and (2) any Wednesdays throughout the semester that you would prefer NOT to be a workshop facilitator or to offer written peer feedback.

Read: Matthew Karp, "'This Vast Southern Empire': The South and the Foreign Policy of Slavery, 1833–1861," Ph.D. diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 2011), chapter 2 ("Under the Black Flag: British Abolitionism and Southern Navalism, 1838-1842," p.70-116).

Read (less closely): Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), chapter 2 ("The Strongest Naval Power on Earth," p.32-49).

Read: Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*, 30-48.

Bring: A printed one-to-two-page abstract or outline of your dissertation, including a list or description of the chapters.

Bring: Some reading notes on Karp's dissertation chapter, focused on writing elements and organizational strategies rather than content. Think about what you like/admire and what you like less. A separate handout in Canvas ("Reading Questions on Karp, Ch.2") suggests many questions you might think about ahead of our discussion.

WEEK 3: 9/20 – The Writing Process, Part I: Writing as Practice

Read: Paul J. Silvia, *How to Write a Lot*, 29-47.

Read: Robert Boice, *Advice for New Faculty Members*, 137-149.

Read: Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*, 49-79 (stop at 62 if you're still in the first half of the overall writing process).

Read: Lynn Hunt, "How Writing Leads to Thinking," 1-4.

Bring: A one-page description or set of notes (bullets are fine) about your concrete dissertation writing goals this semester and the kind of daily goals you think will help you get there.

Bring: Notes on what you found potentially helpful (and what you found distinctly UN-helpful or inapplicable) in the advice proffered in this week's readings.

WEEK 4: 9/27 – The Writing Process, Part II: Writing as Style

Post to Canvas **by 9/25**: A piece of prose with a style that you find inspiring for your own scholarly writing. It can be a scholarly article or book chapter, but it can also be nonfiction for a popular audience (e.g. an essay, blog post, or book) or even a work of fiction.

Read: Christine DeLucia, "The Memory Frontier: Uncommon Pursuits of Past and Place in the Northeast after King Philip's War," *Journal of American History*, 98, no. 4 (2012): 975-997. (Note: this article emerged out of a dissertation chapter and was published while the author was still a dissertator.)

Read: Williams, *Style*, pages TBA.

Read: Stephen J. Pyne, *Voice & Vision*, 19-26, 37-51, and 96-104.

Read (optional, but potentially useful if you are interested in your dissertation one day becoming a book): William Germano, *From Dissertation to Book*, 101-121.

Bring: Some thoughts on why you chose your Canvas contribution (is there a passage or paragraph that especially stands out to you?), and on what you make of DeLucia's prose style.

More recommended readings on style are available in this week's Canvas folder – feel free to check out whichever of these might be helpful to you.

WEEK 5: 10/4 – Postdoc Applications as Genre (+ Zoom Conversation with Abby Lewis)

Read: sample 1 by Abigail Lewis (UW Ph.D., 2022), (a) Letter for a general postdoctoral fellowship at Nanovic Institute for European Studies at Notre Dame; and (b) Letter for a specialized postdoctoral position at Martin-Springer Institute at Northern Arizona University.

Read: sample 2 by Natalie Joy, Application for a postdoctoral fellowship at the Penn Program on Democracy, Citizenship, and Constitutionalism at the University of Pennsylvania.

Read: sample 3 by Lucas Mertehikian, Application for a postdoctoral fellowship in Plant Humanities at Dumbarton Oaks.

Read: spreadsheet by Katie Jarvis (UW Ph.D., 2014) compiling info on postdoc applications.

Read: Three short pieces of advice on grant-writing, by Keisha M. Blain, Michael Blaakman, and Christina M. Gillis. You can also browse the grant-writing advice folder in Canvas and look over any additional items that seem helpful – totally optional!

Bring: Questions/concerns/advice on postdocs in general and/or postdocs in your sub-specialty.

WEEK 6: 10/11 – Introductions (to Dissertations and to Dissertation Chapters)

Read: Introduction to Honor Sachs, "Not the Best Poor Man's Country: The Social World of the Eighteenth-Century West," Ph.D. diss. (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2006), 1-23.

Read: Introduction to Emily Marker, "France between Europe and Africa: Youth, Race, and Envisioning the Postwar World, 1940-1960," Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 2016), 1-36.

Read: chapter introductions from David L. Herzberg (UW-Madison, 2005), 75-78; Judith Surkis (Cornell, 2001), 315-318; Julian Lim (Cornell, 2013), 235-238; and Keisha M. Blain (Princeton, 2014), 13-15.

Bring: Notes on (1) what the Sachs and Marker dissertation introductions accomplish in different sections, and the differences between these two as potential models; (2) similarities and differences among the chapter introductions, and thoughts on your own preferences.

Bring: Either a roughly drafted introduction to the chapter you're working on this semester OR a short set of notes/outline of the elements that you want it to contain or tasks that you want it to accomplish.

WEEK 7: 10/18 – First Peer Review Chapter Workshop

Read: Pre-circulated chapter.

Bring: Your written comments if you are a written commenter this week; your thoughts and ideas regardless.

WEEK 8: 10/25 – Chapter Workshop

Read: Pre-circulated chapter.

Bring: Your written comments if you are a written commenter this week; your thoughts and ideas regardless.

WEEK 9: 11/1 – Chapter Workshop

Read: Pre-circulated chapter.

Bring: Your written comments if you are a written commenter this week; your thoughts and ideas regardless.

WEEK 10: 11/8 – Chapter Workshop

Read: Pre-circulated chapter.

Bring: Your written comments if you are a written commenter this week; your thoughts and ideas regardless.

WEEK 11: 11/15 -- Chapter Workshop

Read: Pre-circulated chapter.

Bring: Your written comments if you are a written commenter this week; your thoughts and ideas regardless.

WEEK 12: 11/22 – Chapter Workshop
(note that we will try to meet on Monday 11/20 this week instead, because of Thanksgiving)

Read: Pre-circulated chapter.

Bring: Your written comments if you are a written commenter this week; your thoughts and ideas regardless.

WEEK 13: 11/29 – From Dissertation to…Article?

Read (skimming is fine – you're just looking for the dissertation/article relationship): A brief section from Kira Thurman's dissertation (Rochester, 2013), 48-63, and then Thurman's article "Singing the Civilizing Mission in the Land of Bach; Beethoven; and Brahms: The Fisk Jubilee Singers in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of World History* 27, no. 3 (2017): 443-471.

Read (skimming is fine – you're just looking for the dissertation/article relationship): A couple of brief sections from Salar Mohandesi's dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 2017), 147-161 and 174-181, and then Mohandesi's article "Bringing Vietnam Home: The Vietnam War, Internationalism, and May '68," *French Historical Studies* 41, no. 2 (April 2018): 219-51.

Read: Wendy Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*, 43-97.

Bring: Some thoughts about whether you are interested in (or already in the process of!) generating peer-reviewed articles from your dissertation research, which portion(s) of your dissertation might serve as the basis for articles, and which venues might be appropriate for them. (Be sure to take a look at those journals' submission guidelines re. length, focus, etc.)

WEEK 14: 12/6 – Chapter Workshop

Read: Pre-circulated chapter.

Bring: Your written comments if you are a written commenter this week; your thoughts and ideas regardless.

WEEK 15: 12/13 – Chapter Workshop

Read: Pre-circulated chapter.

Bring: Your written comments if you are a written commenter this week; your thoughts and ideas regardless.