

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of History
Fall 2024

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Office hours: **Monday 1:30-3:30, 5127 Humanities**

History 710: Dissertation Writing Workshop

The central purpose of this class is for participants to write and present at least one dissertation chapter for peer review at some point in the semester. The class is open to students at all stages of the dissertation – whether you’re writing the first chapter or powering your way through the final ones. Together, we will learn how to offer fair, productive, and challenging critiques of each other’s work.

We’ll talk about how to structure chapters effectively, how to conceptualize chapters within a larger piece of research, and how to effectively structure chapters internally. We’ll think about forging compelling introductions and conclusions. We will examine how to put together compelling narratives that successfully balance evidence and analysis. Some attention will be also devoted to discussing the differences between chapters and journal articles, and dissertations and books. We’ll look at examples of chapters that later became articles, and dissertations that became field-changing books.

Requirements: Present one chapter of your dissertation for peer review. Chapters need not be perfect but should be as complete as possible (i.e., with an introduction, conclusion, and notes). 35 to 50 pages is an appropriate length.

Course goals and Learning Outcomes: The semester goal is to write and, if possible, revise one dissertation chapter. The longer-term goal is to complete your dissertation in a timely manner.

Other goals include developing a strong writing style; perfecting your ability to present and interpret historical evidence in a compelling fashion; learning how to critique each other’s work both orally and in writing.

Credit hours and Workload: the credit standard for this 3-credit class 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). This includes regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meeting times of 115 minutes per week), dedicated time reading, individual meetings with the instructor, and writing dissertation chapters. You will spend most of these 135 hours working on your dissertation

Assessment: You will receive written and oral feedback on the chapter you present to the group. Your grade for the class will be based on the following:

- 50% for regular attendance and engagement in our weekly discussions.
- 50% for workshopping your chapter (20%), providing written comments on the chapter drafts of three other students (20%), and facilitating a workshop discussion (10%).

Academic Integrity. You're all dissertators, so you should be familiar with the rules concerning plagiarism. Stay away from generative AI to write dissertation chapters! The best arguments are made using your own words.

NB: The seminar structure is flexible and will change as students sign up to present their work and lead the peer review sessions. I will post a final version by week 2 of the semester.

Week 1. Sept 4. **Introduction**

Week 2. Sept 11. **The Dissertation Chapter**

By Monday Sept 9 send me an email listing your preferred workshop date along with two alternates (anytime starting October 2). You can also list any Wednesdays when you would prefer not to lead the workshop discussion or offer written comments on chapters (all students lead the workshop once and provide written comments on three occasions).

We'll dissect a sample dissertation chapter.

David Harrisville, "Unrighteous Cause: The Moral World of the German Soldier on the Eastern Front and the Wartime Origins of the Wehrmacht Myth, 1941-1944" (UW, 2016), 85-140, chapter 2 ("Explaining the Unexplainable: Writing Home about Eastern Front Atrocities") (UW Library Online)

And skim the corresponding chapter in his book in order to compare it with the dissertation. *The Virtuous Wehrmacht: Crafting the Myth of the German Soldier on the Eastern Front, 1941-1944* (Cornell, 2021) (Chapter 2 "Rationalizing Atrocities: Self-Exoneration in Soldiers' Letters."), 56-89. (UW library online)

Week 3. Sept 18. **Dissertation Outlines and Writing Practices**

By September 16, please share with the class a chapter-by-chapter summary of your dissertation in its current form.

- Be prepared to discuss your dissertation outline and any structural problems you are facing.

- Bring to class three history books with compelling structures.
- Bring to class a one-page description of your dissertation writing goals this semester (bullet points are fine).

Lynn Hunt, "How Writing Leads to Thinking," *Perspective on History* (February 2010) (Canvas)

Rachael Cayley, *Thriving as a Graduate Writer. Principles, Strategies, and Habits for Effective Academic Writing* (University of Michigan Press, 2023), 10-56. (Canvas)

Paul J. Silvia, *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*, 11-46. (UW library e-book)

Week 4. Sept 25. **Applying for Postdocs**

We'll be joined by Kilian Harrer, one of our recent PhDs who is currently on a Postdoc in Mainz (Germany). We'll read and discuss Postdoc proposals. We can also workshop your postdoc/grant application if you're interested.

Kilian's Postdoc application materials to the Institute for European History in Mainz are available on Canvas. You can read the call for applications here: <https://www.ieg-mainz.de/en/fellowships/funding/postdoc-fellowships>

Also read this proposal: Terry Peterson, "Hearts and Minds: French Decolonization and the Origins of Insurgency, 1945-65," for the Stanford Social Science or Humanities International Security Fellowship. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/content/cisac-fellowship-program#ssh>

You should also read Christine Gillis, "Writing Proposals for ACLS Fellowship Competitions," <https://www.acls.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Writing-Fellowship-Proposals-1.pdf>

Frank Solomon, "On the Art of Writing Proposals," on the SSRC website. https://s3.amazonaws.com/ssrc-cdn1/crmuploads/new_publication_3/%7B7A9CB4F4-815F-DE11-BD80-001CC477EC70%7D.pdf

Week 5. Oct 2. **Introducing Chapters and Introducing Dissertations**

Entire Dissertations:

Holly Grout, "Beauty marks: The Production, Practice, and Performance of Femininity in France, 1880-1939 (UW, 2003), 1-21. (Canvas)

Philip Janzen, “Atlantic Intermediaries: Empire and Black Internationalism between the Caribbean and Africa, 1880-1940,” (UW, 2018), 1-12. (UW library online)

Elena McGrath, “Drinking and Dynamite: Revolution and Social Struggle in a Bolivian Mining Town, 1900-1992” (UW, 2016), 1-41. (UW library online)

Dissertation Chapters:

Daniel Hummel, “American Evangelicals, Israel, and the Origins of the Modern Christian Zionist Movement, 1948-1980” (UW, 2016), 32-38. (UW library online)

Kayci Harris, “Pas de Deux: Cold War Dance Tours and Franco-Soviet Cultural Interaction, 1953-1975 (UW, 2021), 270-279. (UW library online)

Karma Palzom-Pasha, “Political Transformations in the Tibetan Freedom Movement: Resettlement and Political Activism in India, Nepal, and the United States” (UW, 2022), 164-169. (UW library online)

To think about situating your work within your field, read Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (Norton, 2010), 1-43, 57-70, 96-104. (Canvas)

Week 6. Oct 9. Chapter Workshop: Emily Tran

Alexandra (facilitator); James, Brigid, John (written comments)

Before submitting your chapter, use the check list in Wendy Laure Belcher, “Editing your Sentences,” *Writing your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success* (Sage Publishing, 2009), 308-28. Her recommendations are for article publishing but they apply equally to dissertation chapters.

Week 7. Oct 16. From your Dissertation to Articles and Books

How does one transform a chapter into a journal article? What are the key differences between a dissertation and a book? We’ll be joined by two UW History PhDs (Skye Doney, Director of the Mosse Program, and Terry Peterson, Associate Prof at Florida International University) who have turned their dissertations into articles and books. I’ll post short excerpts of their work on Canvas.

Week 8. Oct 23. Chapter Workshop: Nicki Day-Lucore

John (facilitator); Emily T, Ik, Bogoya (written comments)

Week 9. Oct 30. Chapter Workshop: John Balz

- James (facilitator); Alexandra, Emma, Simon (written comments)
- Week 10. Nov 6. **Chapter Workshop: Emily Lobenstein**
Nicki (facilitator); Emma, Ik, Brigid (written comments)
- Week 11. Nov 13. **Chapter Workshop: Simon Werner**
Emily T (facilitator); James, Emily L, John (written comments)
- Week 12. Nov 20. **Chapter Workshop: Bogoya Dimitrov & Alexandra Pasqualone**
Alexandra: Ik (facilitator); Simon, Emily T, Emma (written comments)
Bogoya: Emily L (facilitator); Brigid, Ik, Nicki (written comments)
- Week 13. Nov 27. **Chapter Workshop: James Meadows.**
Brigit (facilitator); Emily T, Nicki, Simon (written comments)
- Week 14. Dec 4. **Chapter Workshop: Brigid Nannenhorn & Emma Wathen**
Brigid: Simon (facilitator); Nicki, John, Bogoya (written comments)
Emma: Bogoya (facilitator); Emily L, James, Alexandra (written comments)
- Week 15. Dec 11. **Chapter Workshop: Ik (Napakadol Kittisenee)**
Emma (facilitator); Bogoya, Alexandra, Emily L. (written comments)