

HIST 710/INTER-LS 700: Writing for the Academy and Beyond

Ingraham Hall, room 224
Wednesdays, 11am-12:55pm

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Office hours: Mondays, 2:30-4:30pm, and by appointment
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Course Description

Writing can be a daunting undertaking. This workshop-style seminar hopes to add a few writing skills to your toolkit, create community among graduate students, and provide you with a space to ask questions that you might not feel comfortable asking elsewhere. It also pushes you to think critically about the public humanities in the 21st century, and help you become more confident and adept in the art of writing for the academy and beyond.

We will follow a common curriculum for the first four weeks of the class. Then there will be a fork in the road, and students will take one of two paths. Some will decide to focus on academic writing, using the remainder of the semester to complete one major academic writing task (e.g., a chapter, article, or MA thesis). Another batch of students will go a different route: they'll focus on translating the skills they have learned in grad school beyond the academy, for instance by developing ties to local organizations in Madison (please see the "Community Partners" list at the end of this syllabus). Our aim will be to break out of the service-learning model and develop resources for creating a deep and mutually reinforcing relationship between town and gown. Students in this group will also work on a short piece of writing that engages key themes in the public humanities, and has a print or digital audience.

Course Requirements and Grading

GRADING SCHEME: 92-100% A 87-91.9% AB 82-86.9% B 77-81.9% BC
72-76.9% C 67-71.9% D 0-66.9% F

WRITING: Our goal is to get you writing no more than 20,000 words (including revisions) for this class.

In week four of the class, on the heels of a length one-on-one meeting with the instructor, you will commit to one of the following two paths:

Path 1: Create a lively and legible-to-all piece of academic writing. Most likely, this will take the form of a 10,000-word article or dissertation chapter.

Path 2: Take a focused approach to exploring your interests in the public humanities through a series of short tasks that will prepare you for a particular para-academic or non-academic job, internship, volunteer opportunity, or solo project (to be completed on your own time, in the spring of 2017). Students walking this path will also produce one polished piece of prose, which explores a key question of personal interest to them in the public humanities. The piece can have either a print or a digital audience.

READING: There will be a light reading load for this class. All of the readings will be posted on our Learn@UW site at least one week in advance.

PARTICIPATING: Please come to class each week with an open mind and equipped with your writing utensils of choice (notebooks, quills, laptops, tablets – just no phones, please). You are expected to do the reading, as well as respect deadlines and provide constructive feedback on the work of your peers. You will be asked to lead discussion on one or two sessions of your choice. Informal Learn@UW posts are due by midnight **almost every week**, on Mondays, two days before the class to which they pertain.

A Glance at Key Dates

- **September 23rd:** Pick-your-path day!
- **September 28th:** First reflective & prospective piece of writing due (see below for details)
- **October 12th; November 2nd; November 20th:** Three installments of final written project due
- **October 26th; December 7th; December 14th:** Formal oral presentations
- **November 30th:** Final version of final project due

Schedule of Classes

I. Writing as a Practice

1. September 7th: Introduction to the class.

Plan of action:

- Explore the porous boundary between academic and non-academic writing; swap favorite pieces of writing.
- Prep for Learn@UW post: When do you write? Where? What is your writing utensil of choice?

NB: Your first Learn@UW post is due by midnight on Monday, September 12th. Please click on “Communication”>“Discussion”>“week 2,” and add your post!

2. September 14th: Why write? What gets in the way?

Plan of action:

- Orwell vs. Welty vs. you
- Writing as a practice
- Specious barriers to writing
- Two five-minute free-writes. First, “Why I Write”; then, “Why X Writes.”

Reading to complete by today:

- George Orwell, “Why I Write”
- Eudora Welty, “The Making of a Writer: Listening in the Dark”
- Joan Didion, “On Keeping a Notebook”
- Anne Lamott, “Radio Station KFKD”
- Wendy Belcher, “Choosing your Writing Site”
- Paul J. Silvia, “Specious Barriers to Writing a Lot”

II. The Engaged Humanities

3. September 21st: Do humanists have a public mission?

Plan of action:

- “The engaged humanities”: reality or pipe dream?
- What do *you* want “the engaged humanities” to mean?
- “Public humanities” intervention: assignment description

Reading to complete by today:

- Edward Said, “The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals”
- Gregory Jay, “The Engaged Humanities: Principles and Practices of Public Scholarship and Teaching”
- David A. Hollinger, “Introduction,” *The Humanities and the Dynamics of Inclusion since World War II* (2006), 1-24.
- Randy Stoecker and Elizabeth Tryon, “Unheard Voices,” in *The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning* (2009), pp.1-18.

Presenters: Please check the websites of **three** organizations that will be on our panel next week and explain to your peers how these organizations are engaged in public humanities work. Also, thinking about your personal interests, please generate a long list of public humanities initiatives/projects/organizations that personally intrigue you.

*****Pick-your-path day: Friday, September 23rd!*****

4. **September 28th: Panel Conversation: The Public Humanities?** Madison Public Library Bubbler Program, UW-Madison Oral History Project, Wiscontext, Wisconsin Veterans Museum. *Lunch will be provided.*

Questions that we'll address in the panel include: How can academics "reach out" not only by trying to make their work available to a broader and more diverse public, but by connecting to their communities in a deeper way, and helping those communities thrive? Do academics have anything unique to bring to the table skills-wise, or is their best role a supportive one (and not getting in the way)?

Please browse the activities of *three* projects and organizations from the following list:

- UW-Madison Oral History Project
- Madison Public Library Bubbler Program
- Wisconsin Veterans Museum
- Wiscontext
- The Conversation
- Zócalo Public Square

Please also browse one or both of the following websites:

- UW-Madison Center for the Humanities -- Public Humanities tab
- AHA website: Career diversity for historians

Writing due to prof by today:

- Path 1: Writing calendar (as detailed as you think is helpful and realistic for you); two-paragraph abstract of your article or chapter's central research question and argument (as currently envisioned); chapter/article outline (one page, in Roman numerals); working bibliography; and two-paragraph reflection on ideal imagined audience
- Path 2: List of personal interests (1 paragraph); Pick **three** public humanities projects or organizations that fit with your personal interests and reflect on their goals and their modes of reaching the public, on the basis of the information on their website (3 pages); Reflect: What skills do I still need to build to contribute to the orgs that interest me? Which of my existing skills are translatable and which are not? (1 page)

5. **October 5th: Your public humanities intervention.** (Today's class is for those who have chosen to walk down path 2 and whoever else wants to join us.)

Reading/viewing due by today (just for path 2):

- Please watch *two* videos from “Writing for the Academy and Beyond” site, paying attention to *what skills PhD graduates deem transferable in their new lines of work* (and whatever else interests you in the videos).
 - To find it, log in to Learn@UW. You should see a course entitled “History Graduate Program Professional Development.” Click on it and look for the folder entitled “History beyond the Academy.” That’s where the interviews live.
- Please look in detail at *three* HEX projects on the UW-Madison Center for the Humanities -- especially HEX projects 2015-2017
- Read selections posted by presenters [regarding exciting public humanities work of various sorts]

III. The Mechanics of Writing

6. October 12th: Long writing assignments and academic grant applications. (This class is intended for path 1 students but all are welcome!)

Reading to do by today (for everyone):

- Lamott, “Shitty First Drafts”; “Writer’s Block,” in *Bird by Bird*, pp. 21-28; pp. 176-183
- Trimble, “Getting Launched,” *Writing With Style*, pp.3-13
- Boice, “Wait”; “Begin Writing Early (Before Feeling Ready),”; “Let Others Do Some of the Work,” *Nihil Nimus*, pp.115-137; 183-186

Those focusing on writing grants may want to check out the following:

- “Writing Proposals for ACLS Fellowship Competitions”
- “Dr. Karen’s Foolproof Grant Template,” at <http://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/05/dr-karens-foolproof-grant-template/>

Writing due to prof today by October 12th:

- 5 pages, single-spaced:
 - Path 1: Work through, interpret, and (if relevant to your field) contextualize three primary sources, and putting them in dialogue with two secondary sources
 - Path 2: First draft of your public humanities intervention

7. October 19th: In-class writing workshop

Reading due by today:

- Read your peers’ pieces; offer suggestions on the basis of questionnaire

- Wendy Belcher, “Abstracts as a Tool for Success,” in *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*, pp.54–58
- “You can summarize your thesis in a tweet, but should you?” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* OR just check out #tweetyourthesis on Twitter
- “Your academic elevator speech,” from *Survive and Thrive in Grad School*
- “The Science (Not Art) of the Magazine Pitch”
- Dan Baum’s (successful) pitch to *The New Yorker*

8. October 26th: Pitching: perform your elevator blurb. Special guest: TBA

Writing due by today:

- First draft of elevator blurb (1 page, double-spaced):
 - Path 1 works on elevator blurb for explaining their chapter to a non-academic audience (or to someone not in their field);
 - Path 2 works on elevator blurb and cover letter/introductory email for their pitch.

NO READING OR LEARN@UW POSTS DUE THIS WEEK

9. November 2nd: Class off for good behavior. Happy writing!

Students in path 2 should arrange one-on-one meetings with their partner organization of choice this week.

Writing due by today:

- Path 1: Fresh single-spaced 10 pages, and re-written original 5 pages, squarely focused on *argument*.
- Path 2: your 1,200-3,000 word public humanities project.

NO READING OR LEARN@UW POSTS DUE BY TODAY

10. November 9th: Writing workshop: argument and paper structure.

Reading due by today:

- Read your peers’ papers *for argument*
- Graff and Birkenstein, “They Say,” in *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, flip to pp. 19–29
- Cronon, Dart, Hamilton, “Positioning Your Argument”
- Belcher, “Strengthening your structure”

11. November 16th: Talking about style.

Plan of action:

- Smart Sentencing
- Vivid writing
- Exercise: destroy the thing you love.

Reading due by today:

- Back to our beloved pieces of writing – let's read for style
- Belcher, "Editing your sentences"
- Sword, "Smart Sentencing"; "Hooks and Sinkers," in *Stylish Academic Writing*, pp. 48-62; pp. 76-98.

Writing due by 5pm on Sunday, November 20th:

- Path 1: Revise two paragraphs for *style*
- Path 2: *Idem*

NO LEARN@UW POSTS DUE THIS WEEK

12. November 23rd: No class. Happy Thanksgiving!

NO LEARN@UW POSTS DUE THIS WEEK

13. November 30th: Final piece of writing due for everyone. Special guest: Professor Sarah Meinen Jedd, Associate Director of Communication Arts at UW-Madison. Developing a questionnaire for oral presentations next week.

NO LEARN@UW POSTS DUE THIS WEEK

14. December 7th: Oral presentations (I): 3 minutes, 1 slide.

Path 2: On your own time, arrange a second meeting with your org of choice; sign a contract; finalize your schedule with them in the spring.

Writing due by today: Oral presentation script.

NO LEARN@UW POSTS DUE THIS WEEK

15. December 14th: End-of-the-year celebration! Plus, oral presentations (II)

Writing due by today: Oral presentation script.

NO LEARN@UW POSTS DUE THIS WEEK

Community Partners

UW-Madison Oral History Program (Troy Reeves, troy.reeves@wisc.edu)

Madison Public Library Bubbler Program (Alexandra Lakind, llakind@wisc.edu)

Centro Hispano (Lauren Deakman, lauren@micentro.org)

Goodman Community Center (Kate Katzban-Beren, kate@goodmancenter.org)

Wiscontext (Kristian Knutsen, kfknutsen@gmail.com)

Wisconsin Veterans Museum (Ellen Brooks and Erin Hoag,
Ellen.Brooks@dva.wisconsin.gov, erin.hoag@dva.wisconsin.gov)