

Title: Academic Writing in English

Semester: Fall 2014

Duration: 6 x 180 minutes (one session every second week, times to be confirmed)

Time: TBC

Location: TBC

Coordinator: Richard Nowell Ph.D.

Contact: richard_nowell@hotmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

The relentless internationalization of disciplines like Film Studies has made a record of English-language publications central to academic career progression across the globe. This situation poses distinct challenges – and opportunities – to non-native speakers of English. Accordingly, *Academic Writing in English* aims to maximize doctoral researchers' competitiveness in this demanding but rewarding aspect of scholarly life. Students will confront the rigors and protocols of publishing in English, by focusing on style, organization, argumentation, intervention, revision, and submission. In so doing, they will develop practical and transferable approaches; ones which will help them to produce research outputs throughout their academic careers.

COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students will develop an English-language essay based on, or spun off from, their doctoral research. Each student will deliver a twenty-minute presentation on his or her work, which will then be the subject of peer-to-peer evaluation. Draft essays will be the subject of ongoing self-critique and revision. By the end of the course, students are expected to show a clear sense of progression toward submitting these essays to a high-impact journal. In particular, they are expected to show growing competencies in:

- The production of clear, authoritative, precise prose.
- The production of elegant, economically written prose.
- The production of well organized scholarship.

- The production of argument-driven scholarship.
- Spotlighting interventions and contributions, and the transferability of ideas.
- The critique, revision, and editing of one's own work, and that of peers.
- Informed and astute targeting of suitable locations for the paper in question

COURSE PREPARATION

Each student will compose a 200-word abstract for the essay project s/he will be developing across the course. These documents are to be emailed to me before the first class, pending peer-to-peer evaluation in the first session.

SESSION STRUCTURE

Each session is broken into two parts. In the first part, students will focus on the session topic, considering issues that were raised by the theoretical reading and the instructor. In the second, one group member will deliver a twenty-minute presentation of his or her essay project, with the other students – who will have received a draft of the essay – providing feedback. Sessions will conclude with a one-on-one consultation between the instructor and the student who presented about the development of his or her presentation and essay project.

Session 1	Richard Nowell, Title TBC
Session 2	Šárka Gmitterková, Title TBC
Session 3	Jan Trnka, Title TBC
Session 4	Michal Večeřa, Title TBC
Session 5	Vladka Chytilová, Title TBC

The exception is the final session, the second half of which is devoted to one-on-one, private instructor-student evaluations of essay project development and general development.

SESSION 1

REAPPROACHING WRITING

DATE TBC

If graduate students are to become professional academics, they must come to terms with the realities of producing publishable scholarship. And, while there is no magic formula, making this leap oftentimes involves rethinking how we produce our work. In this session, students will consider the need to replace the largely private/event approach behind undergraduate and early-postgraduate papers with the semi-public process of drafting research outputs, and embracing redrafting and the solicitation of peer feedback. In so doing, this session lays a firm foundation for subsequent sessions, in which they will consider this process step by step.

Preparatory Readings:

Howard S. Becker, “Chapter One: Freshman English for Graduate Students ... if We Start Off by Opening Up”, in *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article, Second Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 1–25.

Richard Nowell, Essay Draft, Title TBC

SESSION 2

STYLE & RHETORIC

DATE TBC

It is insufficient to produce merely comprehensible English-language scholarship. Rather, academics are expected to craft clear, precise, elegant, and economical prose. Accordingly, in this session, students focus on the adoption of a style of writing that aspires to such qualities. They will also begin to compile glossaries of key terms and turns of phrase upon which they draw in their work.

Preparatory Readings:

Becker, “Chapter Two: Persona and Authority”, pp. 26–42.

Šárka Gmitterková, Essay Draft, Title TBC

SESSION 3

ORGANIZATION & STRUCTURE

DATE TBC

High quality English-language scholarship is presaged on the good organization of ideas; it is often the difference between being published and rejected. Accordingly, in this session, students will approach structuring their work at both the macro and micro level. They will confront the challenges of how best to organize a paper into sections, how best to organize those sections into paragraphs, and best how to organize those paragraphs into sentences.

Preparatory Readings:

Becker, “Chapter Three: One Right Way”, pp. 43–67.

Jan Trnka, Essay Draft, Title TBC.

SESSION 4

ARGUMENTATION & CONTRIBUTION

DATE TBC

If lucid, precise prose and well organized ideas are pre-requisites of high-quality Anglophone scholarship, contributing to knowledge is its *raison d’etre*. Accordingly, in this session, students consider how best to showcase this feature. They will focus on centralizing argumentation, on positioning their arguments in relation to existing views, and on showcasing the implications and transferability of their findings.

Preparatory Reading:

Becker, “Chapter Eight: Terrorized by the Literature”, pp. 135–149.

Michal Večeřa, Essay Draft, Title TBC

SESSION 5

EDITING & REVISING

DATE TBC

The production of scholarly work is a process involving reflection, reconsideration, and revision. Accordingly, in this session, students consider how to edit their work prior to submission, by soliciting the evaluations of trusted colleagues, responding to their own nagging doubts, asking tough questions of their work, and ultimately knowing when to say “enough is enough”.

Preparatory Readings:

Becker, “Chapter Four: Editing by Ear”, pp. 68–89.

Vlad’ka Chytilová, Essay Draft, Title TBC.

SESSION 6

SUBMISSION & REVIEWS

DATE TBC

Crafting a submission ready essay is only part of the journey to publication. It is also imperative that scholars identify a suitable journal for the piece in question, and take steps to increase their chances of being accepted there. Accordingly, in this session, students will consider how to do these things, how to respond to peer-reviews, and how to progress if they encounter something most scholars must from time to time: rejection.

Preparatory Exercises:

1. Revise essay project abstracts
2. Create a shortlist of four target publications, rationalizing these choices.