

History 705 Dissertation Writing Workshop

Spring 2014

Professor Shelly Chan

Workshop: W 11-12:55; Humanities 5255

Office Hour: W 1:30-3:30 & by appt.; Humanities 4120

Contact: pchan@wisc.edu; 263-1837; mailbox 4015

Introduction

This workshop aims to provide structure and support in the dissertation writing process, practice ways of working steadily toward the completion of a chapter, and experiment with turning your chapter into a journal article or a conference presentation. It targets students who have gathered and analyzed their primary source materials, and are ready to write full-time or nearly full-time. On occasion, you will meet with your faculty advisor (or a committee member) to discuss your progress. For the rest of the time, you will work with me and your fellow dissertators across fields to accomplish your writing goals. If you come to this workshop having already written parts of a chapter, keep working on it and start a new one as soon as you finish. The goal is to create a community of writers to share feedback and information, as well as to stay motivated and productive.

Requirements

You are evaluated on a “satisfactory/not satisfactory” scheme. A “satisfactory” performance is regular attendance, active and thoughtful participation in all workshop activities, and the completion of at least one chapter of 35 to 50 pages (including notes). You will read about writing, serve as a writing partner for others, and present your work. You may receive feedback from me, but the course is designed so that the bulk of it comes from your colleagues and your faculty advisor. To allow you additional writing time, we do not always meet every week after week three. Please note the irregular times.

Texts

The following titles are required. As professional scholars, you may find it helpful to read and re-read them in your career. If you do not wish to purchase them, they are on reserve at the College Library.

Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing your Doctoral Thesis*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998.

Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing*. Harvard University Press, 2012.

Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor, 1994.

Wendy Laura Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2009.

Selections from Robert Boice, “Write in Mindful Ways” in his *Advice for New Faculty Member: Nihil Nimus* (Allyn & Bacon, 2000) will be provided for reading during the workshop.

Schedule

Week 1 (January 22): Introduction. Go over syllabus. Get to know each other’s work and stage of writing. Discuss writing goals and challenges.

Class exercise: Read and discuss Boice, “Wait.” Write a 5-minute reflection.

Assignment for next time: (1) Read Bolker and “Dissertation Writing Group Starter Kit”; (2) Work out a personal writing schedule.

Week 2 (January 29): How to write first (Bolker). Find a writing partner.

Class exercise: Free write for 10 minutes.

Assignment for next time: (1) Find and study a model dissertation chapter for structure and organization; (2) Draft a group plan with partner; (3) Write a 150- to 200-word abstract of your proposed chapter and email to workshop members two days prior to meeting; (4) Read Sword.

Week 3 (February 5): How to write better (Sword). Review chapter abstracts. Discuss model chapter.

Class exercise: Write a 5-minute reflection about the review and planning session.

Assignment for next time: (1) Write a first draft of 3-5 pages and bring a copy to next meeting; (2) Meet with your faculty advisor to set goals of working with each other; (3) Commit yourself to a final work schedule and plan; (4) Read Lamott.

Week 4 (February 12): No meeting.

Week 5 (February 19): How to write with balance (Lamott). Report on meeting with advisor. How to give and receive feedback. Review first drafts.

Class exercise: Write a 5-minute reflection on the review session. Read and discuss Boice, “Stop.”

Assignment for next time: Work on a second draft of 15-20 pages. Focus on new writing. Exchange drafts with partner prior to next meeting.

Week 6 (February 26): No meeting.

Week 7 (March 5): Review second drafts.

Class exercise: Write a short reflection on the review session. Read and discuss Boice, “Moderate Attachments.”

Assignment for next time: Expand your chapter draft to 35-50 pages. Use help from your writing partner. Exchange drafts prior to next meeting.

Week 8 (March 12): No meeting.

Week 9 (March 26): No meeting.

Week 10 (April 2): No meeting.

Week 11(April 9): Review third drafts. How to turn your chapter into a conference presentation.

Class exercise: Write a short reflection on the review session.

Assignment for next time: (1) Get your draft to final shape and send to faculty advisor for feedback; (2) Read Belcher.

Week 12 (April 16): No meeting.

Week 13 (April 23): Turn in final drafts by email. How to turn your chapter into a journal article (Belcher).

Class exercise: Make plans to begin work on the next chapter. Free write for 15 minutes.

Week 14 (April 30): Presentations I

Week 15 (May 7): Presentations II