

Ethnic Studies 290A: Writers Group Fall Quarter 2009

Prof. Natalia Molina

Office: Social Science Building 226

Mailbox: Department of Ethnic Studies, Social Science Building 201

Office Phone: 858.822.1580

Office hours: Tuesdays 3:30-5, Thursdays 3:30-5, and by appointment

"Writers fare best when they begin before feeling fully ready. Motivation becomes most reliable in the wake of regular involvement." (Boice 1994:236).

Writers Group goals:

- 1) To break down a large writing project into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- 2) To give and receive constructive feedback on work.
- 3) To collect a toolbox of writing tools that will help you become a better and more consistent writer.
- 4) To produce a draft of your thesis introduction

Readings:

The two main reading sources are:

Your own reading list. You will also develop your own reading list and be responsible for obtaining those materials.

Wendy Laura Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks:*

A Guide to Academic Publishing Success (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. January 2009. 376 pages)

Week 0: Introductions, setting goals for the group, discussing the goal and structure of introductions

Week 1: Design

Assignments: Reading list and timeline. (*Please e-mail to me before class and I will make copies for the class).

The reading list for your project should consist of 10-15 works, books and articles of things you need to read for your project. Every week starting week 2, you will turn in an abstract for each work of 1-2 of these works. In addition to the abstract, consider some quotes or points that you want to keep track of to maybe use in your work. You should turn in an abstract every week whether we meet or not. At the end of the quarter, I should have at least 7 abstracts for each writer.

The goal of the timeline is for you to map out what tasks/assignments you must accomplish in order to write a successful introduction. Make your timeline as complete as possible.

Include material that will help organize your tasks, as well as help you think through your project fully.

For example, assess what are you building on and what are you starting from scratch. Do you have a whole new body of literature you must become acquainted with? Will you eventually have to interviews for the project? Can you come up with interview questions and techniques this quarter?

You can use any format you like, but use the week 1, week 2, etc. to divide the sections of your timeline.

Readings: Belcher, Week 1 (1-43, omit 11-17). Topics include: feelings about writing, choosing writing sites, designing writing schedules, 12 week calendar, weekly writing calendar, overcoming writing obstacles.

Week 2: Begin

Assignments: Write an abstract of your work. Please e-mail to the writing group by 5 pm on Tuesday of this week. Starting this week, turn in your reading list abstract(s).

Readings: Belcher, Week 2 (55-62)

In class: discuss weekly writing calendar, abstract exercise (page 59), discuss reading list abstracts turned in this week

Week 3: Advancing your argument

Written Assignment: Project Description, 3 Pages, double-spaced, please e-mail to the writing group by 5 pm on Tuesday of this week. Explain the who, what, where, when and Why of your project, *without looking back to any of your previous drafts*. Organize your paper in 4 sections according to the following questions:

- 1) Without naming the specifics (e.g subject, site) of your project, what is your theoretical framework? Or, what is the basic question you are asking? This is the Why of your project.
- 2) What are the specifics of your project? This is the who, what, where, and when of your project.
- 3) Who else has written about your project, both theoretically and specifically? Instead of naming each work and their contribution, group them into 2-3 camps, at most, and give the gist.
 - a. Are you building on, overturning, and/or linking this literature?
- 4) Where have you and where will you look for information on the project? Why is this information a good fit for your project? What does this information get you? What does it not get you? This is your methods section.

Readings: Belcher, Week 3. Topics include: Pitfalls to avoid and **how to make an argument**.

In class: Discuss weekly writing calendar, argument/evidence exercise (page 93), discuss reading list abstracts turned in this week. Come to class having read and taken notes on each of the project descriptions. Write an abstract of each other's project which you will turn into the author. Everyone will be asked to comment on each project description.

Week 4:

Assignment: Outline for the introduction as a whole with the introduction's introduction and literature review filled out. E-mail to writers by 5 pm on Tuesday. (Refer to week 8 in Belcher if you need help with the introduction).

Readings: Belcher, Week 5, "Reviewing the related literature" (skip week 4) and Week 6, "Strengthening your structure" (outlining)

In class: Come to class having read and taken notes on each of the project descriptions. Everyone will be asked to comment on each project description.

The review of the literature demonstrates how it relates to your topic. The literature review contains an interpretive *synthesis* of other studies that relate to your topic area. It should contain a discussion of how your research question raises or resolves issues that the available literature does not address.

Planning to write: The focus of this assignment is your **introduction's introduction and the** literature review. But the outline will give you an opportunity to begin planning the rest of your introduction. Before you write, you should always plan. Your outline should list every topic your reader will need to know to understand your project. This will give the reader a sense of the direction you are going in and help you plan before you write. It also helps break the introduction into manageable steps. Your outline should break down the different sections of your introduction. Use subtitles for each of these sections. It gives the reader and you some direction as to what the essence of that subject is. For example, "Literature Review" is much less telling than "Looking for the Class Analysis in Transnational Studies."

In your outline, it is essential you include your argument. This way the reader can see if your lit. review *fits* your thesis.

You can use any format you wish for your outline. Just make sure that each section conveys the point you wish to make in that section of the outline.

Week 5:

No class meeting

Write, write, write. Meet with your advisors.

Turn in your synopsis to the professor's box.

Readings: Belcher, Week 7, "Presenting your methods"

Week 6:

*** We need to reschedule this meeting. Is Monday, Nov. 2 possible?**

Assignment: Draft of methods section. Please e-mail drafts to everyone in the class before we meet.

In class: evaluating evidence exercises (pages 191, 193, 195)

Week 7: Introduction and conclusion

Written assignment: Introduction and conclusion. Please e-mail to the writing group by 5 pm on Tuesday of this week.

Readings: Belcher, week 8

In class: exercises 212, 213, 215

Week 8: In class peer reviews

Written assignment: Introduction and conclusion. Please e-mail to the writing group by 5 pm on Tuesday of this week.

Come prepared to discuss the drafts.

This is your opportunity to test out your thesis and supporting evidence.

It is important that we take stock of where the draft is now. Are your argument and evidence hanging together? The more sections you have drafted by this point, the more you will be able to see how they fit together and build one each other or if you need to move sections around.

Readings: Belcher, week 9

Everyone except the peer critic should come prepared with one a one-page feedback form with copies for the writer and the professor. Please include these prompts in your paper.

I think you were arguing...

I think one thing original about your work is...

I was a little confused about...

One suggestion might be to....

One of your colleagues will be assigned the role of your peer critic. That person will do a 5-10 minute presentation reviewing your paper during our class meeting. They will state your thesis, assess your presentation of the literature review, discuss your intervention in existing literature, explain how your (proposed) research supports your thesis, and the overall strengths and weaknesses of your paper. (The peer critic will give a written copy of his/her comments to the writer and the professor.) You will then have a chance to respond to the critic. We will then open up the discussion to the entire class.

Questions to consider as a peer critic:

Can you state the author's thesis? Can it be revised for clarity?

Does each section connect to the argument?

Are the methods employed best suited to answer the question? What are the strengths and limits of that method?

At what point in the paper do you have a sense of the whole?

Does the author assume his audience knows too much? Too little?

Do you have a sense of how the paper will be organized before you get into the paper?

Could any of the key information be presented more clearly in a different format (chart vs. table, verbal vs. graph)?

Are there sentences that are unnecessarily complex? Can they be broken down, pared down? Is the sentence carrying too many ideas?

Week 9: No class

No class. Write, write, write. Meet with your advisors.

Turn in your abstracts to professor's box.

Week 10: In class presentations and peer editing

Readings: Belcher, weeks 10 and 11

Introduction due date: Wed., December 9, noon, in the professor's box.

Constant Feedback:

Ten weeks is a very short time to write an introduction to your masters thesis. With your preparation and accomplishments from 210, however, this is a very feasible goal. A major component of writing a strong research paper will be to work on it consistently. Not a week should go by when you have not made progress on your introduction. Post your timeline up somewhere you will see it everyday and think and realize your goal for that week.

Your advisor and I will be your resources for your paper. We give our best feedback when you produce your best work. As such, you should be meeting or sending detailed e-mails (if that's what works better for your advisor) with your advisor or myself on a regular basis. Strive to share original work with your advisor regularly.

More resources:

Allen, David. *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. New York: Viking, 2001.

Boice, Robert. *Procrastination and Blocking: A Novel, Practical Approach*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2003.

Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way Creativity Kit*. [San Francisco, Calif.: Chronicle Books, 2000.

Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2003.

Huff, Anne Sigismund. *Designing Research for Publication*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2009.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird : Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. 1st Anchor Books ed. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.

Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman. *Designing Qualitative Research*. 4th ed. Thousands Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2006.

Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman. *Designing Qualitative Research*. 4th ed. Thousands Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2006.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2003.

Zinsser, William Knowlton. *On Writing Well : The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. 25th anniversary ed. New York: Quill, 2001.