



GOAL-PLANNING WORKSHOP

CONTENTS

Lesson Plan

Visuals: Slide show (in Google Drive)

Handout 1: Locating the Academic Moves

Handout 2: Overly Complicated and Wordy Examples

Handout 3: Further resources

MATERIALS NEEDED

Sign-in sheet

Copies of handouts

Room with a blackboard and chalk

LEARNING GOALS

At the close of the workshop, students will be able to:

- o Students will overcome fears about returning to writing at the graduate level or after a period of absence
- o Students will understand how academic writing is a process toward clarity of thought
- o Students will understand that academic writing is about being in conversation with other academics
- o Students will begin to understand some of the rhetorical moves used in academic writing
- o Students will leave the workshop with knowledge of the basics of academic writing and the resources available to them at the Graduate Center

OVERVIEW

Discuss the basics of academic writing and address individual concerns.

In this workshop, we will discuss the basics of academic writing - what defines it, how to engage with other scholars, and potential writing tactics to use. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss their specific concerns about the process with the workshop leaders.

- o Learn about academic writing!
- o Overcome your fears about writing!
- o Know about Graduate Center resources!

EXIT SURVEY

At the end of the workshop, students can offer anonymous feedback via an exit survey.

LESSON PLAN

Learning Goals

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Lesson Plan

1. Discuss the scope of the lesson plan: students will learn about the basic defining characteristics of academic writing. **(5 minutes)**
2. Ask students to introduce themselves to the group and to identify one or two specific concerns about the academic writing process. One of the workshop leaders should take notes either on the board or on paper to be able to return to these goals. **(10 minutes)**
3. Solicit ideas from the group about universal aspects of academic writing that help define something as a piece of academic writing. Highlight academic writing as a process of moving toward clarity of thought and as a method of engaging with the greater academic community. Clarify that it is a skill that can be developed with practice. Acknowledge that some parts of academic writing are universal and others may be discipline specific. Reiterate that writers at all stages of their careers struggle with the process. **(15 minutes).**
4. Discuss some basics regarding overcoming writing fears:
 - a. *Make manageable goals*
 - b. *When you're stuck, write about what you do know.* The act of writing down what you have learned about your topic may spur and/or clarify the ideas you need to express.
 - c. *Write however you write.* Everyone approaches writing differently. If you write from start to finish or if you write in chunks, any way is valid if it ends with the desired

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outcome. Experiment with different styles as you do your coursework to see what is best for you.

- d. *Edits are for later.* Don't worry about making it perfect the first time out, just get words down on paper.
- e. *Avoid virtuous procrastination.* Develop a writing habit early. Don't let the research take over as there will always be more to read or discover. Ideally, write your thoughts along the way. Try not to let other tasks get in the way of your writing time that can be saved for later.

This is also a time to address any concerns raised by students earlier that go along with any of these ideas. **(10-15 minutes)**

5. Address common concerns about creating new knowledge:

- a. *What is a thesis vs. topic? What makes a strong argument?* An argument can be contested; it is not just a statement of facts. An argument always has at least two parts: a claim and evidence for that claim. Consider what question(s) your argument is answering. A good academic argument engages with other work on the topic.
- b. *How do I figure out what my argument is? How do I make my thesis clear for my reader?* The writing process itself can lend to determining and fine tuning what your thoughts are related to the topic of study. The clearer the idea becomes in your mind the clearer it will be for the reader. Clarity and understanding is more important than jargon.
- c. *Should I state my thesis / conclusion / argument at the beginning or wait until the end (and only state my question in my intro)?* Signposting in the introduction lets the reader know the approach the paper will take.
- d. *What constitutes a new argument?* A good argument does not have to be earth shattering. Your aim is to add to the conversation surrounding a topic. This might be to take the conversation further by agreeing with someone else and pointing out a further application, it may be a disagreement about a particular element of someone else's approach. It may offer newly discovered material that you place into the context of a larger conversation. **(10-15 minutes)**

6. Pass out three articles (examples below, but update for recent materials as needed/desired.)

Discuss the moves of academic writing:

- a. Establish research territory
- b. Identify your niche within that territory and lay claim
- c. State the value of your work and announce the plan for the paper.

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- d. Respond to what others have said about their topic.
- e. Acknowledge that others might disagree with your position
- f. Adopt a voice of authority
- g. Use academic and discipline-specific vocabulary (but not too much jargon!)
- h. Emphasize evidence

Ask students to identify how each of the three types of articles uses these moves with the first few paragraphs. Emphasize that the question, “Why does this matter?” is something that always needs to be addressed. Go around and ask students to point out what they found and share it with the larger group. **(25 minutes)**

8. Pass out handout containing overly complicated sentences. Discuss clarity as the most important piece of writing and how these examples could be better articulated for clarity. Offer other style tips: 1. Avoid using too much jargon 2. Avoid using colloquial language 3. Omit contractions 4. Use the passive voice judiciously 5. Use first person effectively 6. Pay attention to all the details: grammar, citation style. **(10 minutes)**

9. Give an overview of useful writing strategies:

- a. Annotated Bibliographies
- b. Reverse Outlining
- c. Outline other articles in your field to see the moves writers are making
- d. Simplify your sentences
- e. Read out loud/Read to a friend
- f. Free Writing/Drafting
- g. Keep a “cuts” document and multiple drafts to return to
- h. Categorize evidence
- i. Work on the body of the paper first and then the introduction
- j. Index card outlining
- k. Write however you write
- l. Scaffold the assignment for yourself **(10min)**

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LOCATING THE ACADEMIC MOVES

In the accompanying articles, representing an assortment of different types of academic writing, see if you can find any or all of the academic writing moves discussed: *(Establish research territory, Identify your niche within that territory and lay claim, State the value of your work and announce the plan for the paper, Respond to what others have said about their topic, Acknowledge that others might disagree with your position, Adopt a voice of authority, Use academic and discipline-specific vocabulary (but not too much jargon!) Emphasize evidence)*

EXAMPLES OF OVERLY DENSE AND COMPLICATED WRITING

(taken from The *Philosophy and Literature* Bad Writing Contest which ran from 1995 to 1998)

Judith Butler “Further Reflections on the Conversations of Our Time,” an article in the scholarly journal *Diacritics* (1997):

The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power.

Homi. K Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994):

If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to “normalize” *formally* the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality.

Steven Z. Levine *Twelve Views of Manet’s “Bar”* (Princeton University Press, 1996):

As my story is an august tale of fathers and sons, real and imagined, the biography here will fitfully attend to the putative traces in Manet’s work of “les noms du père,” a Lacanian romance of the errant paternal phallus (“Les Non-dupes errent”), a revised Freudian novella of the inferential dynamic of paternity which annihilates (and hence enculturates) through the deferred introduction of the third term of insemination the phenomenologically irreducible dyad of the mother and child.

Timothy W Luke. “Museum Pieces: Politics and Knowledge at the American Museum of Natural History” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* (December 1997):

Natural history museums, like the American Museum, constitute one decisive means for power to de-privatize and re-publicize, if only ever so slightly, the realms of death by putting dead remains into public service as social tokens of collective life, rereading dead fossils as chronicles of life’s everlasting quest for survival, and canonizing now dead individuals as nomological emblems of still living collectives

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in Nature and History. An anatomo-politics of human and non-human bodies is sustained by accumulating and classifying such necroliths in the museum's observational/expositional performances.

D.G. Leahy, *Foundation: Matter the Body Itself* (State University of New York 1996):

Total presence breaks on the univocal predication of the exterior absolute the absolute existent (of that of which it is not possible to univocally predicate an outside, while the equivocal predication of the outside of the absolute exterior is possible of that of which the reality so predicated is not the reality, viz., of the dark/of the self, the identity of which is not outside the absolute identity of the outside, which is to say that the equivocal predication of identity is possible of the self-identity which is not identity, while identity is univocally predicated of the limit to the darkness, of the limit of the reality of the self). This is the real exteriority of the absolute outside: the reality of the absolutely unconditioned absolute outside univocally predicated of the dark: the light univocally predicated of the darkness: the shining of the light univocally predicated of the limit of the darkness: actuality univocally predicated of the other of self-identity: existence univocally predicated of the absolutely unconditioned other of the self. The precision of the shining of the light breaking the dark is the other-identity of the light. The precision of the absolutely minimum transcendence of the dark is the light itself/the absolutely unconditioned exteriority of existence for the first time/the absolutely facial identity of existence/the proportion of the new creation *sans* depth/the light itself *ex nihilo*: the dark itself univocally identified, i.e., not self-identity identity itself equivocally, not the dark itself equivocally, in "self-alienation," not "self-identity, itself in self-alienation" "released" in and by "otherness," and "actual other," "itself," not the abysmal inversion of the light, the reality of the darkness equivocally, absolute identity equivocally predicated of the self/selfhood equivocally predicated of the dark (the reality of this darkness the other-self-covering of identity which is the identification person-self).

Roy Bhaskar's *Plato etc: The Problems of Philosophy and Their Resolution* (Verso, 1994):

Indeed dialectical critical realism may be seen under the aspect of Foucauldian strategic reversal — of the unholy trinity of Parmenidean/Platonic/Aristotelean provenance; of the Cartesian-Lockean-Humean-Kantian paradigm, of foundationalisms (in practice, fideistic foundationalisms) and irrationalisms (in practice, capricious exercises of the will-to-power or some other ideologically and/or psycho-somatically buried source) new and old alike; of the primordial failing of western philosophy, ontological monovalence, and its close ally, the epistemic fallacy with its ontic dual; of the analytic problematic laid down by Plato, which Hegel served only to replicate in his actualist monovalent analytic reinstatement in transfigurative reconciling dialectical connection, while in his hubristic claims for absolute idealism he inaugurated the Comtean, Kierkegaardian and Nietzschean eclipses of reason, replicating the fundaments of positivism through its transmutation route to the superidealism of a Baudrillard.

THE MOVES OF ACADEMIC WRITING

- Establish research territory
- Identify your niche within that territory and lay claim
- State the value of your work and announce the plan for the paper.
- Respond to what others have said about their topic.
- Acknowledge that others might disagree with your position
- Adopt a voice of authority
- Use academic and discipline-specific vocabulary in a way that aids the clarity of your ideas, not just for the sake of jargon.
- Emphasize evidence

SUGGESTED WRITING TECHNIQUES

- **Annotated Bibliographies** - Keeping track of your thoughts on the material you are reading will help you begin to engage with what others have said on a topic.
- **Outline other articles in your field to see the moves writers are making** - The more you see how other academics in your field engage with one another, the easier it will be for you to do so.
- **Scaffold the assignment for yourself** - Setting up target goals for a longer writing project will help keep you on track.
- **Free Writing/Drafting** - Often the hardest part is starting to write so starting with a free writing draft will help you get words on paper that you can start to work with.
- **Keep a “cuts” document and multiple drafts to return to** - While working on longer projects you may find that you are cutting material that doesn’t fit in a particular place now, but you want to hang onto in case it fits later or for another project.
- **Work on the body of the paper first and then the introduction** - Writing through the main portions of the paper will often help you determine what you actually are trying to argue.
- **Categorize evidence** - Consider the different types of evidence that your argument rests on and order them in a way that helps the progression of the argument.
- **Index card outlining** - Put single ideas, evidence of topic sentences on index cards that you can rearrange to help you visualize your paper. This can also be done digitally in a program such as Scrivener or Scapple.

SUGGESTED REVISING TECHNIQUES

- **Simplify your sentences** - When editing, try to take your sentence down to the simplest form by taking out extra clauses and see if it makes sense. This will also help with basic grammar editing.
- **Read out loud/Read to a friend** - Hearing something read aloud, either by you, a computer, or a friend will help you catch many awkward phrases and grammatical issues. A friend can also help you clarify ideas that aren't clear.
- **Reverse Outlining** - Once you have drafted a paper, go back and outline the paper based on what you have actually written. This is particularly helpful in identifying problems in the flow of the argument and paragraphing.
- **Write however you write** - Experiment and try different approaches and find out what works best for you. Writing is not one-size-fits-all!

RESOURCES

The Academic Phrasebank - <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

The phrasebank includes many clarifying and transitional phrases for academic writing organized by the types of ideas a writer is trying to express or signal (being critical, defining terms, comparisons, explaining causality, etc.)

Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb, et al. *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago. 2016

Covers the overall research process - from choosing a topic to formulating an argument and through to writing the final paper. Offers useful advice to all levels of researchers.

Graff, Gerald. “They Say, I Say”: *The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. Norton, 2014.

Identifies the key moves in academic writing with an emphasis on how to frame an argument in relation to what others have written.

Perdue OWL – https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

An enormous collection of writing resources including excellent citation guides, subject specific guides and ELL resources.

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Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills*. University of Michigan. 2008

Offers an overview for a range of disciplines including STEM, Social Sciences and the Humanities. Sections cover broad focused ideas about rhetorical approaches to specific linguistic elements.

The **Graduate Center Library** pages have additional resources for citation and research management that may be of use.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Varies by semester - check the Writing Center, Library, Digital Initiatives, Wellness Center, Teaching and Learning Center and Career Planning and Development for applicable material.

[EXIT SURVEY](#)

1. What was **most helpful or useful** about this workshop?
2. What was **least helpful or useful** about this workshop?
3. What **changes would you recommend** for the next time this workshop is held?