



## ANSWERING A CFP—AN ABSTRACT WRITING WORKSHOP

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### MATERIALS NEEDED

White board

Markers

Handouts

### LEARNING GOALS

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

- Understand the idiosyncrasies of responding to a number of different CFP genres
- Identify key terms in the language of the CFP
- Write within the constraints of the CFP abstract form

### OVERVIEW

This workshop addresses the peculiarities of answering the conference CFP through the following activities:

- Brief discussion of abstract forms and the best practices of answering a CFP
- Active reading and critiquing of a series of examples of (un)successful conference abstracts
- Peer editing workshop

### APPENDIX A

Exit Package

### APPENDIX B

Advertising Materials

- Flyer
- APO Email
- Advice Column
- Twitter blurbs

## LESSON PLAN

**Step One:** If there's a white board, list the workshop's agenda. Idle chit chat. Try to engage the students who arrive early. Be personable. Break the ice. Distribute the handouts.

**Step Two (10 – 15 minutes):** Introductions. Ask the students to provide the following information:

Name

Program

Year in Program

Have they ever answered a CFP? If so, were they successful.

This information will help you better understand your group's fluency in the abstract form and help you determine how much time to spend on each of the many different types of abstracts that students will answer in their time at the GC. Because this is an interdisciplinary workshop—that could draw an audience from any number of disparate fields—it's important for you to locate parallels between the different writing needs of your audience. Guided, personal/professional questions are a great way to help you narrow or widen the scope of your workshop.

**Step Three (20 – 25 minutes):** A Brief Mini-Lesson—note, this works best if you run it as a discussion. Try to include the workshop participants. Ask leading questions that will guide them toward the common elements, classifications, and best practices of abstract writing.

**Part One:** Discussion of the common elements present in most, if not all, abstracts. Including, but not limited to, audience, exigency, intervention, and “why I'm unique.”

**Part Two:** Then address the different forms of CFP abstracts, which I broke down into the following groups:

Categories—Grad school, Regional, National

Types—Panels, Roundtables, Seminars, Posters

Genres—Critical, Pedagogical

This is an especially important part of the lesson as each category, type, and genre requires a unique, sometimes idiosyncratic, answer. They each ask the author to engage a different audience and in a different kind of conversation. For example, when answering a Regional or National CFP in English, say the MLA, your abstract should frame its argument to appeal to both the individual(s) who drafted the CFP and the larger theme of the conference. Whereas a Grad School CFP will often seek a wide-variety of responses that the graduate conference committee then places alongside other similar papers in a panel. The type of CFP (whether panel, roundtable, seminar, or poster) will also shape the form of a successful CFP abstract. The difference between a panel and a roundtable is particularly important. Panels tend to include less speakers and ask for a fully formed argument that takes a position on a specific subject. These papers are usually fifteen to twenty minutes long. The roundtable typically includes six to eight interlocutors that are asked to participate in a discourse. Here the author gives a

short, five-ish minute, talk that relates their work's relevance to the roundtable's discussion topic. The "talk" provides the speaker with a certain degree of ethos as they engage other scholars present on the roundtable.

**Part Three: Best Practices.** Here I relayed my strategies for effectively answering Critical CFP Abstracts—we did not go into the peculiarities of Pedagogical CFPs, though this information was provided in the workshop's exit package.

Our discussion of best practices began with active reading skills. When reading a CFP circle the key terms you identify in the Call. What kind of CFP are you reading—is it a broad theme-based roundtable, a narrow text or author specific panel? What terms repeat frequently throughout the document? Are their patterns in the author's thinking? What is the aim of the panel or roundtable? How does the CFP intervene in your field? Does the author point to the broader, non-field specific, implications of your line of inquiry? Identifying and understanding what the CFP author seeks to uncover in their panel will help shape the answer you suggest in your abstract. People like to hear their work echoed back to them. Just try not to be too sycophantic in your delivery.

I then provided an example of how I organize and structure my CFPs. I call this blueprint the "Three Paragraph Hourglass." I believe good abstracts begin broad, then narrow their focus, and end by pointing to their claim's engagement with a larger discourse community. In paragraph one, I often start by speaking broadly about the problem (the exigency) I locate in the CFP as I gradually introduce the subject of my proposal. In paragraph two, I discuss the specific argument I intend to make at the conference. Finally, my last paragraph considers the intervention my proposal makes in the field of study relevant to the CFP, and often, to the theme of the conference. Note: Remember to title your abstract!

The last bit of best practice advice we gave included a series of simple signal phrases I've found particularly useful when placing my argument in a larger discourse community.

" . . . an idea which seems to live in your CFP's attention to . . ."

"Following the work of \_\_\_\_\_, my paper aims to . . ."

"Grappling with the recent scholarship of . . ."

" \_\_\_\_\_ work provides a useful model for understanding contemporary cultures of . . ."

"

**Step Four (30 minutes): Group Work.** Here, we turned to the handouts distributed at the beginning of class.

**Part One:** "Handout One" is a CFP for a Graduate Student conference sponsored by the GC English Department in spring 2019 and three abstracts that answer the CFP. The Call is a broad, interdisciplinary line of inquiry. The abstracts represent three unique disciplines and varying degrees of success. We began our group work by practicing the active reading skill discussed in Step Three, Part Three. We asked the students to circle key words, themes, and hints to the possible motivations of the CFP's author(s), then relay to the workshop what they found and why they thought their discoveries could aid us in writing a successful abstract.

## ANSWERING A CFP—AN ABSTRACT WRITING WORKSHOP

**Part One.Five:** After we identified the most salient terms, themes, and exigencies of the CFP, we read and ranked the abstracts provided in “Handout One.” Students were asked to rank the abstracts on a scale of one to nine and defend their reading of the abstracts’ successes and failures to the group. This was a particularly effective exercise. By asking students to locate the problems and achievements of other scholars, students practice a low-stakes form of authorship in their critiques—they create an argument and defend it to their workshop mates. This process also models the winnowing conference committees employ as they accept and reject abstracts. Importantly, the interdisciplinary nature of the Call and the abstracts selected for review allows students to identify the universal elements imminent to most successful CFP abstracts—recalling Step Three, Part One.

**Step Five (20 minutes):** More Group Work. “Handout Two” is a CFP from a regional conference (NeMLA—Northeast Modern Language Association) and a successful abstract that answers the CFP. As in Step Four, students critically read the CFP. In a return to material presented in Step Three, Part Two. I also asked the students to try to identify differences in the language and presentation of the regional CFP from that of the graduate conference CFP. We then discussed how the regional’s CFP discursive differences could shape the way we frame our abstracts. Finally, students read a successful answer to the regional CFP and identified why they thought the Chair accepted the abstract.

**Step Six (\_\_\_):** Optional. “Handout Three” is the CFP for a poster presentation at a national conference in the social sciences (APA—American Psychology Association) and a successful abstract that answers the CFP. Turn to this handout if a majority of the students at the workshop hail from the social sciences. Repeat activities from Step Five.

**Step Seven (35 minutes):** Students pair-up to read, edit, and revise each other’s abstracts employing the skills they learned and modeled in Steps Three through Five.

**Step Eight (0):** Fin. Distribute Exit Package.

## HANDOUT 1: “GRADUATE CONFERENCE CFP & ABSTRACTS”

CFP

CUNY Graduate Center English Student Association Conference

BLACK LIVES

Thursday, April 11 - Friday, April 12, 2019

CUNY Graduate Center  
New York, NY

“Black Lives” has emerged in recent years as a conceptual touchstone following the wake of Black Lives Matter, a galvanizing social movement of public protest against the persistence of institutionalized forms of anti-black violence that besiege Black individuals and communities on a daily basis, both within the United States and across a range of geopolitical contexts. The phrase implicitly challenges nationalist and global concepts of humanity that do not include blackness as a viable sign of life and citizenship. As critics such as Paul Gilroy, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Robert Reid-Pharr and Henry Louis Gates Jr. have noted, “universal humanism” has been historically built upon a constitutive rejection of black being. To push back against such entrenched conceptual repudiations of black particularity, we take a cue from Jamaican philosopher and novelist Sylvia Wynter, who argues that black particularity paradoxically retains a utopian impulse for recognizing “our collective agency and authorship of our genres of being human” (2006). We intend for the conference to respond to the urgent need to think about the impact and meaning of “Black Lives” both as a touchstone for contemporary activism as well as a scholarly heuristic for research across a range of fields and disciplines. By doing so, we hope to make resonant the potentiality of blackness to signify as a radical node of meaning and being across a range of identitarian and relational articulations.

We are especially interested in workshop proposals that address the necessary rituals and habits for self-care, success/pushing back in a hostile workplace, building and maintaining your village, and contemporary radical Black artists/activists. We also seek papers and panel proposals that take up any aspect of “Black Lives” understood broadly as an entry point into research in, but not limited to, any of the following areas:

- Regional and global Black activisms and cross-struggle affinities
- African-American and African Diasporic Literary Studies
- Contemporary theory regarding blackness and black subjectivity, including Afro-Pessimism, Afro-Futurism, Black Atlantic Studies, Black Pacific Studies
- Critical Archive Studies

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- Critical Science Studies
- Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction and Biopolitics
- Black cultural histories and Blues historiography
- Blackness and “modernity”/globalization
- Middle Passage theory
- Black sovereignty and selfhood
- Critical Race studies
- Blackness, Brownness, and Affect
- Black, Queer and Trans Feminisms
- Queer Sexualities
- Queer of Color Critique, Queer Theory, Critical Trans Studies
- Native-American/First Nations studies
- Blackness and Jewishness
- Postcolonial studies
- Disabilities studies
- Performance studies/Body as Archive
- Prison abolitionism
- Critical interventions in Post-Humanism, New Materialism, and Object Oriented Ontology
- Black utopianisms and Marxisms
- Black aesthetics and/or aestheticism
- The Black Radical Tradition, Black Power and the Black Arts movement
- The New Negro (Harlem) Renaissance/The New Black (post-Civil Rights)
- Intersectionality
- White Feminism/Womanism
- Black literacies and critical pedagogy
- Blackness and religion

Please submit an abstract of up to 400 words, a short biographical description, and your contact information by February 15, 2019. Proposals and questions should be sent to conference organizers at [blacklivesconferencecommittee@gmail.com](mailto:blacklivesconferencecommittee@gmail.com).

Conference Organizers:

Makeba Lavan, Ryan Tracy, Shoumik Battacharya, LeiLani Dowell, Daniel Hengel

**Please circulate widely.**

### REIMAGINING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BLACK IN THE U.S.: FAMILY CULTURAL SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES THAT SHAPE RACIAL IDENTITIES AMONG DIVERSE YOUNG ADULTS

Black individuals' racial identity development is influenced by social positioning, unique ecological demands, and the cultural contexts in which these constructs interact. Family cultural socialization practices derive from these constructs and play a key role in shaping understandings of racial identity and responses to systems of power. Historically, black identity research has relied significantly on the experiences of African Americans. In more recent years, social scientists have determined that the development of racial identities are dependent on sociocultural contexts; thus this research advocates for context specific explorations. By doing so, this research explores the importance of diverse cultural practices and understandings of blackness that varies and lies dependent on evolving sociocultural contexts and sociohistorical positioning of diverse ethnic groups.

This study utilizes social practice theory as an organizational tool and frames racial identity development as it is influenced by social positioning and family cultural socialization practices. Young adults who identify as African-American, Afro-Caribbean, and/or Afro-Latino were interviewed using open-ended questions on facets of racial identity development and the meaning they ascribe to the family cultural practices that shape their identities. The goal of this research is threefold: (1) to explore black racial identity development of diverse cultural groups, (2) to explore how black individuals' understanding of family cultural socialization practices directly contributes to how individuals understand their racial identities, and (3) to examine how racial identity and the understanding of blackness varies across cultural contexts.

END

In the midst of progressively forward conversation about critical pedagogy and Blacks/African Americans in schools, from kindergarten to higher education, a systemic problem in the process of teachers becoming teachers is discussed. Also addressed is the quantitative research from the Department of Education's entity, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on the tremendous disproportionate ratio of minority students (non-White) to non-minority teachers (White). The growing questions of how White educators relate to, engage with, are empathetic to, and interact with their minority students seems a direct relation to the disengagement, low test scores, and student suspensions/expulsions of African American/Black students. Black and minority students, at approximately 60% of the nation's student population, as compared to the Caucasian teachers who serve them, at approximately 85% of the nation's k-12 public school population is a ridiculous imbalance that must be questioned and corrected. Meanwhile, a review of literature on effective pedagogical practices and theory are acknowledged and shared in order to argue the necessary proposed changes to the nation's educational system, which begins at the ground level with its teacher base. That change is the essence of this paper and the description of exactly what needs to happen nationally for both new and current teachers, at all levels, to participate in, as a mandated set of courses and/or practices that must be qualitatively assessed in order for educators to continue in their career field as qualified teachers. These changes will drastically affect the educational process and successes of African American students.

END



“Narratives from the Vestibule: Occult Epistemologies in John Keene’s Counternarratives”

Inherent to the framework of John Keene’s Counternarratives is a recognition that racial capitalism and colonialism have been the defining narratives of modernity, narratives whose functioning depends on the insistence of ontoepistemological systems that deny or occlude Black social life. This recognition, however, only sets the stage for Keene to manifest stories of resistance to these systems of violence. Following a Black radical tradition that recognizes the failure for Western humanism to overdetermine itself as the only instantiation of the human, Counternarratives explores Black life in the Americas to highlight how, by either resistance, improvisation, or evasion, communities found ways to reimagine themselves against the prescriptions and protocols of a Eurocentric liberal humanism. Keene’s stories take place in what Hortense Spillers has called the “vestibule” of modernity—a space created by the racial and gendered violence of Atlantic slavery which distances people from fully inhabiting the mantle of humanism. Writing from the vestibule, Keene creates narratives that speak back to and make a mess of the epistemologies that define modernity, resulting in a text that attempts to envision intimacies and communities beyond the terms set by racial capitalism and colonialism.

In this paper I will be elaborating how the overall project of Counternarratives is encapsulated by magic. Specifically, the stories and novellas that comprise Counternarratives explore the potential of the “occult” as a framework through which we might imagine Black life in the Americas. The occult is enlisted here in two senses: first, as a secret performance of magic or practical art for an initiated community, but also as a phenomenon that exists beyond prevailing knowledge and aesthetics. Keene figures these acts of resistance through these terms not solely in the sense that they perform a form of magic against systems of oppression, but also that they operate beyond the knowledge structures through which those systems manifest themselves. These stories revolve around characters enacting an epistemic fugitivity in which their unordered ways of knowing the world allow them to resist systems of power that require their erasure. This paper hopes to illustrate the use of occult epistemologies within Counternarratives as a tool through which Keene begins to give life to what Ashon Crawley calls “otherwise possibilities” to Enlightenment humanism.

END

## HANDOUT 2: “REGIONAL/NATIONAL CONFERENCE CFP & ABSTRACT (CRITICAL)—A SUCCESS”

Writing *Bios*: Biopolitics in 20th-century Literature and Beyond (Roundtable)

Primary Area / Secondary Area: Comparative Literature / Interdisciplinary Humanities

Chair: Forrest Johnson (York University)

### Abstract

Since the biopolitical turn, scholars across disciplines have attempted to make sense of the encounter between life (*bios*) and politics. This attention paid to the topic of biopolitics shows a cultural ethos that revolves around an awareness of power connected to the body. This roundtable invites papers that analyze how literature engages with biopolitics, particularly in the conceptualizations and depictions of the body in relation to power in 20th- and 21st-century literature. Roundtable participants are encouraged to submit abstracts that engage with the following questions: “How is life (and the body) culturally inscribed with meaning and definition,” and further, “What is a consequence of that inscription?”

By contemplating the many contexts and depictions of the body-power relation, this roundtable will not only gain a better understanding of the multiple connotations and manifestations of biopolitics in literature but will also contribute to the overarching theme of NeMLA’s 2020 convention, “Shaping and Sharing Identities: Spaces, Places, Languages and Cultures.”

Possible approaches to investigating biopolitics in literature may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Bodies in relation to race, gender, sexuality,
- The Production of Art
- Technology / Technological Bodies
- The Environment and the Body,

-Medical Humanities

-Object Oriented Ontology

-Materialism and New Materialism

-Necropolitics

-Posthumanism and Tranhumanism

**DESCRIPTION:** This roundtable invites papers that analyze how literature engages with biopolitics, particularly in the conceptualizations and depictions of the body in relation to power in 20th- and 21st-century literature. Roundtable participants are encouraged to submit abstracts that engage with the following questions: “How is life (and the body) culturally inscribed with meaning and definition?” and further “What is a consequence of that inscription?”

*Beckett's Bodies: Biopolitical Resistance*

The call for resistance to the techniques of power employed by agents of both State structured homogeneity and individualizing subjecthood echo throughout Beckett's oeuvre. His post war writing draws attention to the devastating effects unmitigated ideological indoctrination inflicts on the body. Beckett's texts are littered with incomplete, broken, and dissolving bodies. Molloy, Moran, Didi and Gogo, Ponzo and Lucky, Nagg, Nell, Hamm and Clov, Winnie, the mud muted narrator of *How It Is*, *Company's* immovable memorializer, Mahood and Worm, and *Not I's* tortured Voice suffer dysmorphic displacement as Beckett's work complicates, reorders, and dismisses the course of power<sup>1</sup>. Beckett's extraordinary inscriptions of biopolitical resistance reconstitutes the body outside the fields of representation, which, I believe provide a space for hope in a world marked by decay.

This essay reads Beckett's work as unique biopolitical protest texts that resist the qualification and quantification of the subject as a docile body. His deconstruction of corporeal forms—perhaps, most evident in the slow devolution of the *Unnamable* from a deformed humanoid to a bodiless amalgam of subjectless voices—destabilizes power's agency over the self, which, in turn, problematizes the concept of the subject—as both a self and a casualty of the State—and disabuses ideologically engendered processes of individualization.

In Beckett's work, we find a rich landscape of corporeality that repositions the body in a textual space which exists in the void between subjecthood and the object. This essay positions *The Unnamable's* singular 'subjectlessness' as a kind of marker, a keystone of restructured representation, as I explore Beckettian modes of biopolitical resistance. Specifically, I address, through a lens conditioned by *The Unnamable*, the prostrate body and the negation of

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<sup>1</sup> Please note, this is by no means a complete list of Beckett's broken bodies.

movement as an aspect of dissent in *Malone Dies*, *How It Is* and *Company*, as well as in *Endgame* and *Happy Days*, and the absent body as resistance in *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Not I*.

Importantly, Beckett's rewriting of the subject as a biopolitical body continues to be a relevant, revolutionary mode of infra-political resistance. His subject-less subjects articulate the degradation wrought by the rhetorical abuses of hegemonic interpellation as the dominant elite qualify subjugated classes as "other." Beckett's inscriptions of resistance presage the twenty-first century call for new paradigms of subject-hood—a common directive that seems to unite today's many emergent contemporary cultures of dissent.

### HANDOUT 3: “REGIONAL/NATIONAL CONFERENCE CFP & ABSTRACT (SOCIAL SCIENCES)—A SUCCESS”

Call for 2017 APA Convention Proposals

Division 15 invites submissions for the annual APA convention to be held in Washington DC (August 3-6, 2017). The Presidential Theme for Division 15 will be “Welcoming and Advancing Research in Educational Psychology: Impacting Learners, Teachers, and Schools.”

We encourage submissions related to this theme and research in Educational Psychology. Division Proposals are due no later than December 1, 2016 at 5 p.m. Eastern Time.

APA and Division 15 members and non-members are invited to submit their work for presentation in the Division 15 Program for the 2018 APA Convention. Submissions may fall under any of the following formats:

- Individual Presentations: These submissions should reflect a single project, study, or paper with 1 or more authors. You may indicate whether you would prefer to present in a “paper session” or “poster session.” Paper sessions will include a collection of 3-5 papers grouped by the program committee around a common theme in which each paper is presented for 8-12 minutes. Poster sessions include a collection of approximately 40 papers presented using a poster visual where attendees can walk up and ask questions of each presenter individually. Please note that because of scheduling limitations, we have very few paper session slots this year; thus, the majority of individual submissions will be designated as a poster presentation, even if your preference is to present in a paper session. Submitters should also understand that we do not consider one form of presentation to be of higher quality than the other in terms of the research submitted.
- Symposia/Group Submissions: A symposia submission should include 3-5 papers that are organized around a common theme or area of interest. Symposia should include a chair for the session and a discussant who will comment on the papers presented. Most accepted symposia will be assigned a 50 minute session. Preference will be given to symposia submissions that closely align with the Division 15 2018 conference theme: “Welcoming and Advancing Research in Educational Psychology: Impacting Learners, Teachers, and Schools.”
- Discussions: A discussion submission should include 3-5 speakers or panelists who will discuss a specific topic relevant to Division 15 membership from varied perspectives. Most accepted discussions will be assigned to a 50 minute session. Preference will be given to discussion sessions that closely align to the Division 15 conference theme: “Welcoming and Advancing Research in Educational Psychology: Impacting Learners, Teachers, and Schools.”

### ANSWER:

APA, Division 15 Ed Psych, 2017 APA convention

(This was my proposed dissertation study because I didn't have data collected by the time the conference came around)

Research questions that will be explored are: 1) Do context-dependent words provide unique challenges for beginning readers? 2) Does the type of instructional approach impact word learning for context-dependent words? 3) Does previous research address confounding variables in comparing isolation and context instructional approaches? Two subtypes of context-dependent words will be examined: irregular past tense verbs and function words. Research on word type has shown context-dependent words are more difficult to learn than context-independent words. Past studies have also shown that the conditions in which words are studied affect the types of word knowledge that are learned.

Word identity theory states that a sight word is stored in memory as an amalgam of phonological, orthographic, semantic, and syntactic identities, or word knowledge. Studying words in isolation (e.g., on flash cards) helps the reader learn orthographic and phonological identities. Conversely, studying words in context, or meaningful sentences contributes to a reader's knowledge on how to use a word (syntactic identity) and what it means (semantic identity). However, most of these studies used only context-independent, also known as content, words.

Studies on word identities and instructional methods have traditionally used two conditions: context and isolation. However, these conditions make it impossible to tell if word knowledge is affected by meaning from context or exposure time to target words.

HANDOUT 4: “EXIT PACKAGE”

Dear Student,

Thanks for coming to today’s Conference Abstract Writing Workshop! We hope you had a good time and that the time you gave to this workshop proves fruitful. We put together a brief exit package for you. In it you’ll find a bit of the material we covered today and points to other abstract writing resources. We also included a few more CFPS and corresponding, successful, abstracts. There’s an additional Graduate Conference CFP and abstract and a Regional / National pedagogical CFP and abstract.

Have a great day!

Best,

The Writing Center



The abstract is one of the most versatile and visible forms of academic writing, but writing the abstract is often a task we put off or rush through. Use this guide to focus more attention and thought into abstracts for publications, conferences, dissertation materials, and job documents.

### FOUR ELEMENTS OF A STRONG ABSTRACT\*

- *What is the central issue or question or problem driving your inquiry?* You might not state the question or problem in an explicit sentence or two in the essay, but you should articulate it in your abstract. Doing so may even help you understand your own argument more clearly!
- *What is your essay's answer to this question or problem?* Again, you might not state this answer in a single sentence in the essay, but you should state it explicitly in your abstract. Furthermore, you should closely tie the answer to the question. Your abstract is not a teaser but a spoiler. Don't hold back.
- *How does your paper arrive at this answer?* What is your method of analysis, and how does your argument proceed? In the course of explaining these matters, you should mention the key concepts, theories or texts you rely on to make your case.
- *How does your article contribute to an existing scholarly conversation?* In other words, what's your answer to the "so what?" question? Effective abstracts often begin by addressing this question, characterizing the state of the scholarly conversation about the problem or question and highlighting how the article intervenes in that conversation. Your intervention may be to revise, extend or even overturn received wisdom. It may be to bring new evidence and insights to an ongoing debate. It may be to call attention to some objects of study that previous scholarship has neglected and whose significance for the field you will elucidate. And that's just a partial list. But whatever your intervention, your abstract should express it clearly and directly. The importance of this step cannot be overstated: it is the one from which everything else—in both the abstract and the essay—flows.

\*Adapted from "Writing an Effective Abstract: An Audience-Based Approach," by Faye Halpern and James Phelan

**A few dos and don'ts—please note this information is not meant to be proscriptive. Instead, think of it as a checklist of practices that could be of value to you. Good luck!**

### **DO**

- Remember your audience
- Title your abstract
- Provide a clear precise of your intervention
- Illustrate exigency
- Revisit the “key terms” identified in the CFP
- Point to the theme of the conference
- Consider the larger academic / real world implications of your contribution—if applicable
- Use clear language
- Address the topic of the CFP
- Avoid jargon—unless the CFP lives in that rarified language
- Maintain fidelity to the language stylings of the prompt
- Try to be word-perfect
- Stay organized
- Remember your training

### **Don't**

- Go too far over the word limit
- Hand in your abstract past the due date
- Forget to read your work out loud
- Repeat, verbatim, whole sentences from the CFP
- Forget to include your name

### **A Few Handy Resources**

- “Theprofessorisin.com” has an excellent blog post on writing conference abstracts.
- “Exordo.com” has useful links to writing abstracts across disciplines.
- Penn State’s Graduate Writing Center has a particularly valuable series of downloadable resources. Including, but in no way limited to, the conference abstract writing process. Go to: [gwc.psu.edu/resources](http://gwc.psu.edu/resources).

## HANDOUT 1: “GRADUATE CONFERENCE CFP & ABSTRACT—A SUCCESS”

### Versus Antagonism, Self-Criticism and Hostility in Literature and Art

Keynote Speakers:

Stanley Fish, Davidson-Kahn Distinguished University Professor and Professor of Law, Florida International University

Nathalie Hester, Associate Professor of Italian and French, University of Oregon

Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore USA

September 16-17, 2016

The Department of German & Romance Languages & Literatures (GRLL) Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

For this interdisciplinary conference, the graduate students of GRLL at Hopkins invite proposals for papers on contention in literature, whether between two authors, between authors and their editors and publishers, between authors and their readers, between an author and him- or herself, or on contention within works themselves. We are interested in presentations that grapple not just with the problematic character of a work but also with the questions this raises for editors, scholars, consumers and other artists impacted by the original offense. How does this type of critique shape these professional and personal relationships? How do we, as readers and scholars, interpret authorial self-criticism and hostility toward others in literature? And what are the specific literary and rhetorical techniques or genres of contention or of “versus”? We welcome papers in the fields of German, French, Italian, and Spanish language and literature, as well as English, History, Art History, Film Studies, and Comparative Literature.

Potential subjects include, but are not limited to:

- Self-censorship and auto-critique
- Deliberately antagonistic prose/poetry/manifestos
- Literature presenting or posing ethical problems
- Questions of authority in editorial history (i.e. publishing corrupted or aggressively revised works)
- Forgeries, piracies and pseudonymies
- Cryptographic, hostile or unpublishable literature
- Editorial manipulation and exploitation of authors and/or artists

Send a 250-word abstract for a 15 to 20-minute-long talk to . . .

## Versus Antagonism, Self-Criticism and Hostility in Literature and Art

Daniel Hengel

*“The Unnamable: And the Art of Resistance”*

The call for resistance to the techniques of power employed by agents of both State structured homogeneity and individualizing subjecthood echo throughout Beckett’s *The Unnamable*, (1953). Beckett’s unnamable ‘narrator’—a bodiless amalgam of subjectless voices—complicates, reorders and dismisses the course of power. Written in the wake of World War II’s previously unimaginable horrors, Beckett’s text is a labyrinthine remonstrance of fascism and the devastating effects of unmitigated ideological indoctrination. *The Unnamable*’s extraordinary inscription of resistance reconstitutes the body and language outside the fields of representation.

Grappling with the very recent scholarship of Jacob Lund—“Biopolitical Beckett: Self-desubjectification as Resistance” (2009)—and Mohammadreza Arghiani—“Diminishing I’s: *The Unnamable*’s Absent Subjecthood and the Disintegration of Meaning in the Face of Foucault’s Panopticon” (2012)—this essay reads Beckett’s novel as a unique protest text that resists language’s ability to qualify and quantify the subject. His deconstruction of the subject-object divide through the obfuscation of pro and proper noun allocation destabilizes language’s power over the self, which, in turn, problematizes the concept of the subject—as both a self and a casualty of the State—and disabuses ideologically engendered processes of individualization. Like The Great War before it, World War II demanded “the mighty recasting of literary forms.”<sup>2</sup> Fascism’s wanton destructiveness required new modes of representation forever altering the “distribution of the sensible.”

In *The Unnamable* Beckett creates a textual tympanum that exists in the space between the subject and the object. The ‘subjectlessness’ of the text necessitates a new form of signification. The current scholarship addressing the narrative agency absent from *The Unnamable* often reifies Beckett’s creation in archaic terminology that does not accurately represent the singular specificity of Beckett’s prose. The narrator, Beckett’s narrator, he, they, the unnamable, the committee, the voice, Mahood, Basil, Worm are insignificant and misleading significations of a voice without a voice. In their place this essay introduces a new means of representing Beckett’s Unnamable<sup>3</sup>.

Drawing on the writings of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Samuel Becket and Goran Therborn I propose a reading of *The Unnamable* that seeks neither to codify the speaking voice along familiar lines of representation or misconstrue the uniqueness of Beckett’s literary effort. I call this non-narrating narrator the Vocalisor. The Vocalisor is “in words, made of words, other’s words . . . [it is] all these words, all these strangers, this dust of others” it has “nothing

<sup>2</sup>Walter Benjamin, “Author as Producer” (Address at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris, 27 April 1934), trans. Edmond Jephcott. In *Selected Writings, Volume 2:1927–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999. Print.

<sup>3</sup>Published in 1992, Richard Begam’s “Splitting the Différance: Beckett, Derrida and the Unnamable”—an article I both greatly admire and take umbrage with—previously introduced a series of Beckettian neologisms that, though a step in the right direction, remain wanting.

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to do, that is to say nothing to say, no words but words of others” the Vocalisor is the passage through which language is heard, misunderstood and forgotten as words flow “in at one ear and incontinent out through the mouth, or the other ear.”<sup>4</sup> The Vocalisor is that (not who) which expresses the text’s resistance to established systems of order.

The Essay’s Bibliography Includes:

**END**

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<sup>4</sup>Beckett, Samuel. *The Unnamable*. New York: Grove Press, Inc. 1958: 380, 308, 348. Print.

## HANDOUT 2: “REGIONAL/NATIONAL CONFERENCE CFP & ABSTRACT (PEDAGOGICAL)—A SUCCESS”

### The Place of the Popular: Culture, Classroom, and Field (Roundtable)

Primary / Secondary Area: Pedagogy & Professional / Cultural Studies and Media Studies

Chairs: Mollie Eisenberg (Princeton University)

Kathryn Hendrickson (Marquette University)

### Abstract

For this roundtable, we invite explorations of the intersections between scholarly, institutional, and pedagogical thinking about genre.

Professional literary study in the contemporary disciplinary sense is inextricably linked to the question of canon—it is chronologically coextensive with mass-market literature, and has historically filled the need to sort legitimate art from its pretenders, invaders, competitors, and appropriators. And yet genre fiction’s place in culture, and in academia, continues to grow. Some view academic acceptance of genre fiction as a cheap trick: as humanities fields see fewer majors and smaller enrollments, departments turn to courses on popular culture to attract more students. But genre is increasingly central in and to literary scholarship, too. The current institutional threat to the humanities coincides with a significant rethinking of the boundaries of canon, the theoretical and methodological questions of genre and its objects, and the place of popular fiction in the culture, the classroom, and the field.

The goal of this roundtable is not to propose a new institutional theory to demonstrate the value of the humanities or literary study, but to engage a conversation about the current significance and opportunities of genre in the profession, in scholarship, and in the classroom. In the context of the ongoing

lament about the death of the humanities, what does genre fiction reveal about the place of literature in culture and suggest about the relationship between “legitimate” and popular culture? In what ways does bringing genre into the classroom offer space for a different kind of pedagogy than a focus on works categorized as “literary”? In what ways can we as teachers continue to expand and address the boundaries of mainstream scholarship in ways that benefit our students? How does the study of genre fiction enable explorations of counter-perspectives, new modes of readership, and institutional mission?

**DESCRIPTION:** Some view academic acceptance of genre fiction as a cheap trick: as humanities fields see fewer majors and smaller enrollments, departments turn to courses on popular culture to attract more students. Yet genre fiction’s place in literary studies continues to grow more central: the current institutional threat to the humanities coincides with a significant rethinking of the boundaries of canon, the theoretical and methodological questions of genre and its objects, and the place of popular fiction in the culture, the classroom, and the field. The goal of this roundtable is not to propose a new institutional theory to demonstrate the value of the humanities or literary study but to engage a conversation about the current significance and opportunities of genre in the profession, in scholarship, and in the classroom. We invite explorations of the intersections between scholarly, institutional, and pedagogical thinking about genre.

## ANSWERING A CFP—AN ABSTRACT WRITING WORKSHOP

—The Place of the Popular: Culture, Classroom, and Field—

NeMLA 2020

D.Hengel

*Breaking Barriers: Fiction, Film, and the Fantastic a Pedagogical Practice*

Dear Mollie Eisenberg and Kathryn Hendrickson,

My name is Daniel Hengel. I am a Doctoral Candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center and an adjunct professor at Hunter College. Fall 2019 begins my thirteenth semester teaching in the CUNY system. Before we get into the nitty-gritty of the CFP ask, let me begin by saying how much I dig your CFP. It's great! I too am committed to developing new pedagogical forms and challenging students to think critically about the canon as we discuss new ways of thinking about literature—an interest which seems to live in your CFP's attention to the pedagogical opportunities present in works too often dismissed as "pop-culture." I'm a big fan of genre literature and have made a concerted effort to bring it into the classroom. At MLA 2019, I co-authored and presented on a panel on Afro-futurism and biopolitical resistance. I digress. I'm sorry. Back to the "abstract."

This semester I am teaching a course titled, "Fiction, Film, Fantasy and Their Dissidents."<sup>5</sup> In it we're reading, now canonical works of speculative fiction such as, LeGuin's "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* alongside 'popular' texts including, but not limited to, N.K. Jemisin's *The Fifth Season*, Palahniuk's (and Fincher's) *Fight Club*, Joss Whedon's take on the X-Men in *Astonishing X-Men Vol. 1*, and Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*. Ultimately, the goal of "Fiction, Film, Fantasy and Their Dissidents" is to demonstrate how the texts we read, both in and outside of the canon, resonate in real world problems of agency and authority as we look to reading and writing about literature as a political, social, and egalitarian act.

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<sup>5</sup> A few semesters ago I taught a class titled, "Science Fiction and Dissent: Reading Sci-Fi to Explore Identity, Power, and the Environment." I could bring materials from that class with me as well.



I teach these texts alongside a digital, multi-modal, praxis-centered, semester-long project that lives on the course website. The project, “Power Relations: The New York City Experience,” (PRNYCE), asks students to explore a space in which real-world relations of power operate in a discourse, in New York City, and post about their experience with respect to anything we have read for or talked about in class as we discuss the ways genre literature can foster intersections of literature, language, theory, and praxis in and outside of the classroom.

I designed PRNYCE hoping to encourage students to think critically about the spaces of power, forms of agency, and layers of disguise operating both overtly and surreptitiously in social spaces, while engendering communal empathy by asking students to expose themselves to new ways of thinking about quotidian experiences. In PRNYCE, students write about and provide a non-textual medium illuminating their experience as they participate in three post-response-response2response online-communiqué cycles. At its best, PRNYCE requires students to think both critically and creatively as they discuss their interpretations of systems of coercion and how they, as subjects, relate to the play of agency operating all around them, while, hopefully, recognizing the literature we read in the lives they live. The assignment tacitly asks students to consider everything as a potential text. The language of the prompt purposefully operates in both colloquial and professional textual fields.

### **The Finish:**

My proposed “talk” details my experience with and the pedagogical rationale behind “Fiction, Film, Fantasy, and Their Dissidents” and “Power Relations: The New York City Experience.” I’m more than happy to share copies of my syllabus, semester schedule, assignment prompts, a selection of student posts, responses, and responses to responses that represent the scope of my student body’s accomplishments, and a bit addressing the difficulties and successes of facilitating critical citizenship in the classroom. I’m also happy to chat about maintaining student interest in a semester-long project. It’s up to you!

Below, I provided “Fiction, Film, Fantasy and Their Dissidents” course description and text list well as the PRNYCE assignment prompt.

### The Assignment Prompt:

#### THE PROJECT

##### Power Relations: The New York City Experience (PRNYCE)

**The Assignment:** It’s a blog thingy and it’s going to be great. Divided into three parts, “Power Relations: The New York City Experience” asks you to explore a power relation in New York City and post about your experience with respect to anything we have read for or talked about in class. Try to discover and discuss the movement of power in an ostensibly benign space. For example, how does the layout of the Met reproduce and prioritize Western-hegemonic forms of distinction and value? You will also be asked to respond to other student experiences and to respond to responses of other student experiences in a matrix of student voices and awesomeness.

**The Site:** pending

**The Space:** Anything that exposes you to a relation of power. Power is a many-faced monster. All I ask is that you check with me first. I’ll sign-off—you go for it.

**The Post:** There’s but one true rule governing your post. Your post must include text—written and some sort of non-textual medium. Oh, and there should be a title of some sort, something epic.

- The text you write can be: a journal entry recalling your observations of the machinations of power and its relationship to a text or construct attended to in our class, a short story about your experience, a newspaper-styled article reporting on your event, an analysis of a cultural phenomenon you observed, a poem, a short feature exposing an agent of oppression, a description of the unreality of the dissonance you reckoned with as the prism of power became visible, an anything that is written. There is no minimum word count—different forms of expression ask different utterances from us—but there is a maximum word count! Please, write no more than 600 words. You don’t have to write and write and write. This assignment is not meant to stress you out and burden you in an endless cycle of production. Try to have fun.

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- Your non-textual medium can be: anything that’s not written words, seriously anything. Be creative. You can: paint a painting, paste a collage, play a song, perform a poem, act out a scene you wrote, sketch a comic, parkour, design a graphic, build a GIF, link to a series of related images or sounds, edit a video montage, do a you-tube thing, draw a picture, or dance a dance. Did I mention you can do anything you want to do?

**The Response:** Write 300-ish words in response to a student post. How do you identify, complicate, question, (dis)agree with what was said, sung, drawn, seen, filmed, anything-ed, by the student you chose to respond to. How do your unique lenses overlap, diverge, inform and/or speak to one another? Please, be sure to read through the entire cycle of posts before responding—you never know what you may find. Feel free to supplement your response with something other than text. The Response should begin, “Dear Posting Student’s Name,”

**The Response to the Response:** Join the Conversation. Try to look through the eyes of an-other as they appreciate the experience of someone else. How does another student’s response to a student post affect the way in which you internalize, appreciate, and/or understand the impressions of an-other? Your R2R should attend to both a post and a response—you’ve got to call them out by name. Again, 300-ish words should do it. Please begin your R2R with, “Dear Respondent, I totally (modifier) dig (action verb) your reading of Posting Student’s Name.” You can also respond to an R2R.

**When:**

1	2	3
Post: Midnight, <b>09.27</b>	Post: Midnight, <b>10.25</b>	Post: Midnight, <b>12.01</b>
Response: Midnight, <b>09.28</b>	Response: Midnight, <b>10.26</b>	Response: Midnight, <b>12.02</b>
R2R: Midnight, <b>09.29</b>	R2R: Midnight, <b>10.27</b>	R2R: Midnight, <b>12.03</b>

**How Does This “When” Business Breakdown?**

- You will post only once in the semester.
- You will Respond to a post and an R2R twice this semester.
- In the cycle you post, you do **not** have to respond to a post or write an R2R—though if you would like to engage with a response to your post in an articulate, considered internet debate please do.
- On days that you do not post, you must respond to a post and pen an R2R.
- The assignment is broken into threes. A third of the class will post in any one cycle, the rest will Respond and R2R.

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- You may pick your post day—first come first posts the post they want to post—email me your best-life post list. I’ll do what I can.
- Your contributions will not count toward your grade on this assignment if they are late. Feel free to post earlier than the due date—in fact, that’s totally encouraged.
- Responses and R2Rs must be executed sometime in their listed, 24-hour windows.

**What’s “The Project,” (PRNYCE), Worth to You:** 15% of your final grade in this class (each cycle is worth 5% of your grade). Also, a life-affirming experience.

**Assessment:** Careful consideration. Effort. Execution. Pride. There is no one, concrete, universal standard of excellence governing the assessment of this assignment. It depends on you.

**Finally:** Keep it clean-ish. VITAL, do not attack the human—argumentum ad hominem is a fallacy, it has no place here. You may question a position but you may not go after a person’s character. I have no doubt that none of you will do something like this—because you’re awesome people who dig sharing good, good ideas in a lively discourse community. Thanks for reading!

### THE CLASS

In this course, we turn to the intersection of fiction, film, and the fantastic as we explore divergent representations of social and political resistance with respect to the governing of our bodies and minds. This class investigates the way art resists agents of institutionalized sites of power. And how the art we read and watch remains relevant to current, real-world questions of identity and socio-political agency. We will read novels and short stories, watch films and listen to tunes—supported by selections of theory and criticism—that challenge traditional social, political, and culturally enforced representations of class, gender, and race. Our texts will also illuminate the tenuous relationship between humanity and the environment and the new world we, as a species, may one-day inhabit.

To answer these questions, we will turn to literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries—perhaps the most socially volatile hundred or so years in the history of humanity—that problematize and question the limits of “the canon.” We will explore the ways in which this literature complicates and dismisses patterns of socio-political control, industrial indoctrination, race and class distinctions, hegemonic disenfranchisement, and heteronormative institutions and practices. We will read theories of power and its employee. We will read about systems of control and how we can act against them. We will locate relations of power in the literature we read and discuss their efficacy as both moments of social protest and failures of individuality. We will

celebrate those who chose to speak truth to power despite the odds and obstacles, the threats and punishments.

This course will not be a lecture. You will have a voice. We are going to read and listen to music and watch films. We will sit at the same table and engage in discourse. You will be challenged to defend your readings of the texts to me and your classmates. Modeled after the graduate seminar this class will be a space of shared agency that encourages student engagement and persuasively argued critical thinking. Students will complete low-stakes, weekly writing assignments, deliver a ten-minute presentation, participate in a multi-modal, praxis-oriented, semester-long, three post-response-response2response online-communiqué, and write a research-grounded project of their choosing. We will rotate leading off the discussions each time we meet. You pick a day or two to handle and we'll move on from there. It's going to be a great semester.

### THE TEXTS

#### To Buy:

- *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood  
ISBN: 978-0-525-43500-6
- *Fight Club*, Chuck Palahniuk  
ISBN: 978-0-393-32734-2
- *Astonishing X-Men Vol. 1*  
ISBN: 978-0785115311
- *The Fifth Season*, N.K. Jemisin  
ISBN: 978-0316229296

#### Gratis:

- *District 9*, Neill Bolmkamp
- "Bloodchild," Octavia Butler
- Excerpts from "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses;" Louis Althusser
- "Those Who Walk Away from Omelas," Ursula K. Le Guin
- Excerpts from *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault
- Excerpts from *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault
- Excerpts from *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James C. Scott
- "Shooting a White Elephant," George Orwell
- "These aren't the Droids You're Looking For," Obi-Wan Kenobi
- *Fight Club*, David Fincher
- "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept;" R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt
- "The Forms of Capital" & "Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus," Pierre Bourdieu
- *Pan's Labyrinth*, Guillermo del Toro