Proseminar in Educational Psychology II: Discourse in the Field
EPSY 508, CRN 41213
Spring, 2020
Wednesdays, 5:00-8:00, ETMSW 2419
Instructor: Dr. Theresa A. Thorkildsen
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http://thork.people.uic.edu/fair/

Purpose
This course offers advanced doctoral students a review of the specific types of writing that are privileged in the field of Educational Psychology. Students will explore the nature, quality, and function of four types of scholarship as it aligns with their own expertise of program faculty. These styles of writing include stock-taking literature reviews, conceptual reviews of existing research, original scientific research, and dissemination essays and blogs. Students will also learn some of the norms and conventions associated with crafting research questions, structuring a scientific argument, constructing paragraphs to fit within the argument, and how to move from drafts to polished writing. We will pay particular attention to writing associated with the written preliminary exams, dissertation proposals, and final thesis writing, but students will also be encouraged to broaden these concepts to craft publishable scholarship, grant proposals, and conference presentations. Students will be asked to complete weekly writing exercises design to help them identify the differences and similarities of various parts of their writing. Ideally, students will align their writing products with a capstone piece of writing that will be delivered as a final product for the course.

Specific Course Goals
In a process-focused course of this type, it is easy to lose sight of SMART goals. Recall that such goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely. With that in mind, all students should be able to achieve 3 things if they are devoting enough time to this course and its aims.
1. Identify personal writing habits by labelling those writing habits that should be continued and those habits that should not be continued. This may take the form of a list or emerge from crafting a writing journal.
2. Craft a list of “outstanding authors” whose work might serve as a model for future scholarship—compare and contrast the writing conventions we will discuss with those models. Students may want to identify exemplary thesis work, and that effort should include a problem statement, written examination, thesis proposal, and final dissertation. It would be unrealistic to expect to complete a dissertation in one semester. Students should also be aware that very few people have managed to craft outstanding examples of all parts of the dissertation process, and the ultimate criteria for success in any academic endeavor is a published form of writing.
3. Each week, bring to class 2-3 pages of writing that are problematic. We will spend time working in small groups to offer advice to one another on how to improve writing/solve specific writing challenges.
4. Choose one of the styles of writing we will discuss and craft a capstone product that can be revised across the semester using information about the various discourse styles we discuss. This product may be directly tied to the dissertation process or be independent of that process.
Readings
The best way to learn to write each of the products valued in our discourse community is to read published work with a critical eye, paying particular attention to the style in which authors communicate their ideas. Although we will not discuss the content of specific readings in a linear manner, we will assume that students are professional experts in their field of study and are curious learners. Sample materials are listed below and crowd-sourcing is welcome—suggestions of material to be added will be taken up across the semester.

Published Product Review
Everyone should be able to situate their research in a broader field of research. To assist you with this effort, please find, in your area of expertise, at least one of the following types of publications to be read, compared, and contrasted.

- Book
- Stock-taking review
- Conceptual review
- Original research article
- Dissemination essay for professionals
- Dissemination product for mass media

What is a dissertation?

Writing Guides
It is useful to remember that, while helpful, writing guides serve to encourage writers but do not solve the task of translating important ideas into publishable prose. I welcome any additional suggestions you might also have for this feature of the course.


**Writing Results**


**Inspirational Reading about Writing**

Personal writing journal offer a great way to both identify personal writing challenges and to brainstorm thoughts before being committed too deeply to the structure of a paper. With that in mind, members of the faculty, myself included, have recommended the following books for use in this course. Be aware that spending too much time focused on process detracts from crafting a strong piece of writing, but you will see that this is noted by all the authors of these texts.


**Sample of Informative Websites**

Another guide: [http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/)


APA format for papers: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)

Also: [http://www.uwsp.edu/psych/apa4b.htm#IIF](http://www.uwsp.edu/psych/apa4b.htm#IIF)


And for fun: [http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/](http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/)

**Assignments**

This is a formally graded course. As with other doctoral level courses, grades are criterion-referenced such that the quality completion of each assignment determines the final grade. Final grades are calculated by weighting the weekly writing, class participation, and a capstone project equally. We use this grading system to encourage students to raise questions and think deeply about the program and their involvement in it without worry that this will affect their overall grade point average, but for obvious reasons, participation and attendance are essential.

Students who wish to work toward an ‘A’ in the course should integrate the concepts from the assigned writing tasks into their overall research plan. A self-designed evaluation project, approved by the instructor, should demonstrate how this goal might be met. Outstanding work should enhance students’ curriculum vita, and writing quality should aim to align with the standards found in published journals.

**Grades of “B”** will include oral participation in class discussions and an independent paper that may not adhere to high quality writing standards but that shows progress toward doing so. A passing grade of “C” will be possible if students turn in a final project, but have not always participated in the writing exercises (In doctoral programs, core courses where students earn anything less than a “B” are often retaken.)

**Weekly Writing and Peer Review**

Weekly writing is evaluated pass/fail and should be turned in electronically to the professor at thork@uic.edu. Participation grades reflect the percent of sessions for which papers or make-up assignments are completed.

This class relies heavily on weekly discussions about writing and thoughtful feedback about the quality of written products offered during class. Borrowing the buddy-work concept used in many educational settings, each class member will be expected to bring a short (2-3 pages) piece of writing to class each week and will be paired with at least one peer who is expected to offer sustained feedback on the quality of this writing. Feedback should help each participant identify his/her own strengths and limitations as a writer. Likewise, each class member is expected to offer feedback to his/her peer on their writing.

This level of peer-review mirrors the process that occurs in professional settings. The most important assignment, therefore, is to attend each class and produce some form of writing before coming to class. Advice on how to review writing can be found at the sites below, but we will also discuss styles in class as well.

Advice on reviewing manuscripts: [http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/0102/prescol.html](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/0102/prescol.html)

Strong writers know their strengths and limitations. To assist students in this process, one aspect of the weekly writing process will involve a *self-critique* of these elements. Thus, each class member will be asked to turn in at least a bulleted list of their writing strengths and the challenges they face when writing by the end of the semester. Ideally, this is a revolving list, and it will not be formally graded, but the ability to label the skills one has mastered well is an essential feature of remaining a professional in the field of educational psychology.

For weeks where it is impossible to attend class, students may write a brief summary of one of the course readings or otherwise submit evidence that they have completed activities associated with the topic under consideration. Feedback between peers may be delivered between class sessions, and it is each student’s responsibility to identify the material they have missed.

**Book Talk**

Class members will be asked to choose a week and a book/theme for which they will lead the class in a conversation about the most interesting, relevant, useful parts of the books they have read. The schedule will be updated to reflect the weeks in which individuals are scheduled to present.

**Capstone Project**

The capstone project will be evaluated using the templates commonly accepted when reviewing manuscripts for publication. Templates used from the course readings will be used to evaluate the capstone project. These templates are consistent with the guidelines of the American Psychological Association’s style and content manuals.

The course is designed with the understanding that advanced doctoral students have a wide range of writing goals and that writing improvement occurs when individuals offer sustained attention to a single project. Therefore, each student will be asked to design a capstone project for the course that will be used to evaluate whether he/she has mastered basic elements of generating a strong argument and defending that argument using research evidence. This capstone project may include any one of the following options: journal manuscript, written preliminary examination, thesis proposal, grant proposal, full conference paper, or dissertation.

**Course Guidelines**

It is obviously important for all class members to meet deadlines and responsibilities to one another. Writing is often a solitary act, but strong writing communicates a message to a target audience. This course is designed to improve students’ understanding of how their writing comes across to a professional audience of scholars. Therefore, taking responsibility for communicating with others in a manner that garners feedback is an essential guideline that all participants, the instructor included, must enforce. Rather than build a “class charter” from scratch, it will be helpful if we remember to offer one another feedback on how well we are communicating our intentions and to be receptive to the possibility that our best intentions may not be understood as such by individuals on the receiving end. Patience while we practice what scholar Richard Rorty called the “struggle to find a language that we can all understand” is the most important ground-rule for a writing course of this nature.

We meet for 3 hours each week, and it would be ideal if we could use that time well. Our community will be stronger if we try to adhere, as much as possible, to the following schedule during our weekly meetings. First, the instructor should take no longer than one hour to introduce new writing concepts and/or call attention to common writing struggles. Second, taking turns, each of the class members should be able to lead a book talk discussion, lasting no longer than an hour, about a common writing issue that they have identified in the course readings and found interesting/useful for others to hear.
about. Finally, one hour of class should be spent in the “buddy-review” of writing. These are rough timelines that might vary from week to week, but if we adhere to this process, everyone should be able to learn at least a few new writing skills and improve their ability to write in the clearest manner possible.

**Honesty and Responsibility**
UIC's *Honor Code* as well as the ethical standards of the *American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, Association for Psychological Science*, and *Society for Research in Child Development* govern all work in this and all other courses offered in the College of Education. Students are responsible for becoming familiar with these codes and standards which are available online. Especially important for courses like this one, students should pay attention to the proper use and citations of others' work, and avoid plagiarism. More information on UIC’s Disciplinary Policies can be found at: [http://www.uic.edu/depts/dos/conductforstudents.shtml](http://www.uic.edu/depts/dos/conductforstudents.shtml)

**Accessibility**
UIC strives to ensure the accessibility of programs, classes, and services to students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations can be arranged for students with various types of disabilities, such as documented learning disabilities, vision or hearing impairments, and emotional or physical disabilities. All students should know that the University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that individuals with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for full access and participation in UIC Programs must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Please contact DRC at (312) 413-2183 (voice) or (312) 413-0123 (TDD).

**Resources at UIC**
UIC also offers a wide range of resources for students who need extra help. Doctoral students may want to pay particular attention to the resources available at the UIC Writing Center. It is essential that students get in the habit of writing at least something as often as possible, preferably every day. More details on support services can be found at: [http://www.uic.edu/academics/student-support](http://www.uic.edu/academics/student-support)

**Graduate Special Interest Groups**
The College of Education has a GSIG initiative, a program created by and for graduate students to increase opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and socialization so students build a strong research community for graduate school and beyond. GSIGs are special interest groups in which graduate students engage in an interdisciplinary research community around common interests. GSIGs meet monthly to discuss research and developments in topic areas, collaborate on ongoing projects, and support one another through the academic process with a shared goal to connect, commune, research, and expand knowledge. The initiative also hosts multiple signature events throughout the academic calendar that include: research workshops, graduate community conversations, and writing retreats. [https://education.uic.edu/our-research/graduate-research-opportunities/gsig/](https://education.uic.edu/our-research/graduate-research-opportunities/gsig/)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 15th</td>
<td>Reviewing problem statement and writing guides.</td>
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<td>January 22nd</td>
<td>What does strong writing look like?</td>
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<td>January 29th</td>
<td>What to write, for who, and why? Respecting your audience.</td>
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<td>February 5th</td>
<td>Why an outline, first? Problems with taking shortcuts on this step.</td>
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<td>February 12th</td>
<td>How do I think about order? Structuring a paper with a critical eye.</td>
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<td>February 19th</td>
<td>What makes for a strong section in a paper and why so many headings?</td>
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<td>February 26th</td>
<td>What is the role of a paragraph? Imagining one subject per paragraph.</td>
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<td>March 4th</td>
<td>How should sentences flow in a paragraph? Using logic to include the reader.</td>
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<td>March 11th</td>
<td>Why minimize adjectives? Avoiding rhetoric but maintaining reader interest.</td>
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<td>March 18th</td>
<td>Where does theory go? Following the “show don’t tell” rule.</td>
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<td>Dates</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 25th</td>
<td><strong>Spring Break—no class</strong></td>
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<td>April 1st</td>
<td>What constitutes supporting evidence? Distinguishing theory and data.</td>
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<td><strong>Book talk—Adios Strunk &amp; White—Haeyoon</strong></td>
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<td>April 8th</td>
<td>Why so many drafts? Building the most parsimonious defense of ideas.</td>
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<td><strong>Book talk—How to Write A Lot—Geraldo</strong></td>
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<td>April 15th</td>
<td>Why do reviewers ignore my work? Obeying standard conventions.</td>
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<td>April 22nd</td>
<td>Putting the pieces together into a final draft</td>
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<td>April 29th</td>
<td>Full draft review from class members</td>
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<td><strong>Book talk—Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace—Qiao</strong></td>
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