

NAVIGATING THE PHD

A WRITING WORKSHOP

Navigating the PhD Workshop Series

These two interactive writing workshops, given at least once a semester, are designed to help you develop an individualized plan for graduate writing, especially comprehensive exams, dissertation proposals, and dissertations. Session 1 is designed for students in the early years of their PhD study. Session 2 is designed for students in the latter years of their PhD study. See below for descriptions.

Session 1: Navigating the PhD: Managing Time and Academic Relationships (Pages 2-20)

This interactive online writing workshop is designed to help you develop an individualized plan for graduate writing, especially comprehensive exams, dissertation proposals, and dissertations. Session 1 is generally designed for students in the early years of their PhD study.

In this 3-hour workshop, plans for time management and working with others, especially during these unprecedented times in higher education, will be the main focus. Participants will create academic timelines for their PhD work at MSU and discuss technologies and habits that can help them stay on task. Participants will also discuss how to manage the stress that often pervades the life of PhD students and how that stress might be particularly amplified during this year considering that we are collectively working through the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing racial and systematic injustice and police violence against the Black community.

Facilitators will help guide these discussions and share resources and strategies for overcoming writer's block and procrastination and adopting and maintaining productive practices to consider how to balance time management and prioritizing academic goals.

Additionally, discussion about selecting and working with committees will provide a space for sharing about and learning how to communicate with faculty members about research and writing.

Session 2: Navigating the PhD: Writing Processes & Strategies for Academic

Writing (Pages 21-53)

This interactive online writing workshop is designed to help you develop an individualized plan for graduate writing, especially comprehensive exams, dissertation proposals, and dissertations. Session 2 is designed for students in the latter years of their PhD study.

In this 3-hour workshop, the focus will be on developing and maintaining productive and effective writing processes and practices, especially during these unprecedented times in higher education and in society where we are collectively working through the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing racial and systematic injustice and police violence against the Black community.

Every PhD program at MSU requires comprehensive exams, dissertation proposals, and dissertations. In the workshop, participants will explore and share their current writing practices and be given practical writing and revision strategies. During the latter half of the workshop, participants will draft a plan for developing and completing their dissertations.

Sponsored by **The Graduate School** and **The Writing Center** grad.msu.edu
writing.msu.edu



Managing Time & Academic Relationships

Your PhD Timeline

As PhD students, we have a lot to keep track of every day. It is easy to forget about program requirements, to spend more years than necessary taking courses, and to be surprised by deadlines. One way to help alleviate some of these surprises is to clearly map out our PhD years clearly. Below is an example of one way to organize requirements on a timeline in a table.

Plan of Study

Jane Doe PhD in Ambiguous Studies	Fall 2009-Summer 2014	Core Courses	Concentration Courses
Year 1	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Summer 2016
<i>Coursework</i>	AS 881 AS 885 AS 805	AS 848 AS 870	AS 891 AS 892
<i>Total Credits</i>	9	15	21
<i>Funding</i>	WC, BCC	WC, AS 201	WC, GWG
<i>Attended</i>	MI-WPA	ECWCA	
<i>Presentations</i>		IWCA/CCCC	
<i>Publications</i>			"Stuff" in AS Quarterly
<i>Goals</i>		Annual Review	Revise MA thesis for publication
Year 2	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Summer 2017
<i>Coursework</i>	AS 860 LIN 401	AS 882 LIN 471	
<i>Total Credits</i>	30	39	42
<i>Exams</i>		Core	Concentration
<i>Funding</i>	WC, GWG Research	WC, GWG	WC, GWG
<i>Attended</i>			
<i>Presentations</i>	IWCA		WPA
<i>Publications</i>	Metamorphosis		
<i>Goals</i>	Prepare for Core	Annual Review	

Now, we want you to create your own timeline. You can choose the organizational method we've used as an example, or develop one of your own. In order to complete your timeline, you will probably need to find some specific information. Take this time right now to find your graduate program's handbook online. Based on the information in your handbook, look for when you will need to complete the following:

<i>First Year</i>	<i>Second Year</i>	<i>Third Year</i>	<i>Fourth Year</i>

Timeline Milestones

- Forming a committee
- Submitting any annual reports
- Applying for additional funding, like travel funding, research grants, or completion fellowships
- Finishing coursework
- Preparing for comps
- Submitting your dissertation proposal
- Collecting research
- Storing and cataloging data
- Drafting each dissertation chapter
- Meeting with the committee on each dissertation chapter
- Defending the dissertation

When faced with multiple tasks that are a part of academic work, it's important to prioritize and recognize that we often plan to accomplish more than we are actually able to do. In addition, large goals may require that you set frequent smaller deadlines on your path to the long-term completion deadline. Consider how you might do this as you expand and add detail to your timeline.

Managing Non-Academic/Academic Realities

Graduate school is a challenge for everyone. However, if you are a member of a non-dominant social group, things can be even more challenging. Facing systemic racism, sexism, classicism, ableism, ageism, misogynoir, homophobia, transphobia, exclusionary practices and a host of other obstacles inherent to participation in white, settler-colonialist institutions can affect your studies as well as your wellbeing.

At MSU, our institutional data reveals for example....

We have begun to compile a list of preliminary resources for social and emotional support (to supplement our list of institutional resources) if you experience any of the above. Most importantly, these resources are meant to point you to safe spaces, spaces of strength and care for their members—places to encounter joy and build resistance. Please refer to page (blank) in the appendix.

Activity

We will take a few minutes to explore some of our listed resources and crowd-source any additional resources you might know about that we might not have included.

In groups, please choose an assigned group, explore what they do, what they have to offer, who they serve and find out about an event or resource in specific that they offer, and report back to the group.

Your Strengths and Limitations

One of the best ways to be as successful as you complete these requirements is to know yourself as a student and as a writer/scholar by defining for yourself your own strengths and limitations. Consider what you are good at and where you struggle both as a student and in other aspects of your life.

In the following table, note some of your strengths and limitations. Feel free to talk with your group during this activity.

Strengths	Limitations

As we discuss strengths and limitations, as a full group, think about ways that you can use your strengths to compensate for and work through your limitations. This is why self-awareness is so important.

Strategies for Facing and Working Through Limitations and Obstacles

Sometimes, though, we cannot just rely on what we are good at to make up for where we struggle. We need to learn new strategies to work through obstacles. Some common obstacles for graduate students are establishing systems of organization, managing and using technologies, facing limited resources of time and money, fighting procrastination, dealing with stress, and developing a supportive community.

We are going to discuss these obstacles as a group and share strategies for working through them. In the Appendix we have provided some tips of our own, but before you look through them, we are going to discuss some of the strategies you have all developed. We encourage you to note any useful ideas as they are presented by your fellow workshop attendees.

Establishing Systems of Organization

Based on our conversations, take note of useful strategies and tools for organizing your research, your teaching, and your other responsibilities. Please see the appendix for some resources.

Managing and Using Technologies

The following are several computer-based organizational tools. In your groups, choose one to explore. Play with the technology a bit. When we come back together as a full group, we will ask you to share your opinions about the tools.

ANALOG “TECH”

Passion Planner	http://www.passionplanner.com/	A premium planner that provides daily, weekly and yearly modules for planning and reflection
Plum Paper Planners	https://www.plumpaper.com/	One of several sites that allows you to customize, adapt and create a planner that works best for you.

STUDY/RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Zotero	https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/3504/	A free bibliographic tool. It helps you keep track of what you've read and what you want to read. You can tag books and articles, attach notes and other documents, and link to websites.
Endnote	http://www.endnote.com/	Bibliographic software you can purchase, though free trials are available. You can use EndNote to search online bibliographic databases, organize references, images and PDFs in any language, and create bibliographies and figure lists.
OneNote	www.onenote.com	A Microsoft Office software component that is included with some of the Office Suites. It allows you to capture text, images, as well as video and audio notes. Users can share 'notebooks' with other OneNote users, which allows simultaneous taking and editing of notes with people in other locations. You can view and edit notes from virtually any computer with an Internet connection or a Windows phone.

Evernote	http://www.evernote.com/	Similar to Zotero, Evernote is a note-taking system. You can save links to websites and screenshots and write notes. This is a fairly robust system.
ShoveBox	http://wonderwarp.com/shovebox/	A place to stow away ideas you run across. This keeps snippets of ideas together in one space. This is perfect for folks who are always trying to keep track of multiple scraps of paper with inspiration on them.
Delicious	http://delicious.com/	A bookmarking tool that allows you to keep track of websites of interest. You can label websites with multiple tags.
DropBox	www.dropbox.com	Free and paid versions are available, with varying options. Dropbox allows you to sync your files online and across your computers automatically, to share files, to back up your files online, and to store files on its server.
Mendeley	http://www.mendeley.com	A research tool helps you organize research and collaborate. It is a tool specifically made for academics to coordinate with one another and to keep track of their own research projects.

TIME & TASK MANAGEMENT

ATracker	http://www.wonderapps.se/atracker/	A time tracker that allows the user to enter tasks, categories and activities in order to track daily, weekly and monthly time use. Provides pie chart
-----------------	---	--

		graphs for visual clarity. Better to pay for pro version.
Habitica	https://habitica.com/static/home	An app that boasts a way to “gamify” your life. Build avatars, get rewards for tasks completed and organize your life! ;)
30/30	https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/30-30/id505863977?mt=8	App that sets time limits for each task to keep you moving and on track!
Forest	https://www.forestapp.cc/en/	App that encourages you to put your phone down and focus on tasks. Get rewarded by building a forest.

WRITING PRACTICE

Written Kitten	http://writtenkitten.net/	Writing app that rewards you with a photo of a kitten (!!!) or puppy or bunny, after you complete a number of words.
750 Words	http://750words.com/	Writing practice app that works by engaging a social community and challenges you to write 750 words every day. Helps with goal setting and consistency.
Pomodoro	https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique	Writing practice technique that challenges you to complete timed writing and builds in brief breaks. Good for burst writing practice.

WRITING STYLE/READING/DIAGNOSTIC

Beeline Reader	http://www.beelinereader.com/	Online tool to make screen reading easier on your eyes.
Hemingway Editor	http://www.hemingwayapp.com/	Online tool to help analyze your prose and edit for clarity and concision.

SELF-CARE

Pacifica	http://www.thinkpacifica.com/	App that helps the user track emotion and stress levels and find better coping mechanisms for emotional challenges. Aimed at stress reduction.
Stop, Breathe and Think	https://www.stopbreathethink.com/	Helps bring mindfulness to your daily life. Guided meditations and reflective tool.
Insight Timer	https://insighttimer.com/	Meditation app complete with guided meditations of varying lengths and themes, talks by meditation teachers, a timer to meditate by and a social media component to encourage your practice.
Calming Manatee	https://calmingmanatee.com/	Sitting in class and feeling stressed out? Go here for an affirmation and picture of an adorable manatee 😊

Activity

Do you work with any other tools that you'd like to recommend to other workshop participants? Please share them with us.

Take 10 minutes in groups, to share or find an app that isn't on our list and present it to the group.

What does it do? What is it for? What are its strengths and limitations? Why would it be useful for you?

Fighting Procrastination

Be aware of your particular method(s) of procrastination. Are there any patterns you can recognize? Below, list your procrastination "tools": the things you do or use that keep you from being as productive as you could. We rarely have the chance for such self-reflection, so we are going to take this time now.

-
-
-
-

Dealing With Stress

What causes the most stress in your life? Below list stress factors and ways you cope with them. Remember: MSU offers free counseling to students. The MSU Counseling Center is located at 207 Student Services Building. Phone: 355-8270.

-
-
-
-

Working within an Academic Community

Advisors, committee members, other faculty, and colleagues are a major influence on our levels of stress and our capacity for success, depending on how supportive they are. Therefore, we are going to spend the rest of our workshop talking about working with members of our academic committees, especially advisors and committees. Keep in mind that "non-academic" relationships are important to your academic success too; see the appendix for strategies and suggestions for interacting with people outside your academic community.

Tips and Tricks

Get Yourself Noticed

A successful career requires talent, skills, and a viable network. A talented researcher may still not receive the support, attention, and compensation they deserve if their work is unknown or not marketed. You want to use strategic “bragging” to communicate that you are the person to be relied on. You can weave in your life experience so that you become a person of interest (no one said you can't have a pleasant manner). For good or bad, your performance is not always enough to get noticed.

Win at Office Politics

Office politics exists in every organization: non-profits, “mom and pops,” and universities. Acknowledge that politics is going on! Observe who has the highest level of access and assess your personal level of influence and what you can leverage to get things done.

Build as You Go

Work on your CV/resume and Linked-in/Academia profile as you go along. Waiting until the end makes for difficult and long work and you want to build your network *before* you need it. You can pace yourself by making 2-3 new connections a week and make sure you do less asking and give more opportunities to others in your network. You want to become of value to your network. Remember, “you're your own business.”

The All-Star Team

Know what you're looking for in committee members and become a talent manager. Understand that people work for people and not just institutions. It's better to have committee members or colleagues who want to genuinely work and support you and not out of institutional obligation. To do so, you want to sharpen your leadership skills so people speak favorably of you by doing well by others and looking for respect and not for popularity. You want to think about how you present yourself, what's your personal brand, and what you value. Examine the most talented and look for those characteristics in others and if they're not an obvious yes, they're a no.

Addressing Tension

Don't ignore the problem and hope the issue gets better because the problem rarely does. To avoid issues you want to make sure you communicate your expectations, needs, and concerns with respect and professionalism. You can't over communicate! You want to communicate the end game clearly, with clear metrics when possible, and care personally. In the end, people operate as if things are fine unless something is said otherwise.

Developing a Supportive Community

How do you feel supported in your academic community? What advice do you have for other PhD students?

Choosing an Advisor

For most PhD students, our advisors function as our academic mentors. Before we make advisor choices, it is important to think about what we consider a good mentor to be.

Develop a list of the qualities and responsibilities of a good mentor. Then choose what you all think are the top three most important qualities you have listed. You will share them with the full group.

-
-
-

A successful relationship with a mentor/advisor also places responsibility of the mentee/student.

Now develop a list of the qualities and responsibilities of a good mentee. Again, choose the top three qualities to share with the full group.

-
-
-

It is unlikely that one person can meet all of your needs. That's where your committee comes in. If you have the power to select your committee members, it will be important when you select them to think about who will "fill in the blanks" left by your advisor.

If you have already chosen an advisor and a committee, do they possess these qualities? If not, do you have the power to make changes?

If you have already established a committee, below list your members and their best mentoring qualities. Are you getting what you need from them?

-

-
-
-
-
-

If you have not chosen a committee, are there any people in your department you are thinking about including? Who are they, and what needs do you think they each will meet? If you don't yet have committee members in mind, list the qualities you will most need from your future committee members.

-
-
-
-
-
-

Whether or not you have chosen your committee, can change your committee, or have chosen the best possible faculty members to support you and your work, you will still face challenges in working with these people. It is important for you to anticipate these challenges and how you would deal with them.

Activity

*The following challenges are fairly common problems or are serious issues. In your groups, choose **one** problem to discuss and try to come up with ways to deal with or*

work through it. Think about the resources available to you, both personal and external. We will ask you to present your solutions to the entire group.

- If you are not in agreement with a member?
- If you need additional support?
- If a member is not accessible enough?
- If feedback on your work is slow in coming?
- If members are not getting along?
- If your relationship with your advisor becomes problematic?
- If you begin to wonder whose work this really is?
- If a committee member moves/retires/dies?

Based on your conversation, if you could give one piece of advice to other PhD students choosing or working with committee members, what would it be?

During lunch, write your advice on the whiteboard to share with the entire group.

Managing Time and Academic Relationships

Establishing Systems of Organization

- Set up a filing system to organize your materials—don't discard anything.
- Set up a calendar system with major deadlines visible and clearly spelled out. Although you will rarely meet the originally established deadlines in an exact fashion and must revise them (for various reasons), a master time plan may help you avoid the “no-end-in-sight” syndrome so common to the PhD student. Start researching topics early and everywhere: keep an investigator's journal where you jot down notes, ideas, thoughts, etc.
- Set up a log to chart your hourly/daily progress. This could be a running time sheet of hours spent in the office, library, field, etc. Such a log is important in its own right as a motivator and will play a part when you periodically review your progress, or have to rebudget your time in light of outside demands or new phases of your work.

Managing and Using Technologies

- In addition to establishing “physical” or “material” organizational systems, establishing and maintaining a simple and organized computer file system is incredibly important with so many digital notes, handouts, presentations, readings, and written texts living in our computers. Clearly and specifically name and date your files and folders.
- Save each revision to a text with the day's date added so you don't lose your previous versions.

Facing Limited Resources of Time and Money

- Apply for fellowships—not only are these opportunities for money and research experience, but the application process itself usually asks you to write personal research statements. Reflecting on your work in these statements can be reassuring and productive for future work.
- Develop daily and weekly task lists in which you identify the tasks that NEED to get done, that SHOULD get done, and that you WANT to get done. Don't limit these to work tasks, but include other daily activities such as chores, errands, lunches, and fun.
- Rethink your conceptions of time. Consider breaking your day up into small pieces of time and dedicate those pieces to the work activities you need to finish and the other time requirements of your day, leaving a few blocks open for yourself.

Fighting Procrastination

- Think about deadlines: Do they help your production or does the stress of them hinder your progress? Do you rely on others to set deadlines or do you set them for yourselves? How might you use deadlines to help you fight against procrastination?

Dealing with Stress

- Find ways to make progress—even tackling a small task can help you feel good. Any accomplishments should be viewed as positive; let it represent progress.
- Increase your competency in other areas that could be contributing to your stress (e.g. computer competency, teaching strategies).
- Find/schedule time to enjoy activities not related to your academic work. Even consider interacting with people outside your program who share some of these interests.
- Exercise regularly and try relaxation techniques (meditation, yoga, etc.).
- Be sure to get enough sleep as the effects of sleep loss can harm you both in the short term and the long term.

Developing a Supportive Community

- Maintain your relationships with family and friends. They can be an invaluable source of support and help you maintain your perspective on life outside of academia.
- Consider how choices in topic might separate you from your partner or family and discuss these lifestyle changes with them. Talk about the expectations you have for your partner, children, and your family, and talk about the expectations they have of you.
- Think about whether there are ways to include your family/friends in your work.
- Join or develop working groups with other students—theory groups, research groups, study groups, and writing groups can be intellectually stimulating and supportive spaces.

Social and Cultural Graduate Student Resources

- Council of Graduate Students Cultural Resources page: <http://cogs.msu.edu/resources/diversity-and-inclusion/>
 - Links to the following: Office of Institutional Equity, Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, LGBT Resource Center, MSU Women's Resource Center, Student Veteran's Resource Center, Office for International Students and Scholars, Mosaic-Multicultural Unity Center, Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions.
- Black Graduate Student Association
 - MSU BGSA (FaceBook)
- MICCA: Michigan Indigenous Chicax Community Alliance
 - MICCA (FaceBook)
- APAGA: Asian Pacific American Graduate Association
 - MSU APA Grad Student Association (FaceBook)
- IGSC: Indigenous Graduate Student Collective
 - Michigan Indigenous Graduate Student Collective (FaceBook).
- AGEF: Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate
 - grad.msu.edu/agep
- QT-GRADD: Queer Grad Student Organization
 - QT-GRADD (Facebook).
- MSUCSD: Michigan State University Council of Students with Disabilities
 - MSU Council of Students with Disabilities (FaceBook).

Choosing an Advisor and Committee

- An effective advisor of your committee should be:
 - Someone interested in and competent to advise on your topic;
 - Someone with reasonable expectations for what you will accomplish;
 - Someone reliable (ie. Will give comments within a reasonable time)
 - Someone accessible for feedback and consistent with advice
 - Someone with personal integrity;
 - Someone interested in your success;
 - Someone with the ability to responsibly chair the committee;
 - Someone willing to be a mentor during and beyond graduate school;
 - Someone respected by other faculty;
 - Someone you generally get along with and enjoy being around.
- Temporary advisors are, believe it or not, only meant to be temporary! Many grads begin working with a temporary advisor and invite that person to become his or her permanent advisor. However, the point of having a temporary advisor is to help you get started in your program and you shouldn't feel guilty about choosing a permanent advisor later on. It may feel awkward to end this relationship, but most temporary advisors expect it to happen and you should feel free to choose an advisor that suits you best.

- Try working with your committee to establish guidelines and expectations for both you and the various members of your committee.
 - Consider working with your committee to establish realistic responsibilities for both you and the various members.
 - Keep an open mind and encourage their suggestions and comments; feedback is important—let your committee know how they are doing.
 - Early on, think about creating, along with your committee, a meeting schedule and stick to it.
 - Sometimes, planning around times when everyone *cannot* meet is easier than trying to find the “one time” that everyone can.
 - Consider clearly establishing at what point in the development of the drafts they will be given to the various committee members and agree on a response time. Solicit specific responses from individual members based on their strengths and your needs in order to assure timely and relevant responses from them.
 - Take responsibility for communicating with members; do it regularly and build a positive relationship with them. Think about sending regular progress reports to them discussing coursework and research.
 - This report should be a regular habit. For instance, submit a monthly report to the entire committee and be clear on what revisions you have accomplished and still need to do. It could also be a forum to resolve difficulties you may encounter.

- Suggestions for Handling Situations
 - First, recognize that your advisor and your committee *want to see you succeed* (despite the feelings we might sometimes have to the contrary!). Keep these thoughts in mind when working out conflicts with your committee.
 - If you disagree, keep lines of communication open. Both you and your advisor need to articulate your positions to eliminate misunderstandings. If you still can't agree (and the situation becomes insurmountable), perhaps you need to reconsider the membership of your committee. Remember, articulate your concerns early on in the process.
 - If a member is inaccessible or unavailable, make sure that you are being very clear as to when you need them and how to reach them.
 - If feedback is slow in coming (e.g., if it takes weeks or months to get work back), talk with the member and find out why the agreed upon time frame is not being adhered to. Make your advisor aware of the situation. If a resolution cannot be reached, you need to deal with it by channeling your energy and emotions back into your writing, finding outlets for stress, or finding an outside reader.
 - If your relationship with your advisor becomes problematic—depending upon the nature of the situation—seek out the counsel of a responsible person. In most circumstances the graduate chair of your department is the best first step.
 - If you begin to question whether the dissertation is your work or the committee's, be aware that it is a joint venture; you and your committee. However, you still should feel a strong sense of ownership in the work.



Writing Processes & Strategies for Academic Writing

Today we'll be talking about doing activities related to writing processes. At the end of the workshop, we'll cover some information about high-stakes writing (comprehensive exams and dissertations).

Reflecting on Your Writing Processes

What kind of writing do you do for your degree program?

What kind of writing do you do outside of school?

What kind of writing do you expect to do as part of your career after you obtain your PhD?

Exploring Your Writing Processes

The French word for rough draft is *brouillon*, which is derived from a verb meaning “to place in disorder, to scramble.” This messiness is an integral part of writing, but in English, we have no equivalent for *brouillon*. *Rough draft*, instead, suggests something that must be polished and smoothed not something deliberately scrambled. Similarly, the word *outline*, which is frequently used when discussing writing, suggests an inert structure, a clear plan. The way we usually talk about writing in the US makes it seem like a very

orderly and straightforward process instead of the messy, recursive, knowledge-making process that it usually is.¹

A Model of the Writing Process We're Familiar With:

1. Choose a topic
2. Narrow your topic
3. Write a thesis
4. Make an outline
5. Write a draft
6. Revise
7. Edit

A More Realistic Model of Writing Processes:

- Start with a problem or a question
- Explore the problem through research, freewriting, and discussion
- Take time away from the problem
- Explore some more
- Write a complete draft using exploratory writing and research
- Reformulate/revise writing by thinking through the problem again and considering audience more than before
- Polish and edit for unity, coherence, and structure

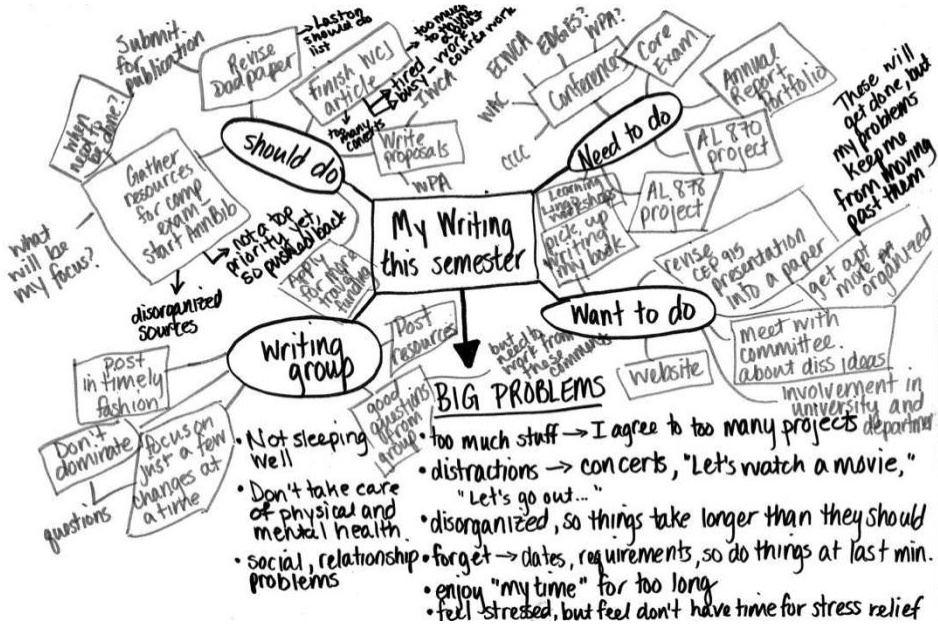
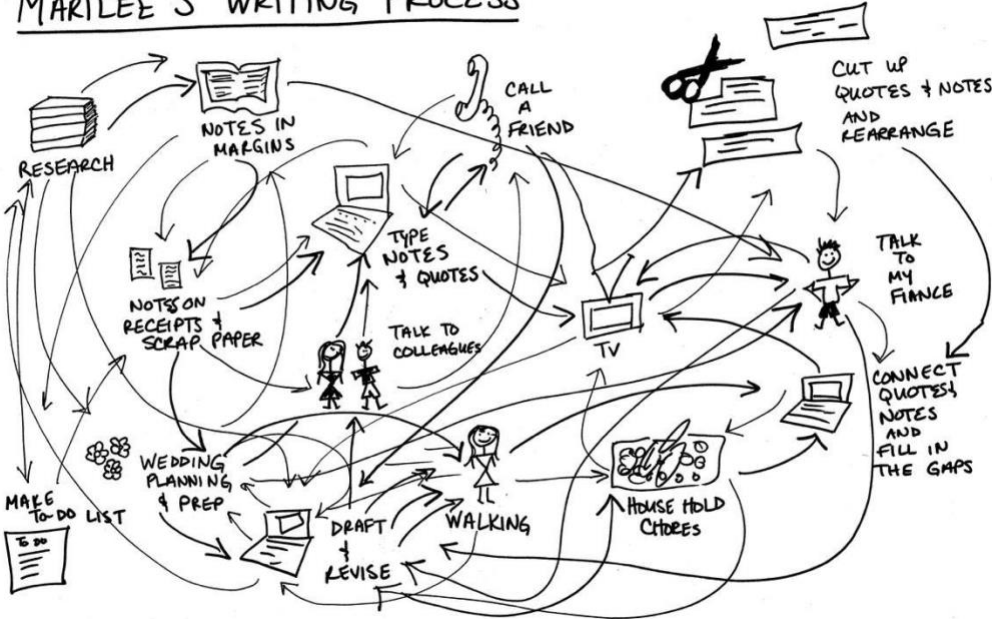
Writing is hard to talk about realistically in a step-by-step way because so many steps are repeated throughout the composing (this is what it means when people say writing is recursive) and every piece of writing is different, requiring different kinds of repetition. Writing processes are difficult to represent in alphabetic text, which often works in a linear way.

What are other ways you and/or others talk about writing? What are the processes and practices involved with writing for you?

On a separate sheet of paper, write about, map, and/or draw your typical writing process for writing a paper for class. What do you do? What kinds of activities not typically considered "writing" are part of your process? (Note examples below for guidance.)

¹ Taken from John C. Bean's *Engaging Ideas* (16, 29-30)

MARILEE'S WRITING PROCESS



Once you've completed your map, share it with other participants at your table. Note how your approaches to writing are similar and different.

Why do you think these differences exist?

Will you consider adapting your approach to include some of the processes mentioned by others? Which ones?

After you have discussed your writing process with your group, answer for yourself: Where am I most confident in my writing process?

Then ask yourself: Where do I struggle most?

How might you find resources and strategies for improving these difficulties?

Graduate Writing Groups

Joining or starting a graduate writing group can serve many functions, such as expanding your knowledge of writing processes, establishing regular deadlines for your writing, receiving constructive feedback on your work, and creating a system of support for yourself during the dissertation process.

The Writing Center supports graduate writing groups. If you are interested in joining a group, go to **<http://writing.msu.edu/writing-groups>** for more information and to fill out

an interest form. Groups are usually formed at the beginning of each semester, so placement is easiest in September and January.

Another option is to *start your own group*. If you go this route, here is some advice:

- Keep your group to about 3 to 5 members. You want to be able to create a feeling of close community and trust, and you want to be able to have time for each participant to share his/her writing every couple weeks.
- If you have the opportunity, form a group with graduate students who have similar interests, goals, and views about writing so that your group will work collaboratively together.
- Make sure members are committed and will stick with the group. Ask members to make a commitment of at least two semesters to create continuity.
- Schedule meetings regularly to minimize the problems related to everyone's hectic graduate life. For example, decide to meet every Tuesday from 3:00 to 5:00PM or set your specific times and dates at the beginning of each semester.
- Set a definite agenda for each meeting—socialize either before or after business. One way to structure the group, for example, is to take turns bringing your own work to the meetings.
- If you form a leaderless group, set up parameters and guidelines. You can take turns facilitating, but be sure you lay out guidelines when you begin, so that all group members know the expectations of the group.
- A group leader can be helpful in dealing with problems or eliminating unproductive members or habits of the group. If someone is willing to lead, and others concur, this can help streamline the process.
- Encourage each other to set goals and support each other in reaching them. Use contracts or other goal-setting tools and let the group be your cheering section and support network.

Research & Drafting

Keeping an investigator's notebook

Don't wait to start writing until you've finished your research/reading. Set aside a notebook in which you record your questions, ideas, notes, and concerns as they arise. Research, especially for the dissertation, is not just taking in ideas or facts; it involves engaging with information. Since you can't expect to hold all of your ideas and thoughts in your head as you go, write them down.

Begin with writing for yourself

Explore your ideas and begin writing a draft for you. This draft is a place for you to make your ideas tangible on the page. Write uncensored. Work through ideas as you go. This is a first step—just getting your ideas on a page—and you do not have to show it to anyone, which alleviates any pressure or expectation of a polished writing project.

Consider these approaches

Start by writing down your ideas; don't stop to correct or find the right word. Just get all your ideas down on paper in any order you can, and don't worry about editing. Some folks call this "blahing on the page."

Outline the chapter or section with major ideas, writing out each section as research comes in, and then read it over. Later you can move sections around as needed and eventually blend in changes.

What approaches to research and drafting would you recommend to other PhD students?

Reworking the Draft

Next, you'll want to shape your writing into a complete draft for others to read. First, we'll talk about "reworking" our writing which we see as a messy step following the initial writer's draft, making it into a reader's draft. Then, we'll move on to revision where the work is refined through changes in organization and structure.

There are various ways to approach reworking a draft:

- Create an outline of your ideas as you read through your writing. You can sum up each paragraph in the margin, write down questions, or categorize ideas. This is sometimes called a reverse outline.
- As you read the draft, look it over to see how your argument and ideas fit together, and move sections around thematically. You can cut up pages on your printed draft if necessary, or highlight sections that are similar.
- Briefly sum up your ideas after each section ("What am I really trying to say in this argument/chapter/section?") to articulate what you are trying to do in different sections. This can be like freewriting about each section to determine what you're trying to say, and it can help you gain clarity.
- Do what works for you. Don't try to force yourself into someone else's method. Consider what has worked for you in the past, and adopt methods only if they fit your style. Remember, don't get overwhelmed by working through an initial draft, break it into chunks to make it manageable.

General Tips for Reviewing Your Draft

- Look for materials that stand out as interesting.
- Look for questions that pop up as you read.
- Read and mark themes by color, number, letter, etc.
- Read through and put a check by something that seems (very) right, or (very) wrong.
- Cut out, but save, the paragraphs that have interesting ideas but don't belong in that chapter. Put them in a specific file or section "to be used later" and hold on to them.
- Identify what you need or where you are struggling and ask someone else to work with you on these concerns. The Writing Center can be helpful here, as can friends, family, and colleagues. Visit writing.msu.edu to make an appointment at the Writing Center.

Revision

Revision is an inevitable part of the dissertation writing process. Revision is usually discussed as a specific stage of the writing process that takes place after initial drafting during which the writer rearranges text, expands ideas, and edits errors. Since writing is recursive, revision happens throughout the writing process until the document is considered "finished."

Consider these approaches

Revision is collaborative. Talking about your ideas and writing with people in and outside your field can be helpful in developing your idea and working out gaps in your knowledge. Talk with family members, friends, officemates, colleagues, and Writing Center consultants. Meet frequently with your advisor or other committee members. Consider joining an informal writing group.

List some people you'd be interested in talking with about your writing

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Revision is recognizing what is and isn't working and making changes as your project grows. *Take a moment and think about where you are at with your dissertation (or other project). Consider what changes you might need to make to :*

Methodological choices

Conceptual frameworks

Diction and terminology, and/or

Writing processes and practices

Overcoming Writer's Block

Writer's block has plagued us all at one point or another. It can be debilitating.

Consider this approach

Try writing every day, or almost every day, for at least 15 minutes. Try to cultivate a "writing addiction" mentality by using your daily writing to keep your mind engaged with ideas even when you're occupied with other tasks. Motivate yourself to write by building it into daily work or pleasures, and start small so it will build from there.

Ask Yourself

What do you think are the causes of writer's block?

What strategies have you used in the past to keep yourself writing?

What are the minimum number of minutes you are willing to commit to working on a daily (or every other day) basis?

How have or will you motivate yourself, or reward yourself, when you reach your daily or weekly writing goal?

How have you reached your writing deadlines?

High-Stakes Writing: The Comprehensive Exams and the Dissertation

All PhD students are required to take comprehensive exams and to write a dissertation. These processes and documents are different for every degree program.

Use the information below and your graduate handbook to help you develop a plan for approaching and/or completing your comprehensive exams and/or dissertation.

Comprehensive Exams

1) Find out how many components your comprehensive exam has. Do you take more than one exam? Will the exam(s) take place in a specific location? How much time do you have to complete the writing? Will the exam be long- or short-essay questions? Will you be responsible for writing your own exam questions? Is there an oral component to the exam?

2) When do students usually take their comprehensive exams? Many programs have students taking their exams in the second or third year of study. Make sure you know what is normal and that you are on track.

3) Put this information together to form a timeline and a plan to approach your comprehensive exams with confidence. Refer to the tips in the appendix for more direction.

Dissertation

1) Find out the processes and structures for dissertations in your discipline. Do you need to write and defend a prospectus/proposal? How are dissertations in your discipline structured? How many chapters do they have? Consider reviewing completed dissertation proposals by checking them out from the library and seeing their content and structure.

2) When do students usually begin their dissertations? How long will you have to complete your dissertation? How might this affect the research methodologies you would like to employ?

3) Use this information to develop a timeline and plan to approach your topic selection, proposal/prospectus writing, and dissertation writing with confidence. Refer to the tips in the appendix for more direction.

Sample Review Form

This workshop has focused primarily on writing process, strategies for combating procrastination, and navigating some of the material obstacles of being a doctoral student. However, as we all know, whether or not you plan on remaining in academia as a researcher or working in industry or the public sector, for now at least, professionalizing your writing is a huge component of your enculturation here.

Graduate students are expected to write dissertations, compose articles for publication, write grant proposals, attend conferences and work on research teams that report their results in the public, private and academic sectors. We also know that practice with

and instruction in these writing genres can sometimes be confusing or uneven. In order to support you, here and in a series of documents in the appendix of this packet, we offer documents aimed at helping you understand how to do some of the following at a professional level: review your own writing and the writing of others, how to break up larger projects into smaller, publishable pieces and how to evaluate and track publication venues in your discipline. We gratefully share these adapted materials in partnership with the community engagement and outreach office here at MSU.

What follows is an activity to help you in a twofold approach: first, to evaluate your own writing and second to evaluate writing as a reviewer would, helping you gain skills as both a writer and reviewer.

Page One

Title of Article

What is the *Journal* looking for in a Research Article?

Research Articles: description of what the parameters/needs of journal are for articles.

Research Articles should (examples of what a social science journal typically looks for)

- outline the overall concept of the study;
- provide a thorough literature review that is timely and relevant to the study;
- give a clear statement about what gap in the literature the current study is addressing;
- outline the methods used
 - Indicate that Institutional Review Board (IRB) human subjects approval was secured, if applicable (or explain why it was not required);
- provide robust sections that report the **findings** of the study and **discuss their implications**;
- include a section with the limitations of the study and areas for future research; and
- provide conclusions that address
 - the gap in the literature that the study addressed;
 - best practices or lessons learned that the reader can apply to her/his context; and/or
 - how the conclusions inform decision makers.

Peer Review Decision: *Accept, Reject, Major or Minor Revision*

Positive comments: *What are the particularly positive aspects of the manuscript?*

Overall Recommendations: *What general recommendations do you have to improve the manuscript?*

Page Two

Specific Recommendations: Complete where appropriate

Recommendations for setting of the context of the study: *Nature of the context; nature of the exigency for project? Community/Audience/Issue being addressed by the article?*

Recommendations for the author about the literature review: *Has the author identified literature highlights and gaps? How have the gaps led to the current study? What gap is the study seeking to fill? How do the findings extend, revise, or forge new ground in the literature?*

Recommendations about the research methods: *What is the connection of the author to the project and assessment of the project? Was IRB approval secured? If not, why not? Who or what is being assessed (the sample)? How were data collected and analyzed? What are the limitations of the study? How were participants involved in study (research ethics)?*

Recommendations for Findings and Implications sections: *Has the study extended, revised, or filled a gap in the literature? How do the findings inform theory? Practice?*

Recommendations for Section that outlines the limitations of the study and areas for future research:

Recommendations for the Conclusion section: *Does the author provide lessons learned or best practices that readers can apply to their contexts? Does the author cogently tell how this study contributes to the literature?*

Recommendations for readability, flow, copy-editing, organization, APA formatting, use of acronyms, etc.

Writing Processes & Strategies for Academic Writing

Brainstorming & Organizing

Some common and easy-to-use visual brainstorming and organizing tools:

- Venn Diagrams are great for comparing and contrasting and for seeing details that can be synthesized. They could certainly be useful in figuring out how to organize something like a literature review. Venn Diagrams are easy to create on PowerPoint, though this program does not allow for much complexity. However, Venn Diagrams are not the best diagramming tools for multi-layered, complex situations.
- Clusters can be used as an initial brainstorming technique to not only generate ideas and connections but to also see what might be the most viable focus for a project. Clusters can be quite messy, and another organizational technique is generally used after a writer has worked through completing a cluster.

- Mind Maps are fairly detailed and complex maps that can display connections between ideas as well as sub-content. Mind Maps, as originally conceptualized, are more artistic than most other visual graphic organizers or brainstorming maps. They are generally used to help students remember concepts and visually present information (such as from readings). For more information on Mind Maps, go to: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newslss_01.htm.
- Schematics are generally used to display processes, such as the process of a factory production line, or the design of a circuit or machine. However, researchers and writers can use schematics to display processes observed (human interactions, movements, etc.) or how any “mechanisms” observed function.
- Situational Maps are maps that look to visually represent an entire research situation, considering human actors, non-human actors, and discursive (language-based) actors. Situational maps were developed by Adele Clarke and are discussed in detail in her book, *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*. Mapping software like Bubbl.us and VUE are great for creating complex situational maps.

For PDF images of fill-in-the-blank graphic organizers, go to:
<http://my.hrw.com/nsmedia/intgos/html/igo.htm>

Comprehensive Exam Tips

- First, like many things in graduate school, comps/quals differ from department to department. *This list of strategies is a broad overview and does not replace talking to your advisor.*
- Many departments maintain a file of previous comp questions. Talk to a department administrative assistant to find out more about this.
- Talk to other graduate students in your department who are studying for/recently completed comps. They are one of your best resources for planning
- Get a reading list ready early. Talk to your advisor or fellow graduate students to get a suggested list of the most significant texts in your field. Think about forming a reading group up to a year before your comprehensive exams.
- Generally, departments give you more than one test with one required to be written; sometimes they are both written, sometimes one is written and one is oral. Check with your advisor to find out the format of your exams.

- Comps are meant to show the breadth of your general subject matter knowledge and the depth of your speciality.
- Comps are about synthesizing your coursework and research interests as well as showing your department what you know about your potential dissertation work. Make sure your committee understands your work and guides you as you prepare for comps.
- Some departments require a proposal before comps—check with your advisor for specific details.
- If you fail comps (but you probably won't!!!), most departments allow retakes, although some departments are more stringent on this. Again, check with your advisor for your department's policies.

Purposes of the Dissertation

- Don't let the idea of the perfect dissertation paralyze you; it doesn't exist.
- The dissertation is not your magnum opus; it is the ticket to your professional career.
- The dissertation is an apprenticeship project; what is “significant” or “original” depends largely on your field.
- Keep in mind that you are building on existing research. The dissertation is rarely a place where completely “new” ideas are presented.
- The dissertation is unique in terms of the work you have been doing in your academic career; you are expected to learn how and why you're doing it as you do it.
- The dissertation is designed to show that:
 - You can persevere;
 - You are familiar with what others in the field are writing;
 - You can make a contribution to the field through your research;
 - You can document and make your research available to others;
 - You can suggest future areas for research.

Questioning: Situating Your Dissertation

Ask Yourself

What characteristics do you feel an ideal dissertation possesses?

What do you feel has been or will be your greatest area of confidence as you work on the dissertation project?

What has been or might be your greatest challenge?

Finally, what purpose(s) do you feel your dissertation might serve for you?

Questioning: Topic Selection & Evaluation

Ask Yourself

How have you selected or thought about selecting and narrowing your topic?

What process did you go through or do you imagine yourself going through in order to come up with your final topic?

How does your topic reflect your passions, your interests, the way you do research, and/or your previous academic work?

How does your topic demonstrate the need for further research?

Does sufficient background information exist to facilitate your research?

Is your topic narrow enough so you can claim a degree of expertise?

Is your topic amenable to research methods?

Is your topic one you can write in a reasonable amount of time?

How does your topic match with your capabilities and interests?

How is your topic attractive for funding?

How does your topic allow for professional development?

Has your topic been addressed already? If so, in what detail?

How does your topic allow you to demonstrate expertise in a larger field?

How does your topic provide a springboard for future research?

Topic Selection & Evaluation Tips

Where to look for topic ideas

- Look at other dissertation in your field in order to get an idea of the overall scope and style. (The MSU Library is a good place to find dissertations from your own department.)
- Identify your areas of interest. What are you passionate about? Write about topics and look at your own academic career to see what you have done.
- Identify how you think and research—do you look at one topic in depth or several ideas you can explore in a comparative manner?
- Look at job openings to see what is “hot” in your field and what potential future employers are looking for.
- Strive for a balance between passion and practicality.
- Talk to your advisor and professors to learn what they are working on. In the sciences, you may have the opportunity to work with them on their research.
- Contact experts and professionals in the field to see what they're doing and what's new.

- Generate titles as soon as possible. They will contain words that will frame your work.

Once you have a general idea of your topic

- Remember that an idea or topic that is general and undefined is fine to start. Broad is all right because it is a research topic not research questions.
- Reading, read, read. Do extensive reading and research on your topic to narrow it down and get specific.
- Generate a list of possible titles. This helps identify key words and concepts.
- Choose the best possibilities, analyze them briefly, and present them to your committee to get their feedback and develop them further.
- Try using cognitive/mind/concept maps to organize your ideas.

What is the proposal?

- A template for the larger project of the dissertation;
- An evaluation;
- A research plan;
- A trial run or head start;
- A sales pitch;
- A contract with your committee saying what you will do and what requirements occur before you get your degree;
- A document that demonstrates you can conceive of a dissertation;
- A document that identifies the ideas you want to call your own; and
- A tentative blueprint that is always subject to change as you go.

Before and after the proposal

- Pre-proposal outline (consider letting your advisor look at this early);
- The proposal defense (expect open-ended and specific questions—consider asking other students to do a trial run with you. Think of your committee as colleagues trying to help you refine your ideas);
- Ultimately, your proposal won't answer every question. In final form, it becomes whatever your committee agrees it should be and guides you into your dissertation.

Two Possible Ways of Structuring the Proposal

Please note that these are just examples. Your program may have specific guidelines. Please speak with your advisor to find out about structures that are appropriate for your field.

Structure A

1. Problem
2. Hypothesis
3. Importance of research
4. Literature review
5. Possible methodologies
6. Limitations and key assumptions
7. Potential outcomes and importance
8. Descriptions of proposed chapters

Structure B

1. Introduction
2. Statement of purpose
3. Explicit research question
4. Limitations and assumptions
5. Terms to be used
6. Literature review
7. Potential methodology

Dissertation Structure

- Be clear on the structure required for your dissertation by your department and advisor.
- Ask your advisor to recommend recent dissertations that you can model yours after, and/or go to the library and look at dissertations in your area of research.
- Make sure that you spend time with your advisor early in the process, going over a specific structure for the dissertation and your chapters/sections.
- Go to your graduate school office and get a copy of the formatting requirements of the university.
- You will also want to investigate your school's requirements concerning human research subjects early in the process. You might need to gain Institutional Review Board approval.
- Realize that the format or structure of your dissertation may change as you research and write, so be flexible with your initial plan.

Three Possible Dissertation Structures²

These structures are general. Check with your advisor to find out appropriate structures in your discipline.

Data Thesis Outline I	Data Thesis Outline II	Thematic Thesis
Front Matter	Front Matter	Front Matter
Chapter I. Introduction	Chapter I. Introduction	Chapter I. Introduction (including lit review and methodology)
Chapter II. Lit Review	Chapter II. Lit Review	
Chapter III. Methodology	Chapter III. Experiment 1 (methods, results, discussion)	Chapter II. Theme 1
Chapter IV. Results	Chapter IV. Experiment 2 (methods, results, discussion)	Chapter III. Theme 2
Chapter V. Discussion	Chapter V. Experiment 3 (methods, results, discussion)	Chapter IV. Theme 3
Back Matter	Chapter VI. General Conclusions	Chapter V. Theme 4
		Back Matter

² Taken from Robert L. Peters' *Getting What You Came For*

	Back Matter	
--	-------------	--

Tips for Revision

For some writers, revising their written work can be a lonely process, but it doesn't have to be. Here are some additional techniques to help you revise your writing.

- It's easy to forget that writing is a *process* and that you need to see your writing through several drafts, requiring patience and persistence.
- The more you revise, the clearer and more fluid your writing may become. Try to keep some detachment from your writing, so you can be open to changing it.
- Revision may serve to help you *think further* about your topic, to make yourself as clear as possible and to undo mistakes. Revising forces you to dig deep and *pull your best ideas together*.
- Remember that revision comments from your committee can be varied according to the style of its various members.
- To keep track of various drafts, you may want to print out each draft on a different color paper or save as separate documents.
- Leave editorial changes for last—start by working on clarity and organization.
- Revising takes stamina, and while you might get bored or tired of find it difficult, just anticipate that this can be part of the process of revision.
- When you return a revised draft, consider including a cover letter that refers back to the reader's previous comments and outlines what you have revised.

Identify your writing and revision resources:

- Your advisor and committee members: be clear with them about which point they wish to see your drafts and revisions, and what they expect from your revisions.
- The Writing Center: outside readers for help with all revising tasks. <http://writing.msu.edu>
- Graduate Writing Groups: start your own group or join an existing group of peer editors. <http://writing.msu.edu/writing-groups>
- A fellow doctoral candidate: trade work with other students in order to give each other feedback as you proceed.

Continuing Revision: The Reader's Draft

After you've gone through the draft that you write for yourself, you'll want to start working toward a draft for other readers. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you're working on this draft.

- Be ruthless; if it doesn't make sense or work, throw it out or revise completely. Remember, there is always more than one way to say something.
- Keep it brief and use short paragraphs; break down elaborate or complex ideas or thoughts into manageable chunks. Aim for simplicity the first time around.
- Don't try to adopt a completely new "dissertation writing" voice, use your own academic voice.
- Establishing and going back to key words can help keep your argument consistent.
- Give yourself some time to rework sections as needed. Take some time off in order to look at your writing with fresh eyes.
- Try chopping off first sentences or opening paragraphs. Sometimes your opening words are just your warm-up—what you really mean to say may take several pages to emerge.
- Back everything up, at least twice in different locations. Be sure to save your work on both a hard drive and a portable storage device (flash drive, CD-R, external hard drive, etc.). Consider keeping copies of drafts and disks in a safety deposit box or at a friend or relative's house. The idea is to keep these copies in a separate building in case of a fire or other disaster. You may also want to keep your work on your AFS space through MSU or another online location such as with Drop Box or in your email account.

- Keep copies of old drafts so that if you lose your most recent copy, you will have a fairly recent version to revise.
- Use your network space ('p' drive) on the MSU server. Connecting to the server is simple on an MSU computer but can also be achieved on a home or personal computer. Visit <http://help.msu.edu> for specific details. Click on "AFS" under "Useful Links" to get directions for your operating system.

Tips for Overcoming Writer's Block

- Figure out the time and place that allows for the least disturbance for writing and allows you to be the most productive.
- You may want to give yourself time for a mental transition into writing from other tasks—think of it as warming up your brain before you begin.
- Park on a downhill slope: finish your work knowing where to begin next time; this may allow you to get back to work with less apprehension.
- Begin anywhere: Start writing at whatever point you want. If you want to begin in the middle, fine. Leave the introduction or first section until later.
- Talk about the paper: Talk to someone about your ideas. Talking will help you crystallize your thoughts into words or help you explain an idea in the simplest terms.
- Tape the paper: Talk into an audio recorder (imagining a particular audience, if that helps). Then, transcribe the recorder material, and you'll at least have some ideas down on paper to work with and move around.
- Write through the confusion: Try freewriting about the thoughts, feelings, or ideas that are causing you confusion. By writing through your "block," you may notice that writing is easier and ideas or questions become clearer as you write.
- Change the audience: Imagine you are writing to a friend, a parent, a person who disagrees with you, or someone who's new to the subject. This can help you make your ideas clearer or make you feel more comfortable and help you write more easily.

Defending the Dissertation

What a “typical” defense looks like:

- You present a brief overview of the dissertation that can last from a few minutes to an hour.
- The committee asks you questions for an hour or two.
- You participate in a final summation where you are all clear as to what need to be done or addressed next.

What the defense is designed to do:

- The defense is an opportunity for your committee members to help you better understand the research that you have done and to point out the limitations of your work. Their purpose is to help you finish your degree requirements.
- The defense is a test of whether you can present your work in a “professional manner” and of how skillfully you can think on your feet to defend it under pressure.
- The defense is an opportunity for you to show your committee how well you have conducted research and prepared your dissertation.

Preparing for the defense:

- The secret to having a successful defense is preparation. If you have selected your committee wisely, communicated well with them throughout the project, and prepared thoroughly for the defense itself, you will be in an excellent position to succeed.
- Meet with your advisor ahead of time and discuss the strategy you should use at the defense. Identify any possible problems that may occur and discuss the ways they should be dealt with. Try and make the defense more of a team effort.
- Try to attend one or more defenses prior to your own.

- It may be helpful to prepare an outline.

At the defense:

- You know more about your dissertation than anyone, and everyone present wants you to succeed.
- Your performance reflects not only on you but also on the professional competence of your advisor in ways both subtle and direct.
- You may want to bring a copy of your dissertation with you to the defense.
- Consider video and/or audio recording your defense.
- Don't be defensive at your defense.
- Can you fail? Very few people fail if they have worked closely with their committee during the writing of the dissertation. "Provisional pass," however, is not uncommon, where eventual acceptance of the dissertation is dependent upon either major or minor revisions.

After the defense:***Writing an article for publication:***

Since this is the time you know this work best, it's a good time to work on creating articles out of it. Keep in mind that this is far more than a cut-and-past exercise. You may need to make significant revisions to prepare the document for another audience and condense part of your arguments given that dissertations are far longer than academic articles. Depending on your field, you may want to consider the issue of "co-authorship" with your advisor.

The Job Search

- The job search usually begins while you are writing or defending your dissertation. This is an already stressful time, so good time management and personal organization is critical.
- Seek help from your committee while reviewing postings in your field well ahead of time. Remember, your defense will likely become your job talk and you should consider larger audiences and purposes.
- It might be to your advantage to create multiple versions of your defense talk considering the different positions that you are applying for; consider the context of the institution you are applying to as part of the overall design of the presentation (goals of the college, history of the organization, etc.).
- Use opportunities to present at conferences to polish your public speaking skills, refine your work for clear presentation and network with others in the field. This also builds your C.V.!

- Keep your C.V. up-to-date throughout the entire PhD process. Consider maintaining a web-based portfolio that includes a vita, coverletter, photos, samples of writing, and other items pertinent to your work.

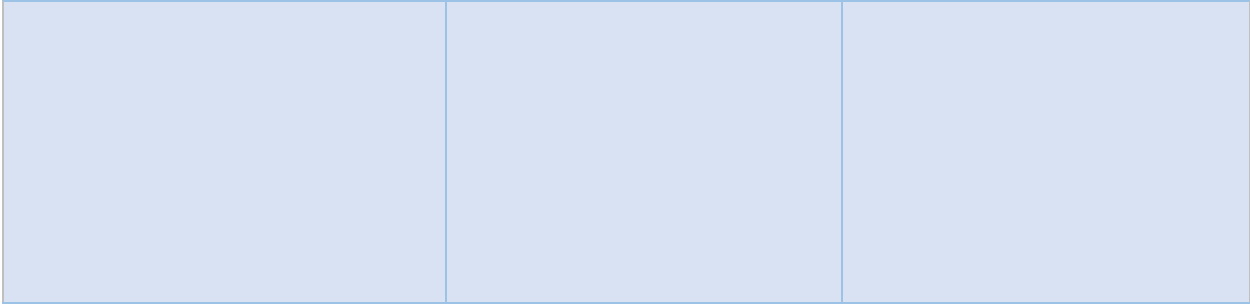
Unfurling Your Large (Dissertation) Project Template

Topic	Audience	Type of Article
Describe topic/facets of:	Disciplinary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research ● Methods ● Teaching and Learning Interdisciplinary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research ● Methods ● Teaching and Learning 	Conceptual framework, program theory models, Program description, case study Results or impacts on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research ● Community ● Pedagogy ● Students ● Faculty ● Institutions/Organizations Reflections, critiques, lessons learned White papers, research in progress articles

Annotated List of Journals Template

Journals—Create Templates by Research Journals, Pedagogy/Practice or Topically Focused/Policy Type

Journal Title	http:// (web address)	
Journal Profile Published Since: Published by: Previously named (if applicable): Guidelines for acceptance: For example: "Manuscripts accepted ongoing basis On-line submission, email submission to editor"	Journal Submission Info Published: times/year Average of xxx articles/volume Occasional special editions/issues? Available in print? /No longer available in print? Available on-line? Free/open source?	Sections Sections (examples) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research articles ● Practice stories from the field ● Reflective essays ● Book reviews ● Dissertation overviews ● Projects with promise



Journal Section Comparison Template

Designed by Diane M. Doberneck, National Collaborative for the Study of University Engagement, Michigan State University - Updated August, 2017

Journal Section Comparison Template

Designed by Diane M. Doberneck, National Collaborative for the Study of University Engagement, Michigan State University - Updated August, 2017

Journal Title	Invited Articles	Research, Analysis	Theory, Conceptual Frameworks, Models	Synthesis, Literature Reviews	Methods, Processes	Research in Brief, Research from Field	Reflective Essays	Curriculum Development, Education & Training	Policy & Practice	Case Study, Program Descriptions	Practice Notes, From the Field	Projects with Promise, Ideas at Work	Works-in-Progress	Institutional Perspective, Impact	Faculty/Staff Perspective, Impact	Student Perspective, Impact	Community Perspective, Impact	Dissertation Briefs	Practical Tools, Tools of the Trade	Commentary, Editorials	Snapshots	Book Reviews	Interviews	Poetry, Art, Photos, Creative Writing, Multimedia
Disciplinary Journal		●									●										●	●		

Scholarly Products for Academic & Public Audiences Worksheet

Shared with us by Diane Doberneck, Office of Community Engagement and Outreach, 2017

Product Type	Title	Audience
Article		(Journal)
Article		
Article		
Conference Presentation		(Conference Venue)
Conference Presentation		
Poster		(Conference, symposium, etc)
Poster		
Powerpoint		(Institutional, professional etc)
Powerpoint		
Report		(public, government, institutional, departmental , etc.).
Report		

Guidelines for Professional Peer Review

We offer this resource that has graciously been shared with us by Miles McNall, Diane M. Doberneck in the Community Engagement and Outreach Office at MSU.

CRITICAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Rappaport's Rules

1. As a reviewer, you should attempt to re-express the writer's position so clearly, vividly, and fairly that the writer says, "Thanks, I wish I had thought of putting it that way."
2. You should list only points of agreement (especially if they are not matters of general or widespread agreement).
3. You should mention anything you learned from the writer.
4. Then, and only then, are you permitted to say so much as a word of rebuttal or criticism.

Other Guidelines on Feedback

1. Evaluate based on standards and criteria.
2. Avoid criticisms based on your personal bias or perspective; instead review the piece based on the stated criteria.
3. Provide a balance of positive and negative feedback.
4. Be specific in your praise or criticism.
5. Focus on description not judgment.
6. Critique the writing, not the writer.
 - a. In other words, focus on strengthening the writing not calling into question the writer's capacity.
7. Focus on observations rather than the inferences.
8. Emphasize strengths and positives, not weaknesses and negatives.

References & Resources

Dissertation & Thesis Writing

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

Cone, J.D. and S.L. Forester. *Dissertations and Theses from Start to Finish: Psychology and Related Fields*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1993.

Davis, G.B. and C.A. Parker. *Writing the Doctoral Dissertation: A Systematic Approach*. 2nd ed. New York: Barron's, 1997.

Fitzpatrick, J., D.J. Wright, and J. Secrist. *Secrets for a Successful Dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998.

Lovitts, B.E. *Making the Implicit Explicit*. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2007.

Madsen, D. *Successful Dissertations and Theses: A Guide to Graduate Student Research from Proposal to Completion*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992.

Mitchell, L. *The Ultimate Grad School Survival Guide*. Princeton, NJ.: Peterson's, 1996.

Peters, R.L. *Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student's Guide to Earning a Master's or a PhD*. New York: Noonday Press, 1992.

Rudenstam, Kjell Erik and Rae R. Newton. *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2007.

Smith, R.V. *Graduate Research: A Guide for Students in the Sciences*. 3rd ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998.

Zerubavel, E. *The Clockwork Muse: A Practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Writing & Writing Process

Bean, John C. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. Jossey-Bass, 1996.

Davis, Robert L. and Mark F. Shadle. *Teaching Multiwriting: Researching and Composing with Multiple Genres, Media, Disciplines, and Cultures*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007.

Dillard, Annie. *The Writing Life*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1990.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Fox, Helen. *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*. Urbana: NCTE, 1994.

Gaiman, Neil. *Neil Gaiman's Journal*. <<http://journal.neilgaiman.com/>>.

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Boston: Shambhala, 2005.

Hartwell, Patrick. "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar." *College English*. 47.2 (1985): 105-127.

Heilker, Paul. *The Essay: Theory and Pedagogy for an Active Form*. Urbana: NCTE, 1996.

Kennedy, X. J., Dorothy M. Kennedy, and Marcia F. Muth. *Writing and Revising: A Portable Guide*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

King, Stephen. *On Writing*. Pocket, 2002.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Harpswell: Anchor, 1995.

McManus, Patrick F. *The Deer on a Bicycle: Excursions into the Writing of Humor*. Spokane: Eastern Washington University Press, 2000.

Murray, Donald. *A Writer Teaches Writing: A Complete Revision*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin College Division, 1985.

----. *Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, and Poem*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996.

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 9th ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2007.

Writing Groups

Elbow, Peter and Pat Belanoff. *Sharing and Responding*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2000.

Moss, Beverly J., Nels P. Highberg, and Melissa Nicolas, eds. *Writing Groups Inside and Outside the Classroom*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.

Reeves, Judy. *Writing Alone, Writing Together: A Guide for Writers and Writing Groups*. Novato, CA: New World Library, 2002.

Rosenthal, Lisa. *The Writing Group Book: Creating and Sustaining a Successful Writing Group*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2003.

Ryan, Leigh and Lisa Zimmerelli. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

Schneider, Pat. *Writing Alone and With Others*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Career Options & Academic Publishing

Basalla, S.E. & M. Debelius. *So What are You Going to Do with That?: A Guide to Career Changing for MAs and PhDs*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Girous, 2001.

Hartley, James. *Academic Writing and Publishing: A Practical Handbook*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Scholarly Products for Academic & Public Audiences Worksheet

Franz, N. (2011). Tips for constructing a promotion and tenure dossier that documents engaged scholarship endeavors. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 15(3), 15-29. Table 1 from Pg. 23 (modified).

Guidelines for Professional Peer Review

Reference: Dennett, D. C. (2013). *Intuition pumps and other tools for thinking*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Sons. [selected pages only—pp33-35—Rapaport's Rules].

University Service

The Writing Center

300 Bessey Hall
517.432.3610
writing.msu.edu

Main Library

100 Library
517.353.8700
lib.msu.edu

Graduate School

110 Linton Hall
517.353.3220
grad.msu.edu

Learning Resources Center

202 Bessey Hall
517.355.2363
lrc.msu.edu

The English Language Center

A714 Wells Hall
517.353.0800

University Services and Resources

Michigan State University Covid-19 Related Resources

"2019 Novel Coronavirus-Resources." *Michigan State University*, <https://msu.edu/coronavirus/resources/>

"Coronavirus (COVID-19)Workplace Health Screening." *Michigan State University*, <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=MHEXli9k2UGSEXQjetVo fRr5465eeciGIAHCZg1x3U+UQU1EWTRBtkZTMzVESEJDTzRPMTBHNEFHVC4u>

"Office of Cultural & Academic Transitions (OCAT)- Coronavirus (COVID-19 Updates)." *Michigan State University*, <http://ocat.msu.edu/covid-19-coronavirus- updates/>

"Student Health and Wellness-COVID-19 Info & Resources." *Michigan State University*, <https://studenthealth.msu.edu/coronavirus.html>

"Recreational Sports and Fitness Services- Virtual Group Ex." *Michigan State University* <https://recsports.msu.edu/fitness/groupex.html>

Resources and Information for International Students

"Resources for DACA and Undocumented Community." *Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions Michigan State University*, <http://ocat.msu.edu/resources-for-the-daca-and-undocumented-community/>

"International Studies & Programs- Office of International Health & Studies." *Michigan State University*, <https://oihs.isp.msu.edu>

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Resources

Source: The Information in the "Diversity and Inclusion Resources section" are from Paulette Grandberry-Russell's compilation of "DEI resources and programs available to the Spartan Community."

"Asian Pacific American Studies Program." *Michigan State University*, https://apastudies.ssc.msu.edu/?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

"elevate U."- Human Resources -Spartans @ Work" *Michigan State University*, https://hr.msu.edu/professional-development/elevateu/?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

"Education- Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives." *Michigan State University*, https://inclusion.msu.edu/education/index.html?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

“Lesbian Bisexual Gay And Transgender Resource Center.” *Michigan State University*, https://lbgtrc.msu.edu/education/?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

“Multiracial Unity Living Experience & Intercultural Aid Program-The MRULE-ICA Program.” *Michigan State University*, http://mrule.msu.edu/?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

“Muslim Studies Program.” *Michigan State University*, <https://muslimstudies.isp.msu.edu>

“The Office of Cultural and Academic Transitions.” *Michigan State University*, http://ocat.msu.edu/?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

“The Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel.” *Michigan State University*, https://jsp.msu.edu/?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

“Understanding Implicit Bias Certification Program-Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives.” *Michigan State University*, https://inclusion.msu.edu/education/understanding-implicit-bias-certification-program.html?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

“Womxn of Color Initiatives.” *Michigan State University*, https://woci.cal.msu.edu/?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

Conferences, Grants, Events

“Creating Inclusion Excellence Grants- Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives.” *Michigan State University*, https://inclusion.msu.edu/research/creating-inclusive-excellence-grants/index.html?utm_source=other-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dei-resources

Funding

“Funding-Council of Graduate Students.” *Michigan State University*, <https://cogs.msu.edu/resources/funding/>

Additional Resources

“MSU Student Foodbank.” *Michigan State University*, <https://foodbank.msu.edu/distribution/index.html>

APPENDIX

In the appendix, we've provided more tips concerning the topics and activities from the workshop.

Table of Contents

Managing Time and Academic Relationships

Establishing Systems of Organization	7
Managing and Using Technologies	8; 17
Fighting Procrastination	7; 12;17
Dealing with Stress	12;18
Developing a Supportive Community	14
Choosing an Advisor and Committee	14
Facing Limited Resources of Time and Money	17
Social and Cultural Graduate Student Resources	19

Writing Processes & Strategies for Academic Writing

Brainstorming & Organizing	37
Comprehensive Exam Tips	38 (31)
Purposes of the Dissertation	38
Questioning: Situating Your Dissertation	39
Questioning: Topic Selection & Evaluation	39
Topic Selection & Evaluation Tips	41
Dissertation Structure	44
Tips for Revision	45
Continuing Revision: The Reader's Draft	46
Tips for Overcoming Writer's Block	47
Defending the Dissertation	48
Unfurling Your Large (Dissertation) Project Template.....	50
Annotated List of Journals Template.....	51
Journal Section Comparison Template.....	52
Scholarly Products for Academic & Public Audiences Worksheet.....	53
Guidelines for Professional Peer Review.....	54
References and Resources.....	55
University Services and Resources	58

