

## ANTHROPOLOGY 703: WRITING THE FIELD

Winter 2020

Dr. Andy Roddick



Time: Fridays 9:30AM-12:30PM

Location: Chester New Hall

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-1:30, and upon request.

E-Mail: roddick@mcmaster.ca

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What makes good anthropological writing? What defines a good conference paper, thesis chapter or academic article? How do scholars become stronger academics through critical reflection on tough feedback and peer review? What is a good scholarly workflow in the age of new media and "info glut"? This course will investigate these questions through case studies, writing exercises and work on a larger writing project relevant to the larger academic goals of the Anthropology graduate students. The class will consist of seminar discussion and group work. This course permits students from the various sub-disciplines to work on projects relevant to their development as scholars, while engaging with a wider literature on academic writing, research and critical thinking.

### **READINGS**

We will be using a variety of articles, chapters and website posts in this class. You will also be providing some of your own readings as we move forward. There is only one book that is required:

Becker, Howard

1986 "Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book, or Article".

University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

We will be reading the entirety of this, therefore it is highly recommended that you order a copy. Most of the other articles are available on-line through the library website system, or will be chosen based on your own research projects. I will lend out other readings mentioned on the syllabus for you to share.

**\*\* NOTE:** If there are readings that you feel I have missed, or that would make a critical contribution to our in-class discussions, please do let me know! I'm happy for this class to shift per your needs, interests, or simply as I may not be aware of useful resources.

Other books (many of which we will discuss) include:

Boice, R. (1990). *Professors as Writers: A Self-Help Guide to Productive Writing*. New Forums Press Inc.

Eco, U. (1977). *How to Write a Thesis*. Feltrinelli.

Goldberg, N. and Cameron, J. (2005). *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Shambhala Publications, Inc.

Gray, T. (2005). *Publish and Flourish*. The Teaching Academy, New Mexico State University

King, S. (2000). *On Writing: 10th Anniversary Edition*. Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Luker K. (2010) *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Narayan, K. (2012) *Alive in the Writing: Crafting Ethnography in the Company of Chekhov*. University of Chicago Press,

Newport, D. (2016). *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. Grand Central.

Silva, P. (2007). *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*. American Psychological Association.

Stein, A. and Daniels, J. (2017). *Going Public: A Guide for Social Scientists*. The University of Chicago Press.

Sword H. (2017). *Air & Light & Time & Space*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Wulff H. (2017). *The Anthropologist as Writer. Genres and Context*. Berghahn, New York.

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

Zinsser, W. (2006). *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction (30th Anniversary Edition)*. Harper Collins Publishers.

## COURSE EVALUATION

### **First Day Writing Biography 5%**

For our first meeting, prepare a 1-page (single spaced) overview of who you are (personally and professionally). The first part will discuss your background, and experiences that have shaped your academic interests, the second the issues around writing you struggle with.

### **Blogs Posts 35 %**

A central component of this class is a series of 7 blog posts (each will be worth 5% each, with blog 7 being worth 15%). You are writing these blogs to reflect on your writing process, to investigate elements of good anthropological writing, to generate in class discussion, but more than anything, to keep you writing! A handout will be passed out in our first or second meeting with issue relating to academic blogging, and instructions in setting up a blog. I am asking you to set up a WordPress blog either through the library 2.0 website, or independently through the WordPress.org system beyond the University's walls. (There are big advantages for creating your own professional presence on the web for your research.) You may use your real names or just a pseudonym known only to those of us in the class. You may also keep your blog private, so long as all of us in the class have access to it. The blogging assignments are briefly outlined below, but I will offer my expectations for each of these blogs within the first couple of weeks of January. The due dates are listed in the course schedule. You should come to class ready to discuss issues that came up in your own blog posts, and those of your colleagues.

**Blog 1:** Your writing workflow: A blog post on your writing process and a reflection of what slows you down, or where writer's block emerges.

**Blog 2:** An Outline: A basic outline of the writing you wish to complete this semester. This blog should include your writing deadlines. I will be keeping you to your deadlines as much as possible.

**Blog 3:** Review of a "Reviews in Anthropology" article: Find an article pertinent to your work and analyze the strengths of the literature review.

**Blog 4:** Knowing your audience & recognizing the skeleton of written work: Annotations of 3 articles in 3 Anthropological journals.

**Blog 5:** The Good and the Bad: Discussion of what makes articles fail and succeed by looking at an excellent article and a weak one.

**Blog 6:** Review of a good presentation: Within the department, at a conference, or from a *YouTube* link. (Start thinking about this early in the semester so that you can take advantage of speaking events in the department or elsewhere in your own field!)

**Blog 7:** Collaborative Writing: In this blog you will pair up with a colleague in a different sub-discipline and produce a short (~8 paragraph) blog on a current issues in the field that cross-cuts the discipline as a whole. I encourage you to start this blog early!

### **Final Paper 40 %**

This course is all about your research; I have no interest in having you focus on something not directly in line with your own scholarship. Throughout this course you will be working on one major project, whether it is a conference paper or an article, or simply a paper that is somehow connected to your research. I do, however, expect you to be open to other ways of writing, and

broadly engaged with all facets of Anthropology. As such, you should expect to participate in reading drafts from colleagues who may be coming from various modes of anthropological knowledge. We will set up reasonable deadlines in your blog 2. In the final week, those presenting a conference paper will present a very polished version of the presentation for feedback.

### **Participation (On-Line Commenting & Peer Editing) 20%**

As you develop from writing as a student to a professional, a key component is learning to how to give feedback. This will take two forms: first (10%) I expect you to follow each blog assignment by commenting on a minimum of 2 other blog postings each week. Second (10%), we will have a series of more formal peer-editing steps. Here you will provide both your partners, and myself a copy of your edits and the peer-editing form. This peer-editing and discussion of your work should help in making it not only accessible across sub-disciplinary boundaries, but should also result in more cogent writing for colleagues within your own corner of the discipline. I also want us to move towards an awareness of how to peer-edit in a meaningful and productive way.

## **SCHEDULE**

### ***INTRODUCTION: ANTHROPOLOGY, NARRATIVES, AND READY TO WRITE!***

#### **January 10th Introduction, blogging, and the important of writing, writing and writing...**

Brainstorm possible writing projects and do initial readings. See handout on setting up blogs

Read: Becker Preface; Carrigan chapter 1 and 2; Luker ch. 1 and 3.

\*\* First Day Writing Biography Due

#### **January 17th Writing in Anthropology & Finding your Voice Pt. 1**

Read: Becker Ch. 2; Boyer "The Necessity of Being a Writer in Anthropology Today", Savage Minds "What is Good Anthropological Writing?" (website), Savage Minds "Decentering Writing" (website), Footnotesblog "Decanonizing Anthropology" (website)/ Missie Landau "Human Evolution as Narrative"; Jonathan Marks "My ancestors, myself" (website)

\*\* BLOG 1 DUE

#### **January 24th Writing in Anthropology & Finding your Voice pt. 2**

Read: Gottlieb "The Anthropologist as Storyteller"; Joyce excerpt from The Languages of Archaeology; Thomas "The Archaeologist as Writer"

\*\* BLOG 2 DUE

#### **January 31st Writing in Anthropology Pt. 3 & Finding your Voice pt. 3**

Read: Geertz "Being There: Anthropology and the Scene of Writing"; Abu-Lughod "Writing against Culture"; Kirin Narayan "Preface and Chapter one from Alive in the Writing" (There are no blogs due for this week and the next. Work on Blog 7 with your partner!)

### ***NAVIGATING INFOGLUT: TOOLS OF THE TRADE & FINDING YOUR VOICE***

#### **February 7th Getting started, getting finished: Research in the age of info glut**

Read: Becker Ch. 6; Luker Ch. 7; Extracts from Sönke's "How to Take Smart Notes"

\*\* Free writing exercises in class.

#### **February 14th: Literature Reviews & Comprehensive Exams**

Read: Becker Ch. 8; Luker ch. 5 (Other readings to be posted)

\*\* BLOG 3 DUE

**February 21st: BREAK**

**February 28th From evidence to argument, from field (lab) to paper**

Read: Becker Chapter 3 (Other readings to be posted in Dropbox) \*\* BLOG 4 DUE

***THAT WAS A GOOD PAPER!: DEFINING ANTHROPOLOGICAL RULES OF ENGAGEMENT***

**March 6th What makes good Anthropological writing: From sub-discipline to the wider public**

Read: Calcagno "Keeping Biological Anthropology in Anthropology, and Anthropology in Biology", Nyqvist "On Some Nice Benefits and One Big Challenge of the Second File", Schepher-Hughes "Making Anthropology Public", Savage Minds on "Can we Still Write Big Question Sorts of Books?", "Using archaeology to understand the past, present, future of climate change"

\*\* BRING A SERIES OF QUESTIONS FOR OUR DR. CHIP COLWELL

\*\* BLOG 5 DUE

**March 13th What makes good Anthropological Writing: The Conference paper**

Read: Becker Chapter 5; Savage Minds "How to Write AAA Papers"

\*\* BLOG 6 DUE

BRING IN 1st DRAFT OF THE PAPER YOU ARE WORKING ON

**March 20th What makes a good Anth. journal article – Style**

Read: Allen & Joyce "Communicating Archaeology in the 21st Century",  
BRING A SERIES OF QUESTIONS FOR OUR VISITING EDITOR

\*\* BLOG 7 DUE

***1, 2 or 3 DRAFTS AIN'T ENOUGH: POLISHING YOUR PAPER***

**March 27th Editing drafts Pt. 1: Phases of Self-Editing**

Read: Becker Chapter 4; Moeran "The Craft of Editing: Anthropology's Prose and Qualms"

BRING IN 2nd DRAFT OF THE PAPER YOU ARE WORKING ON

**April 3rd March 30th Editing Drafts Pt. 2: Dealing with Critiques**

Read: Becker Chapter 7; Herrington & Cadman "Peer Review and Revising in an Anthropology Course: Lessons for Learning".

\*\* Final paper due date to be announced.

## **STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES (SAS)**

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) supports students who have been diagnosed with a disability or disorder, such as a learning disability, ADHD, mental health diagnosis, chronic medical condition, sensory, neurological or mobility limitation. Students who require accommodation should contact SAS as early in the term as possible. <http://sas.mcmaster.ca>

## **FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must

originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

\*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link (Approved at the Faculty of Social Sciences meeting on Tues. May 25, 2010)

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one's own for which other credit has been obtained. (Insert specific course information, e.g., style guide)
2. Improper collaboration in group work. (Insert specific course information)
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

(If applicable) In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

## **AODA**

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact Delia Hutchinson at 905-525-9140 extension 24523 or email [hutchin@mcmaster.ca](mailto:hutchin@mcmaster.ca)