

Anthropology 703 - Writing the Field (Spring 2017)
Dr. Andy Roddick (roddick@mcmaster.ca)



COURSE DESCRIPTION

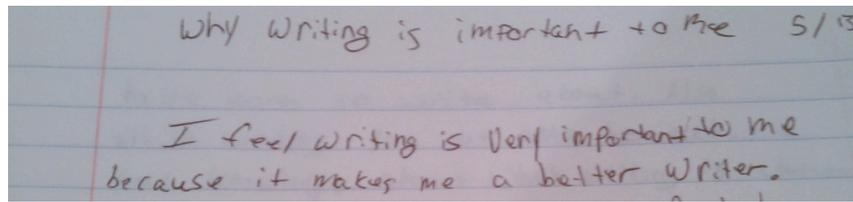
What makes good anthropological writing? What defines a good conference paper, thesis chapter or academic article? How do scholars become stronger academics through critical reflection on tough feedback and peer review? What is a good scholarly workflow in the age of new media and "info glut"? This course 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, group work, and class presentations. This course permits students from all three 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:

1. 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 thus it is highly recommended that you order a copy from Amazon. 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 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.



(from <http://blogs.plos.org/neuroanthropology/2012/07/13/thomas-friedmans-lessons-for-anthropologists/>)

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Blogs Posts 45 %

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!*

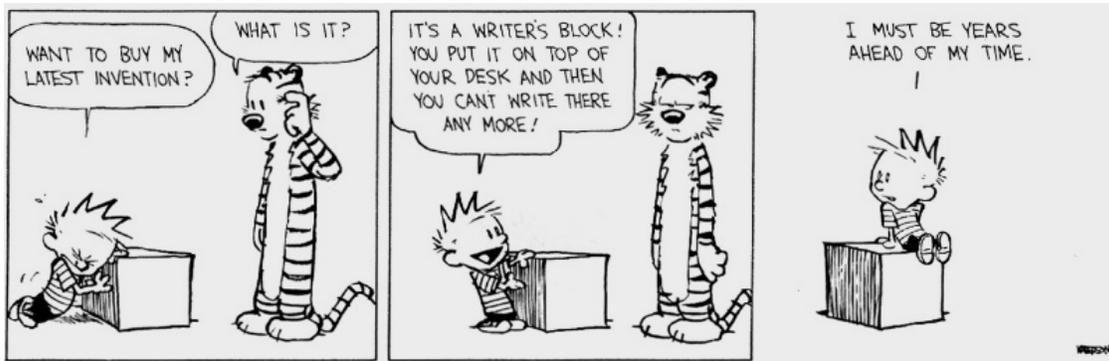
Final Paper 40 %

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, you will prepare either a brief presentation summarizing your paper and reflect on your paper, or if you are working on a conference paper, you will prepare a *very polished* version of the presentation for feedback.

Commenting & Peer Editing 15 %

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 (5%) I expect you to follow each blog assignment by commenting on a minimum of 2 other blog postings each week. Second, 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

**Please note, these readings may be subject to change in through the course.

INTRODUCTION: ANTHROPOLOGY, NARRATIVES, AND READY TO WRITE!

January 5th 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.

**Bring exercises from Luker ch.1 and 3 to class

January 12th Writing in Anthropology & Finding your Voice Pt. 1

Read: Becker Ch. 2; Savage Minds "What is Good Anthropological Writing?" (website), Savage Minds "Decentering Writing" (website), Missie Landau "Human Evolution as Narrative"; Jonathan Marks "My ancestors, myself" (website)

** **BLOG 1 DUE**

January 19th Writing in Anthropology & Finding your Voice pt. 2

Joyce excerpt from *The Languages of Archaeology*;

Pluciennik, Mark, 1999. Archaeological Narratives and Other Ways of Telling. *Current Anthropology*, 40(5), 653-78.

Janet Spector, *What this Awl Means: Feminist Archaeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1993. 0873512782

** **BLOG 2 DUE**

January 26th Writing in Anthropology Pt. 3 & Finding your Voice pt. 3
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 2nd Getting started, getting finished: Research in the age of info glut

Becker Ch. 6;
Luker Ch. 7
- Free writing exercises in class.

February 9th: Literature Reviews & Comprehensive Exams

Becker Ch. 8;
Luker ch. 5 (Other readings to be posted in Dropbox)
**** BLOG 3 DUE**

February 16th From evidence to argument, from field (lab) to paper

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

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

March 2nd What makes good Anthropological writing: From sub-discipline to the wider public

Calcagno "Keeping Biological Anthropology in Anthropology, and Anthropology in Biology",
Errington and Gewertz "Excusing the Haves and Blaming the Have-Nots in the Telling of History",
Savage Minds on "Questioning Collapse" and
"Can we Still Write Big Question Sorts of Books?"
**** BLOG 5 DUE**

March 9th What makes good Anthropological Writing: The Conference paper

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 16th What makes a good Anth. journal article - Style

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 23rd Editing drafts Pt. 1: Phases of Self-Editing

Becker Chapter 4; Extracts from "Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing"
BRING IN 2nd DRAFT OF THE PAPER YOU ARE WORKING ON

March 30th Editing Drafts Pt. 2: Dealing with Critiques

Andy is away at conference, but meet to work with your editors and Read Becker Chapter 7;
Herrington & Cadman "Peer Review and Revising in an Anthropology Course: Lessons for Learning".

April 6th Presentations of final Papers/Presentations