

Workshop for Dissertation Writers in Women's and Gender Studies
Fall & Spring, 2014-15
5:15 - 8:15 PM
Provisional Syllabus*

Instructor: Professor Beth Kowaleski Wallace, Boston College, kowalesk@bc.edu

Classroom: Building 56 Room 167

Required Texts: *Writing Your Dissertation in 15 Minutes a Day* by Joan Bolker (Owl Books, 1998).

Creating Interdisciplinarity by Lisa Lattuca (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2001).

September 3 Introductions

For the first class, **please bring** a one page “intellectual biography,” detailing your education, field interests, and other kinds of information that may be relevant to the members of the seminar. (For instance, some may have family obligations that demand time commitments; others may have employment. Some may have both...) Then, write down the one aspect you most look forward to as you begin (or continue the process of) writing your dissertation. Also list one aspect that concerns or worries you. These will be shared with the group. We will also discuss the abstract, due on October 1.

Who are we and what do we hope to achieve in the seminar? What issues do we share? How might our concerns differ?

Reading: Over the next few weeks, be sure to read the Bolker book.

September 17 Interdisciplinarity

This class acknowledges that we come from a range of disciplines and that we use a variety of methodologies.

What is the nature of interdisciplinarity? What is its significance and importance to Women's Studies in particular? How do we work together in a supportive, interdisciplinary community?

Readings for tonight: Selections, TBA from Lettuce.

Everyone should bring a description, of no more than two pages, of the dissertation, with a projected timeline for the work. Please make sufficient copies for the class.

October 1 **For those who are just beginning....& breaking the work down into manageable units**

This class will address the issue of how to get started, if you have not already done so. It will also reflect on the process of managing such a large, potentially unwieldy process.

How does one frame a suitable topic? For those who may have already started, we will discuss how to break the work down into manageable units and consider the shape of the chapter.

Readings for tonight: Two volunteers will pre-circulate a chapter or section from their own work in advance for discussion.

October 15 And those who are on their way...

This class will discuss the practicalities of writing a dissertation, with a discussion of the kinds of issues that come up during the process. These may include questions of how to find an appropriate methodology, how to be consistent in the use of methodology, and how to use evidence.

Readings for tonight: Two volunteers will pre-circulate a chapter from their own work in advance for discussion.

October 29 Modeling the best work and learning by imitation

For the next two weeks, we will focus on short essays that model the kinds of work we would most like to accomplish ourselves. Each participant should pick a relatively short model essay to share and make it available in the form of a pdf. During this week, half of the class will present their choices and will explain in detail why they have chosen it and what they think we can all learn from it.

What constitutes exemplary work in our chosen disciplines? Whose work do we most admire and why? How can we aim to achieve a similar level of excellence in our own work?

Readings for tonight: One half of the chosen “model work,” to be circulated in advance. Students will respond to each other’s choices, as pre-arranged in class.

November 12 Modeling the best work and learning by imitation

We’ll continue our discussion from last week.

Readings for tonight: The other half of the chosen “model work,” to be circulated in advance.

November 26 Professionalism One: Thinking about conferences

We'll cover the basics of conference going. Students should prepare by identifying sources of information on conferences in their fields and by coming to class with ideas about at least two potential, upcoming conferences where they could present their work.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of conference going? How does one find a suitable conference? Funding for the conference? How does one prepare an abstract? What is to be expected from the conference experience?

Readings for tonight: volunteers will circulate in advance either a paper they have already given at a conference, a paper they would like to give, or a paper they would like to revise for presentation

December 3 Professional Two: The dissertation and the job market

As it becomes time to think about looking for a job, how does one market a dissertation?

No readings for tonight. Instead, everyone should come to class with a one-paragraph summary (i.e. an “elevator pitch”) of their dissertation, to be potentially inserted into a job letter. Make adequate copies for the class.

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS FOR SECOND SEMESTER

February 4 Mid-year check-in

Where are we now? What are our goals in this second semester?

Reading: TBA

Bring a schedule of work for the spring, with adequate copies. If you have not yet presented your work to the class, please pick a date from below.

February 18 The Art of Revision

What are the best strategies for revision? What is the most effective moment to revise? What issues should be addressed in the revision process? When does revision go too far? Which voices should matter most in the revision process?

Readings for tonight: Two volunteers will pre-circulate a chapter from their own work in advance for discussion.

March 11 Style and Grammar workshop

What issues of grammar, style, or presentation continue to resurface?

Readings for tonight: Two volunteers will pre-circulate a chapter from their own work in advance for discussion.

March 25 Wrapping up the dissertation

How do you know when you're done? How does a dissertation effectively end? What happens next?

Readings for tonight: Two volunteers will pre-circulate a chapter from their own work in advance for discussion.

April 8 Professionalism Three: turning a chapter into an article

What is the process of turning a chapter into an essay? What considerations occur in the process of revising for publication?

Everyone should come prepared with a list of three target journals in which to publish. Come with relevant information, including requirements for length in words, something about the review process and the reviewers, and a clear explanation of why the journal seems like a good match for the work you have produced.

April 22 Professionalism Three: turning a chapter into an article, continued

Volunteers will come with chapters that they have successfully revised for publications—or with chapters they would like to revise.

May 6: presentations of research to the public

Over the next two weeks, everyone will make a conference length presentation (20 minutes).

May 13: presentation of research

*Please note that this syllabus may be altered according to student need or interest. Though it currently assumes a mixed group of students at various stages of writing the dissertation, we can make changes to accommodate the actual make-up of the class.