

HWG705

Academic Writing in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Study Year : Recommended for CoHASS, IGP and RSIS postgraduates, pre PhD Qualifying Examination (QE)

Academic units : 1.5 (Pass/Fail)

Pre-requisite : Nil

CONTENT

This course will enable students to become sensitive to both the rhetorical, discursive, as well as ideological nature of academic writing. Other important aspects or characteristics of academic writing – formality, complexity, discursivity, and rhetoricity – will be discussed in the early sessions. Students will then be introduced to the academic research poster as a powerful conceptual and representational academic text type. Following these introductory discussions, there will be an in-depth analysis of the structure and generic features of the thesis or dissertation as a formal academic document symbolizing and epitomizing undertakings in knowledge construction and meaning making in post-graduate studies. Students will present their research to the class and revise their work based on peer and teacher feedback.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will guide students in recognizing and practicing generic, discursive, and rhetorical conventions within their field. It is for graduate students who are proficient writers, but would like assistance with generating, composing, and structuring academic texts as part of constructing and articulating academic meanings. Students will revise their writing based on feedback from peers and the course lecturer and discover that writing is a socio-constructive process.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. analyze and explain the rhetorical strategies of successful published academic papers;
2. position their own research question or motive for writing within the existing work of published scholars;
3. formulate their thesis or argument and signpost the development of this argument;
4. do research and cite texts ethically and accurately;
5. value elegance and clarity in academic prose;
6. conceptualize and formulate research projects guided by written academic conventions; and
7. negotiate and co-construct scholarly knowledge through active engagement in academic discussions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Readings/ Activities
1	Characteristics of Academic Writing	This session focuses on the characteristics of academic writing. Academic writing will be seen as an institutional construct enacting and fulfilling institutional functions and purposes. Students' attention will be drawn to the formality, historicity, contingency, non-pre-existence and contextuality of academic writing as well as its rhetorical nature.
2	Academic Research Posters and Annotated Bibliographies	Research posters are a means for students to pose research questions, identify research gaps, and represent academic knowledge in a precise manner, while annotated bibliographies encourage student evaluation and reflection as well as critical appraisal of relevant literature. Students will be introduced to: (1) academic posters followed by a video on how research posters are designed; (2) annotated bibliographies followed by a video on how annotated bibliographies are written. Students will be asked to create a poster on research which they have recently embarked on or work on an annotated bibliography of relevant works in their area of research interest.
3	Close Reading and Annotation; Research Questions; Evidence; Analysis; Argumentation	After a collaborative close reading of published academic articles to evaluate how they present research questions, evidence, analyses, and arguments, students will present an analysis of an article in their field as part of preparing to do an annotated bibliography. Students will, in this vein, also assess the current state of their field and identify a single path-breaking study published in the last year that is relevant to their research.
4	Literature Review	Students will workshop a two-page literature review, which should end with a paragraph that articulates a motivation for writing and a potential argument. Ideally, this activity will draw on or contribute to a student's independent or course research. Students will review how to represent texts ethically and accurately, as well as discipline-specific formatting. Peer workshoping and teacher feedback will assess the quality of the review and the potential of the proposed argument.

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5	Revision and Development with due consideration given to Shape, Structure, and Transitioning	Building on their literature review and drawing on published academic papers, students will re-examine their research notes, revise their research question, and further develop their draft. Using articles in their field as models, students will consider the structure and shape of a paragraph, as well as transitions in their own drafting.
6 – 7	Strengthening Arguments and Completion of Draft Thesis Chapter	Students will share a complete draft with the class and receive feedback for revision. The focus will be on making arguments more complex and strategies for self-editing.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Following components are individually assessed.

Assessment	Weighting
Written assignments	80%
- a. Academic Research Poster or b. Annotated Bibliography	- 30%
- Draft of Thesis Chapter	- 50%
Class participation	20%
- Peer review and class discussion	

TEXTBOOKS/REFERENCES

Students will work on selected published academic papers in their field.

References will also be made to:

1. Silvia, Paul. How to Write a Lot, APA Life Tools, 2009.
2. Goodson, Patricia. Becoming an Academic Writer, Sage, 2012.
3. Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak. Academic Writing for Graduate Students, 3rd Edition, University of Michigan Press, 2012.

Tutorial hours:

Semester	Tutorial hours
Semester 1 or 2	6.5 weeks x 3 tutorial hours per week. Total hours: 19.5 hours