

SYLLABUS

ACADEMIC WRITING

Instructor: Dr. Bruce Berglund

Course Objective: Writing is essential to our work as scholars. We communicate our discoveries, express our ideas, establish our reputations, and advance our careers primarily through the written word. Yet few of us, whether graduate students or faculty members, get any training in how to write better. As a result, writing can be a source of anxiety for many academics.

This course is intended to help us think of academic writing in a more deliberate way. How can we reliably and effectively build our research papers and proposals? And how can we engage our readers, rather than simply putting information on the page? Above all, the course focuses on the particular challenge of writing in academic English. Academic English is not only a distinct form of the written English language, it is also part of the cultural system we call academic publishing, which is largely dominated by Anglo-American norms. Our course will be a guided introduction to this language and culture.

The course will have short readings made available through the student site. For the most part, the course will function as a workshop in academic writing, with students getting hands-on experience in dissecting, critiquing, and revising academic texts.

Course Requirements:

Participation (20%): Students are required to attend classes regularly, read assigned texts, and participate in class discussions. Class sessions will regularly include writing or editing work, which will count within this part of the course requirements.

Book Review (20%): Students will write a review of a scholarly book of their choice, following the standards of an academic journal.

Project Proposal (20%): Students will write a proposal of their planned research projects, or a project you devise, as if for a grant agency or an academic-review committee.

Bibliographic Essay (40%): The major assignment of the semester will be a bibliographic essay, in which you give an overview of the key works of scholarship in your particular field of research interest.

Tentative Course Schedule:

1 October: Intro

8 October: Cultural Foundations of Anglo-American Academic Writing

15 October: Meetings with Individual Students

22 October: Writing Grant Proposals

29 October: Meetings with Individual Students

5 November: Why Is Academic Writing So Bad?

Read: Pinker, Steven. "Why Academics' Writing Stinks." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2014) **and**

Bring to class an example of bad academic writing that you had to endure.

12 November: The Book Review

20 November: Writing Introductions & Proposals

Book Review Due

27 November: Writing Arguments & Conclusions

3 December: The Literature Review

Proposal Due

10 December: Submit, Revise, Re-Submit: Understanding the World of Academic Publishing

17 December: How Can We Make Academic Writing Less Academic?

Bibliographic Essay Due