

**MLA 541 645/FOLK 541 645**  
**Academic Writing and Research Design in the Arts and Sciences**  
**Kristine Rabberman**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Mondays, 6:30-8:30**

Have you ever noticed that scholars in different academic disciplines seem to speak different languages? Have you wondered how scholars put together a plan for their research, explain their findings, and organize and write their papers? This class is designed to introduce MLA students and other advanced students to the research and writing conventions used by scholars in the arts and sciences, with a focus on the social sciences. We will identify and explore some of the theories, sources, language, and qualitative methodologies that scholars use as they conduct original research in their fields. Throughout the class, we will also discuss writing conventions across the arts and sciences, with special attention to the structure of argument; the use of evidence; voice and style in both traditional academic writing and more innovative forms of writing; and documentation conventions. Students will develop an original research project through incremental writing assignments, leading to the completion of a formal research proposal (12-15 pages), which can be used as their Capstone proposal if they wish.

**Class requirements:**

(1) **Class Participation: 20%**

- Active, engaged participation in class discussions through **chats & verbal discussion in Adobe Connect Professional**. Your grade will be based on regular attendance and the quality of your comments in class discussion. You need to demonstrate that you have completed class readings & read them critically. I would also like to see evidence of your making connections between the assigned readings and your research to develop your research proposal.
- Every week, there will also be topics on which you will need to make a brief posting via **threaded discussion**. The topics will emerge from your written assignments, your work on your proposal, and our class discussions. The discussions will provide you with an opportunity to consider how you will apply what you learn in class to your research proposal, or to discuss challenges with your peers. Each student will need to respond to the prompts by the Sunday before the next class. You are encouraged to respond to prompts and the ensuing discussions multiple times over the week between classes.

(2) **Small group work & peer review: 10%**

- I will assign you to a peer review group in the beginning of the class. You will work together throughout the semester, during class sessions and outside of class, collaborating to meet challenges in research and writing.
- During many class sessions, you will work in **breakout rooms in Adobe Connect Pro** to explore a common question, conduct a close reading of a text, or apply what we are learning in class to your research projects. You will also provide each other with

feedback on some of your incremental writing assignments, culminating in a formal peer review session in class when you complete your first full draft of your research proposal.

- You will engage in a **real-time peer review session of your research proposal draft** in the class session on December 5.

**(3) Incremental writing assignments & research blogs: 25%**

- During the class, you will complete **weekly short, incremental writing assignments** that are designed to guide you through the steps in completing your research proposal. There is a good reason for the frequency of the writing assignments in the class. Many of them will become a part of your research proposal. Writing is a very important part of academic thinking, exploration, and communication. The frequent, short assignments will get you used to writing, and will give me ample opportunity to give you feedback before your final draft of the research proposal is due. You will need to submit these to me by uploading to the assignment dropbox on the course as a MSWord attachment by the beginning of class every week.
- **Blogs:** Throughout the class, you will also write weekly **research blogs**. Each should be at least 1-2 paragraphs in length, and should provide your thoughts, concerns, challenges, and discoveries as you conduct preliminary research for your proposal. The blogs will give you a method to track your progress on your research proposal, reflect on the evolution of your research project, and explore more informally the issues and questions that excite you as you develop your research proposal. They will be due every week on Monday by 5:00 PM.

**(4) Library Lounge: 10%**

- You also will be graded on your work in the class's **Library Lounge**. The **Library Lounge** is a space on our Canvas course site where you will find resources, discussion forums, and Q&A space to get guidance from Dr. David Azzolina, a Van Pelt reference librarian. The **Library Lounge** work will focus especially on library policies and systems, search techniques and strategies customized to your disciplines of choice and topics, strategies to keep your bibliographic findings organized, and information on citation and documentation conventions, among other topics. By the end of September you will see some **Library Lounge discussion forums, blogs**, and other prompts appearing on some unit modules. You will be graded on the timeliness and thoughtfulness of your posts, and on the extent to which you engage actively in the different stages of library research throughout the class.

**(5) Formal research proposal: 35%**

- The capping assignment for the class is an **original research proposal** (12-15 pages). The proposal will be due at the end of the class, but you will work on it throughout the semester, getting feedback from your peers and me along the way. You will be graded on the overall quality of the research and writing in the proposal, as well as on how effective your revisions are at

addressing feedback from peers and me, and your own goals for the revision.

**Required texts:** The following texts are required texts for the class. You can order them online easily. They also have been ordered from the Penn Book Center, 34<sup>th</sup> and Sansom Streets.

Sonja Foss & William Waters, *Destination Dissertation: A Traveler's Guide to a Done Dissertation*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Norton, 2009.

Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. ISBN 978-0674307605

Michele Lamont, *How Professors Think: Inside The Curious World of Academic Judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Joe Moran, *Interdisciplinarity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge, 2010

Other course readings are available on the course site—you will see them as attachments in the course site for each unit on the modules.

I also recommend that you purchase a handbook for writing and documentation that is appropriate for the discipline in which you will write your research proposal. Please be aware that the consequences for plagiarism at Penn are serious; if you pass off direct language or close paraphrases of others' work as your own, you could fail the assignment or the class. If you have questions about standards for academic documentation, please ask me.

**Contact information:**

**Office:** Division of Professional and Liberal Education  
3624 Market St., Ste. 5W  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2615

**Phone:** 215-898-9119

**E-mail:** [rabberma@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:rabberma@sas.upenn.edu)

**Office Hours:** Thursdays, 5:00-6:00 (call or email to sign up) or by appt.

**Schedule of Readings**

**September 9**

**Optional reading:**

**Introduction to the Class**

Keith A. Roberts, "Toward a Sociology of Writing" **CS**

Stephen K. Donovan, "Ten Rules of Academic Writing" **CS**

Theresa Lillis & Joan Turner, "Student Writing in Higher Education: contemporary confusion, traditional concerns" **CS**

**September 16**                      **Social Context for Academia**  
**Required readings:** Michele Lamont, *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment*  
**Optional reading:** John C. Scott, "The Mission of the University: Medieval to Postmodern Transformations"    **CS**  
**Assignment 1:** Goals exercise  
**Threaded discussion of Lamont (Unit 2) open through Thursday, September 26. We will discuss Lamont in the first part of the live class session on Monday, September 23.**

**September 23**                      **Academic Disciplines & Interdisciplinarity**  
**Required reading:** Joe Moran, *Interdisciplinarity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge, 2010. Chapters 1-3.  
**Assignment 2:** Description of self as writer and scholar  
**Threaded discussions on Moran (Unit 3) open until evening of Thursday, October 3. You can start this week and continue if you choose after we have class discussion on September 23 and September 30.**

**September 30**                      **Introduction to Research & Library Orientation**  
**Required readings:** Judith Nixon, "How Scholars Work: Panning for Gold in Libraries"    **CS**  
Joe Moran, *Interdisciplinarity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge, 2010. Chapters 4-5 & conclusion.  
Foss & Waters, *Destination Dissertation*, chapters 2-3  
Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Introduction & chapter 1.  
**Optional reading:** Jane Robertson & Gillian Blackler, "Students' experiences of learning in a research environment"    **CS**  
**Assignment 3:** (1) Preliminary idea for research topic (submit by September 29)  
(2) Short description of the kinds of primary and secondary sources that you hope to find to complete your research proposal  
**Threaded discussions on Moran (Unit 3) and Library (Unit 4) both open until evening of Thursday, October 3.**

**October 7**                              **Formulating Preliminary Research Topics & the Preproposal**  
**Required readings:** Susan Peck MacDonald, "Problem Definition in Academic Writing"    **CS**  
Foss & Waters, *Destination Dissertation*, chapter 4  
Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, chapter 2  
**Assignment 4:** Schedule an individual consultation with a Penn reference librarian this week, and use the time to start to identify initial databases and sources for your research topic; continue to conduct searches for sources throughout the week. Please submit a brief note stating which

librarian you will meet with and when the appointment will take place.

**October 14**

**Required readings:**

**Conceptualizing Research & the Research Process**

Emily Keightley, "Remembering research: memory and methodology in the social sciences" **CS**

Pernille Schiellerup, "Stop making sense: the trials and tribulations of quantitative data analysis" **CS**

Kimber Bogard & Frederick J. Wertz, "The Introduction of a Qualitative Perspective in Advanced Psychological Research Training: Narrative of a Mixed Methods Doctoral Dissertation" **CS**

Julia Brannan, "Mixing Methods: the Entry of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches into the Research Process" **CS**

**Assignment 5:**

2-3 page status report on your initial library consultation and searches

**October 21**

**Required readings:**

**Research Questions: Developing Your Research Topic**

Jane Agee, "Developing qualitative research questions: a reflective process" **CS**

Earlene L. Lipowski, "Developing Great Research Questions" **CS**

Graff & Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, chapters 4-7

**Optional reading:**

Doris Leung and Jennifer Lapum, "A Poetical Journey: The Evolution of a Research Question" **CS**

**Assignment 6:**

Statement of your research questions and explanation of their importance

**October 28**

**Required readings:**

**Mapping the Literature in Your Field: The Literature Review**

Article from your discipline

Foss & Waters, *Destination Dissertation*, chapter 5

Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, chapters 8-10

**Optional readings:**

Anne-Marie Ambert, Patricia A. Adler, Peter Adler, Daniel F. Detzner, "Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research" **CS**

Karen Golden-Biddle and Karen Locke, "Appealing Work: An Investigation of How Ethnographic Texts Convince" **CS**

**Assignment 7:**

- (1) Preliminary bibliography
- (2) Article critique

**November 4**

**Required reading:**

**The Research Proposal – Putting It All Together**

Sample proposals **CS**

Foss & Waters, *Destination Dissertation*, chapter 6

Graff & Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, chapters 11-14

**November 11**

**Required reading:**

**Developing Methodology**

Judith M. Bennett, "Misogyny, Popular Culture, and Women's Work" **CS**

Harriet Hartman & Deborah Kaufman, "Decentering the Study of Jewish Identity: Opening the Dialogue With Other Religious Groups" **CS**

Sharon Lockyer, "Heard The One About ... Applying Mixed Methods in Humor Research?" **CS**

Foss & Waters, *Destination Dissertation*, chapter 7  
Draft of literature review

**Assignment 8:**

**November 18**

**Required reading:**

**Plagiarism and Citations in Academia; Introductions and Conclusions**

Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. ISBN 978-0674307605

Roger Clarke, "Plagiarism by Academics: More Complex Than It Seems" **CS**

Nigel Harwood, "An interview-based study of the functions of citations in academic writing across two disciplines" **CS**

B. Samraj, "Introductions in research articles: variations across disciplines" **CS**

Foss & Waters, *Destination Dissertation*, chapter 8  
Draft description of methodology

**Assignment 9:**

**November 25**

**Required Readings:**

**Approaches to Peer Review**

Sample proposals (Available as attachments on the course site) **CS**

**Assignment 10:**

Draft of research proposal due

Cover letter or writer review form describing your main concerns about your proposal

**December 2**

**Assignment 11:**

**Peer review**

Peer review in class

**December 9**

**Approaches to Revision & Working With Faculty Readers**

Foss & Waters, *Destination Dissertation*, chapters 9 , 11 & 12

**December 18**

**Final proposals due by 6:30 PM**

## Schedule of Assignments

**Submission Instructions:** Assignments are due on the date specified on this schedule. The assignments should be uploaded as MSWord attachments to the dropbox on the course site by the time class starts at 6:30 PM. All assignments should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and a 12-point font similar to this one (Times New Roman). Your name should appear on the first page, and all assignments longer than 1 page should have page numbers included. They should be saved as MSWord documents. If you are paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting from another work, you must include citations to show the original source of the ideas or passages you are using. The citations should be written in a documentation style used by scholars in the field(s) in which you are working. Please be aware that plagiarism is a serious offense, and could result in your failing the class.

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>September 16<br/>Assignment 1:</b> | <b>Social Context for Academia</b><br><b>Goals exercise:</b> Brainstorm to develop a list of your goals for this semester. The goals should fall into three separate categories: ways that you would like to develop as a writer; academic topics and disciplines with which you would like to become more familiar; and research skills that you would like to develop.   |
| <b>September 23<br/>Assignment 2:</b> | <b>Academic Disciplines &amp; Interdisciplinarity</b><br><b>Description of yourself as writer and scholar:</b> 2-3 pages, can be an informal letter to me if you wish. Please consider how your personal identity/experiences helped to shape your academic identities. You can write this as a traditional essay, or you can employ another genre, such as a letter to me. Feel free to take some risks and play with voice, style, and format.   |
| <b>September 30<br/>Assignment 3:</b> | <b>Introduction to Research &amp; Library Orientation</b><br><b>(1) Research topic due:</b> Write a paragraph or two describing your preliminary idea for a research topic for your proposal. Submit to me by September 29.<br><b>(2) Short description of the kinds of sources that you hope to find to complete your research proposal.</b> Think in terms of primary sources/data and secondary sources. What disciplines and perspectives will be the most useful for you? (This preliminary list will help you to start thinking about the kinds of library searches that you will need to do.) |
| <b>October 7<br/>Assignment 4:</b>    | <b>Formulating Preliminary Research Topics &amp; The Preproposal</b><br><b>Library consultation:</b> Schedule an individual consultation with a Penn reference librarian to take place this week, and use the time to start to identify initial databases and sources for your research topic; continue to conduct searches for sources throughout the week. Please submit a brief note stating  |

which librarian you will meet with and when the appointment will take place.

- October 14**  
**Assignment 5:** **Conceptualizing Research & the Research Process**  
**Library status report:** 2-3 page status report on your initial library consultation, and your progress in library searches. Describe your search techniques, the kinds of sources you are finding, the areas you are finding challenging, and your sense of any patterns you see in existing literature. Be sure to include some academic, peer-reviewed journals in your search
- October 21**  
**Assignment 6:** **Research Questions: Developing Your Research Topic**  
**Statement of your research questions and why they are important:** This assignment should be 1-2 pages. Feel free to consider ways in which the questions could be important to scholars and/or to people in certain professions if you are considering applied research.
- October 28**  
**Assignment 7:** **Mapping the Literature in Your Field: The Literature Review**  
**(1) Preliminary bibliography for your research proposal due.** Include academic journal articles as well as monographs and collections of essays. Organize in sections: separate primary from secondary sources, and organize secondary sources by topic. Should be 1 ½-2 pages.  
**(2) Article critique:** Write a 2-3 page critique of any article from a peer-reviewed academic journal. The article should be one that relates to your research proposal, and that you have found while conducting your library searches. You should use one opening paragraph to summarize the article, but the rest of the paper should be devoted to a critique. Think about significance of the argument, use of supporting evidence, clarity in presentation, effectiveness of the argument, etc. You will need to be selective, so focus on the most interesting, important, and/or problematic parts of the article
- November 11**  
**Assignment 8:** **Developing Methodology in the Social Sciences**  
**Draft of literature review due:** Should be 2-3 pages.
- November 18**  
**Assignment 9:** **Plagiarism & Citations in Academia; Introductions & Conclusions**  
**Draft description of methodology due:** Should be 2-3 pages.
- November 25**  
**Assignment 10:** **Approaches to Revision & Peer Review**  
**Draft of research proposal due, with a cover letter or completed writer review form describing your main concerns about your proposal:** Please be prepared to distribute your proposal and cover letter to your peers as well. In your writer review form, you should indicate the parts of the proposal you are the most concerned about, as well as the areas



with which you are the most pleased. This will help to guide us in giving you feedback.

**December 2**

**Peer review**

**Assignment 11:**

**Peer review in class:** Come with written feedback for all the members of your peer review group, including both marginal comments and general comments at the end of the draft.

**December 18**

**Final proposal due by 6:30 PM (Assignment 12)**

## Research Proposal Assignment

Your main assignment for the class is a formal research proposal, 12-15 pages in length, with an attached bibliography. You will not actually write the research paper itself. Instead, the formal proposal serves as an introduction to academic research design. You will need to complete original research as you formulate your topic, develop your methodology, and explore the sources that are available to you. You need to be certain that your research project involves primary research; it's not enough simply to propose a lengthy review of other people's research, although a literature review will form a part of your proposal. Instead, I want to see that you can envision and plan an original research project in the discipline of your choice.

Since this is a very different assignment than others that you have completed, you will have the opportunity to move through the assignment step by step as you complete incremental writing assignments that lead up to the completion of the research proposal. That means that you won't have to worry that you don't know what is expected of you in the proposal. I will be giving you feedback throughout the class, and in a peer review session you will receive advice from some of your classmates. However, you will need to meet the deadlines for each writing assignment so that you don't fall behind. You will also need to start your research early. By spreading out the work for the proposal, you will get more out of the assignment, and you will ensure that the end of the semester isn't a hectic time for you.

Below, you will find a description of the main components of your research proposal. (I have modified this from the Capstone proposal guidelines, so some of you might find this familiar!)

- **Provide a clear description of your Project's topic or focus:** You should frame your Project by identifying the topics that you will include in your research. You can also do this by explaining why you will not answer certain questions, study certain topics, or use a particular set of sources. Often, scholars identify broad issues that motivated their study, and then set limits on their present study. It is far better to set a narrow study and to thoroughly explore it than it is to delineate a broad scope and to conduct a shallow or haphazard investigation. As long as you have clear reasons for framing your study, your reader will be happy to see that you're not trying to accomplish too much in one paper. When you situate your research and frame your reader, you need to be aware that your readers may not be as familiar with the conventions of your discipline as you are. You may need to use your introduction to describe briefly your research design and the benefits of your approach.
- **Describe your preliminary hypothesis or main research questions:** Writers often feel uncomfortable when they are asked to give preliminary hypotheses in a proposal, since they may not have completed their research yet. Bear in mind that your preliminary hypothesis is not your final argument. Instead, it represents the hypothesis that will guide your research. You may feel more comfortable giving a series of questions that you hope to answer in your paper in lieu of a thesis. Be sure that you don't leave out this information,

since your proposal will be judged on the likelihood that you can complete your proposed project successfully. It will be very difficult for your readers to make this assessment without seeing your thesis or research questions.

- **Establish the significance of your study:** Throughout your proposal, you need to motivate your reader to read your paper. You can do this by discussing the significance of your study. Will you be discussing important issues? Taking sides in a current debate? Will you develop a thesis that will help to answer an open research question in your field? Study how writers in your field discuss the significance of their research if you need models. If you're writing an interdisciplinary proposal, you can also explain the significance of combining two or more disciplines in your research. What will you gain by taking this approach? Why do your disciplines fit well together? What do you gain from interdisciplinary research that you would not have from research in one discipline?
- **Sources and methodology:** Methodology is a technical term for the methods that you use to gather data or find sources, and to identify and analyze information from your sources. It is common for social scientists to discuss quantitative and qualitative methods and to develop clear descriptions of their methods when they write up research. If you look carefully in most pieces of academic writing, you will find a discussion of methodology. For example, literary scholars might spend some time discussing versions of literary texts that they are analyzing, as well as identifying some important theories that are helping them to develop a framework to analyze their sources. Legal historians may identify the courts that produced certain legal records and documents, and introduce a quantitative approach to coding and analyzing the records. The best way to decide how to describe your methodology is to study the introductions of similar studies, since different disciplines have different terminology and conventions.
- **Include a literature review:** Literature reviews serve several important purposes. First, they show your readers that you have good working knowledge of the major sources in your field. This helps to ensure that you're not simply reproducing another scholar's work. Second, they help you to frame your research with reference to other works in your field. You may be able to establish the significance of your research by demonstrating that you're addressing an open (or debated) question in the field of sociology, for example. If you are proposing an interdisciplinary paper, you may need to discuss works from several different fields that help to inform your approach.
- **Attach a preliminary bibliography or works cited page:** This bibliography is important. It will help your readers to see where you've gotten your ideas for your paper, and it will make it easier for them to see how thorough your preliminary research has been. (The bibliography is not included in the suggested length for the proposal.)

\*\*\* Lisa Ratmansky and Nancy Watterson prepared a *basic* template for a proposal. This is included below to give you an abbreviated example of a research proposal.

My study of \_\_\_\_\_ is important because \_\_\_\_\_. Other scholars of \_\_\_\_\_ have noted that \_\_\_\_\_, yet little is known about \_\_\_\_\_. My project will add to the discussion of \_\_\_\_\_, specifically by looking systematically at issues of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. I will accomplish this study by \_\_\_\_\_ (insert method of study here); these are methods that \_\_\_\_\_ (name scholars who have established a groundwork for your approach) have used to study similar questions of \_\_\_\_\_. My work departs from (or contrasts with) previous works, specifically \_\_\_\_\_ (name them) in that it \_\_\_\_\_.