

**ANTH 284: MA Writing Practicum
Fall 2022**

Wednesday 12:00 -2:50, SSB 269

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SSB 262

(Office hours by appointment)

Objectives of the Practicum

This is a one-quarter practicum for graduate students who are writing an MA thesis (or MA equivalency paper) in Anthropology. While you will be developing the content of your thesis individually with your advisor, the focus of this seminar is on the process of planning and writing the paper. Students will be engaging in peer review and mutual support to help each other accomplish your goals for the quarter.

The class will bring together students who will be working with differing methodologies, primary and secondary materials, and writing styles/genres. It is understood that students will be producing different sorts of projects based on your subfield, your interests, and the discussions you have with your advisors. This diversity will help you to understand and appreciate the various methods and publication genres of your fellow students as you move forward in your academic careers.

The non-writing assignments for the class will deliberately be kept light to give you time to work on your paper. We will also use some class time to do in-class writing.

This course is graded S/U. In order to get a "Satisfactory" grade for the course you will be expected to do all of the assignments, including writing and submitting a preliminary proposal, outline, and drafts of sections of your paper. If you aren't able to complete particular assignments by the due dates, please contact me to let me know when you expect to finish them. All of the assignments must be completed by Monday, Dec. 5 (the beginning of Finals Week).

Class Schedule and Assignments

WEEK ONE (SEPT. 28): INTRODUCTIONS AND PLANNING AHEAD

We will discuss what each student envisions for their thesis (or MA equivalent) at this early stage.

Some questions for discussion and to think about as you plan ahead:

1) Have you already written an MA thesis in the past, or is this your first?

- 2) Do you plan to write a traditional MA thesis, or do another kind of project? (See the document “MA Equivalency Projects” for examples.)
- 3) What topic do you plan to write about (roughly)?
- 4) If your topic is still too broad or unfocused, how can you narrow it down?
- 5) Will your thesis (or MA equivalency paper) be based mainly on primary data (either your own or someone else’s), secondary sources, or a combination of the two?
- 6) What research and analysis (if any) have you conducted so far, and how do you anticipate collecting or analyzing data for your thesis (if it is a data-based thesis)? If you are still collecting primary data, how long do you expect to continue doing that?
- 7) What sort of literature review do you expect to carry out? How important will the literature review be for the overall project?
- 8) What do you need to do before you can start actually writing your paper? When do you hope to start doing that?
- 9) Are you and/or your advisor aiming for you to end up with a publishable article?
- 10) How do you see this project contributing towards your doctoral dissertation project?
- 11) What do you feel is the most productive way for you to work with your advisor? Will you arrange regular meetings with them?
- 12) What concerns do you have about the process of planning and writing the paper?
- 13) What might be the best way for you to break down the task of researching, planning, and writing the paper into manageable “chunks” so that you can make the best use of your time and not feel overwhelmed by the process, especially towards the end?
- 14) How much of the thesis/paper do you want to try to complete by the end of this quarter?
- 15) What other major time commitments do you have besides the MA thesis? What do you think would best help you to manage your time so that the thesis doesn’t get left behind while you focus more on your other work?
- 16) What would you find most useful from this seminar? What do you think would help you stay on track in meeting your goals?

In-class assignment (if time): Write a preliminary week-by-week plan for what you want to accomplish on the thesis between now and the due date for the first draft (Feb. 6). We will discuss these after everyone has finished writing their plan. (If we don’t get to this in the first class, please complete this on your own and have it available for the next class.) You should check your progress against this plan periodically and revise it as needed.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE NEXT CLASS (October 5):

- 1) Arrange a meeting with your advisor for this week or early next week (if possible) to discuss their expectations for the MA/equivalency paper, if you haven’t met with them about this recently. The meeting should focus on what sort of paper you will be writing (a thesis? a journal article? a literature review?) and how long they expect it to be, as well as working out a timeline for completing sections of the paper. You should also

discuss how often they would like you to meet with them and how you will arrange those meetings. Please be prepared to discuss this in the next class if possible. You can also ask them for recommendations for a thesis or article to read for the next assignment (see #2).

2) Look for an MA thesis OR a journal article in your subfield (ideally something related to your thesis topic that you would like to read anyway) to discuss in class on Oct. 5. If you are writing an actual MA thesis for the first time, it would probably be a good idea to read an MA thesis by another UCSD student just to get a sense of the structure and what can be accomplished during the relatively limited period of time that you have to work on the thesis.

You can find a number of UCSD Anthropology students' MA theses here:

https://escholarship.org/search?q=anthropology%20master&searchType=ucsd_etd&searchUnitType=series

As mentioned above, you can also ask your advisor or another faculty member to recommend a recent MA thesis that they have read (which is available online or in hard copy).

You should read the abstract, introduction, and conclusion carefully, but you can spend less time on other sections if it's a longer thesis. Be prepared to talk about this thesis/article for about 5-10 minutes (per student). You should address most or all of these questions:

- 1) How long is it? Does the length feel about right for what it's trying to accomplish?
- 2) How is it structured? If it's a thesis, how many chapters is it? If it's an article, how many sections is it divided into?
- 3) What is the main argument? Where is the argument initially set out? How clear is the argument and how well is it supported in the body of the thesis?
- 4) How is the literature review put in dialogue with/in support of the main argument? Is the literature clearly related to the topic at hand?
- 5) How effective are the introduction and conclusion in framing the thesis/article at the beginning and tying it together at the end?
- 6) How smoothly does the logic of the thesis/article(s) unfold as you move through it? Is there anything that you would have done differently? By the time you got to the end of the thesis or article, did you feel that the author had moved logically from the beginning to the end? Could you summarize the argument fairly easily?
- 7) What do you think makes the thesis or article effective or, perhaps, less effective than it might have been? What writing strategies did the author use that helped to keep your interest, to get the point across, and to make a real scholarly contribution? Did their own voice come through in the writing (this may be more or less relevant depending on the genre)?

If you are discussing the work of another UCSD student in particular, please be respectful as you engage in constructive critique and analysis.

Meanwhile, you should also be looking for and reading other sources for your thesis.

WEEK TWO (OCT. 5): WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE MA THESIS OR JOURNAL ARTICLE?

We will briefly check in about your progress and about your advisor's expectations for your project.

We will talk about effective academic writing and what you should be striving for in your thesis. You will be asked to talk about the MA thesis or journal article that you have read (see Assignment #2 above), particularly how it is organized, what strategies the author use to get their points across, and how clear and effective the writing is (or isn't). Please keep in mind the questions that were listed for the assignment.

If there is time, we will also read (in class) and discuss the first part (pp. 28-48) of Part II ("Asking Questions, Finding Answers") in *The Craft of Research*. (This will be made available on Canvas.)

WEEK THREE (OCT. 12): USING ONLINE RESEARCH TOOLS

[NOTE: This class will run from 12:30 – 2:50]

Information session about using online research and reference management tools with Dr. Sarah Buck Kachaluba, UCSD Library Subject Specialist for Anthropology, Latin American Studies, and Latin American and Iberian Languages and Literatures.

Dr. Buck Kachaluba will provide an orientation to key library resources for effective anthropological research and reference management/organization.

Optional assignment for this class:

It would be a good idea to look at the useful page of resources that Dr. Buck-Kachaluba has put together for Anthropology (https://ucsd.libguides.com/sb.php?subject_id=21610) before we meet so that you'll have an idea of some of the resources available.

If there are any online tools, databases, or library resources in particular that you would like to learn about in this session, please contact Dr. Buck-Kachaluba well beforehand at sbuckkachaluba@ucsd.edu to see if she can go over that in our session. You can also schedule individual sessions with her at another time, especially if there's something that is very specific to your own research that you would like to talk about.

WEEK FOUR (OCT. 19): DISCUSSION OF PRELIMINARY THESIS/PAPER PROPOSALS

We will share and discuss each other's preliminary proposals. What are the objectives of your thesis/paper? Given the time constraints for the MA project, are the goals reasonable? What will you need to do in order to accomplish what you have set out to do?

Assignment for this class:

Write a preliminary proposal (about two pages) of your thesis/paper to share with the group. If you find it difficult to write something that looks like a coherent proposal at this point, just write down a few paragraphs that encapsulate some of the main ideas that you hope to pursue in the paper. Please make these available to the other seminar members by the beginning of class (or ideally beforehand).

After receiving feedback in the seminar, you should revise the proposal as needed and make an appointment to discuss the proposal or preliminary ideas with your advisor (if you haven't done so already).

Also, you should revise (if needed) your week-by-week plan for researching/writing the thesis.

We may do some in-class writing if time permits, so please be prepared with whatever you need to do this.

WEEK FIVE (OCT. 26): STRATEGIES FOR THESIS WRITING

During the first hour of class we will finish giving feedback to everyone on their proposals.

During the second hour, Alicia Wright, the Graduate Writing Consultant for the department (and dissertation writer herself), will share ideas on good writing practices and strategies for writing a thesis.

If there is time towards the end, we will use it as dedicated time for getting independent work done on your thesis. If anyone would like to meet with me one-on-one during part of this time to talk about your project and any problems or questions you might have, we can go to my office or outside for an informal meeting

WEEK SIX (NOV. 2): LITERATURE REVIEW

What makes a good literature review? What should you be aiming for in yours? How exhaustive does it need to be? How can it be put in service of an argument?

Assignments for this class:

By Monday before class (Oct. 31), please circulate about 6 - 8 pages of your literature review to the class and an informal, one-half to one-page preliminary statement of how you (tentatively) expect your thesis/paper to draw on, complement, or go beyond this literature. (If you're not sure about any of this yet, just write a short statement of what you have found most interesting and/or most lacking in the literature so far.) We will discuss these in class, so please read each other's work before coming to class. You can upload your work to the shared Google Drive folder:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OACLqS8_jG-bvUk9PVA

Also, please read at least one of these articles, which will be made available on the course website:

- 1) Besnier and Morales, "Tell the Story: How to Write for *American Ethnologist*"
- 2) Boellstorff, "How to Get an Article Accepted at *American Anthropologist* (or Anywhere)."

Another useful article that gives advice about writing an academic article, which was recommended by Prof. Postero, is "Chekhov's Gun and Narrative Topography in Social Science Texts," by Christian Lund.

WEEK SEVEN (NOV. 9): OUTLINE OF THESIS/PAPER

We will go over each student's thesis/paper outline. What work will each section/chapter do for the overarching argument or structure? Is all of this doable? Are you dealing with any particular problems or just feeling "stuck"? What can you do to move forward?

Possible In-class writing session in the second half of the class.

Assignment for this class:

Before the beginning of class, please complete and circulate a fairly detailed outline of the thesis (about 3-4 pages), with an updated schedule for accomplishing it.

WEEK EIGHT (NOV. 16): PEER REVIEW AND IN-CLASS WRITING SESSION

Assignment for this class: Circulate 6 - 8 pages of your writing (please make it available to everyone by noon on Monday, Nov. 14). By this point you should hopefully be finishing up the literature review and moving into your key research questions and the presentation and analysis of your data (if you are writing a data-based paper).

After we discuss your work, it would be a good idea to make an appointment to meet with your advisor to talk about what you've written so far and what you need to do to finish the paper.

If there is time we will spend the last part of this class writing, so be prepared with whatever you need to do that.

WEEK NINE (NOV. 23): Thanksgiving Week: NO CLASS

Keep writing this week if possible (but take some time off to relax, too 😊)

WEEK TEN (Nov. 30 – last class): WRAP-UP

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE WILL MEET ON ZOOM THIS WEEK (the link will be sent out ahead of time).

Assignment for this week:

- 1) Be prepared to give a 10-minute presentation on your thesis (overview and conclusions). Where are you in the writing process? What do you need to do to finish the first draft? What aspects of the writing are still giving you trouble?
- 2) This will be our final check-in and chance to discuss each other's work as a group. Please also circulate any additional writing that you have done (maximum of about 8 pages) that you would like to have peer reviewed by the other students in the class. If possible, please circulate it by Monday Nov. 28, but no later than Tuesday the 29th.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE MA THESIS/PROJECT:

(Please verify these with the information provided by Veri and Bonnie; the dates may be subject to change)

Department Deadlines

Feb. 6: Full MA draft due to committee

Feb. 21: Committee's comments due

March 21: Final MA thesis/project due date

April 4: Committee's evaluation (pass/no pass) due

Graduate Division's Deadlines for a Spring MA "Graduation"

April 14: Veri submits degree audit to the Graduate Division

Between Spring Quarter Weeks 1 and 3: Student meets with Grad Division

June 9: Final MA paperwork must be submitted to Grad Division

Some useful sources on the subject of academic research and writing

Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article* (2nd edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. Available through the library at

<https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?nobk=y&vid=1&sid=2da27b92-20a2-4b71-bf37-c5d133b5c3cd@redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ==#AN=268521&db=nlebk>

Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, *The Craft of Research* (3rd edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Available through the UCSD library at <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsd/detail.action?docID=432155>

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (3rd edition). New York: W.W. Norton, 2014. (Not available online through the library.)