

**Ethnic Studies 290A: Writers Group**  
**Fall Quarter 2006**

**Prof. Natalia Molina**

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**Office hours:** Monday 2-3:15 & Friday 11:15-1 and by appointment

**Writers Group goals:**

- 1) To break down a large writing project into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- 2) To give and receive constructive feedback on work.
- 3) To collect a toolbox of writing tools that will help you become a better and more consistent writer.
- 4) To produce a draft of your thesis introduction

Readings will be on e-reserve or handed out in class. You will also develop your own reading list and be responsible for obtaining those materials.

"Writers fare best when they begin before feeling fully ready. Motivation becomes most reliable in the wake of regular involvement." (Boice 1994:236).

**Week 1, September 27: Introductions, setting goals for the group, discussing the goal and structure of introductions**

First discussion: Come prepared to discuss, Guglielmo, Thomas A. "Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas." *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 4: 1212-37. (e-reserves)

• **Written Assignment: Project Description, 3 Pages, double-spaced, please e-mail to the writing group by 5 pm on Monday, October 2.** Explain the who, what, where, when and Why of your project, *without looking back to any of your previous drafts*. Organize your paper in 4 sections according to the following questions:

- 1) Without naming the specifics (e.g subject, site) of your project, what is your theoretical framework? Or, what is the basic question you are asking? This is the Why of your project.
- 2) What are the specifics of your project? This is the who, what, where, and when of your project.
- 3) Who else has written about your project, both theoretically and specifically? Instead of naming each work and their contribution, group them into 2-3 camps, at most, and give the gist.
  - a. Are you building on, overturning, and/or linking this literature?
- 4) Where have you and where will you look for information on the project? Why is this information a good fit for your project? What does this information get you? What does it not get you? This is your methods section.

• **On October 4, turn in a reading list** for your project of 10-15 works, books and articles of things you need to read for your project. Every week starting week 3, you will turn in a one-page synopsis for each work of 1-2 of these works. Your synopsis should be organized according to the following questions:

- 1) What is the author's main argument?

- 2) What is the main contribution the author is making or what do you know now that you didn't know before or what can you build on?
- 3) What are some quotes or points that you want to keep track of to maybe use in your work?

You should turn in a synopsis every week whether we meet or not. At the end of the quarter, I should have at least 10 synopses for each writer.

### **Week 2, October 4: Breaking Down Introductions**

Come to class having read and taken notes on each of the project descriptions. Everyone will be asked to comment on each project description.

\* Begin writing **introduction's introduction and literature review due Friday October 13, 5 pm.**

### **Week 3, October 11:**

Starting this week, turn in your synopsis.

**Assignment: Create timeline,** E-mail to professor by Tuesday October 10 at 12 pm

The goal of this assignment is for you to map out what tasks/assignments you must accomplish in order to write a successful introduction. Make your timeline as complete as possible. Include material that will help organize your tasks, as well as help you think through your project fully.

For example, assess what are you building on and what are you starting from scratch. Do you have a whole new body of literature you must become acquainted with? Will you eventually have to interviews for the project? Can you come up with interview questions and techniques this quarter?

**Format:** You can use any format you like, but use the week 1, week 2, etc. to divide the sections of your timeline.

**Assignment: Outline for the introduction as a whole with the introduction's introduction and literature review filled out. Due Friday October 13, 5 pm.** Please e-mail drafts to everyone in the class.

### **Week 4, October 18:**

Turn in your synopsis.

Come prepared to discuss outline, **Outline for the introduction as a whole with the introduction's introduction and literature review filled out.** Come to class having read and taken notes on each of the project descriptions. Everyone will be asked to comment on each project description.

The review of the literature demonstrates how it relates to your topic. The literature review contains an interpretive \*synthesis\* of other studies that relate to your topic area. It should contain a discussion of how your research question raises or resolves issues that the available literature does not address.

**Planning to write:** The focus of this assignment is your **introduction's introduction and the literature review.** But the outline will give you an opportunity to begin planning the rest of your introduction. Before you write, you should always plan. Your outline should list every topic your reader will need to know to understand your project. This will give the reader a sense of the direction you are going in and help you plan before you write. It also helps break the intro. into manageable steps You should also include what sources you will use to inform the reader on those

topics. Your outline should break down the different sections of your introduction. Use subtitles for each of these sections. It gives the reader and you some direction as to what the essence of that subject is. For example, "Literature Review" is much less telling than "Looking for the Class Analysis in Transnational Studies."

In your outline, it is essential you include your thesis. This should be a concise summary of the core purpose of your research project. This way the reader can see if your lit. review \*fits\* your thesis.

You can use any format you wish for your outline. Just make sure that each section conveys the point you wish to make in that section of the outline.

### **Week 5, October 25:**

#### **No class meeting**

Write, write, write. Meet with your advisors.

Please schedule a meeting with me for this week.

Turn in your synopsis to the professor's box.

**Due Assignment:** Revised draft of introduction's introduction, literature review, draft of methods section, **Friday October 27, 5 pm.** Please e-mail drafts to everyone in the class.

Come to class having discussed the assigned introduction suggested by one of your classmates.

Turn in your synopsis.

#### **Readings:**

"Methodology" in *Not Just Victims: Conversations with Cambodian Community Leaders* Edited and with an Introduction by Sucheng Chan.

### **Week 6, November 1:**

Turn in your synopsis.

#### **Come prepared to discuss the drafts.**

This is your opportunity to test out your thesis and supporting evidence.

It is important that we take stock of where the draft is now. Are your argument and evidence hanging together? The more sections you have drafted by this point, the more you will be able to see how they fit together and build one each other or if you need to move sections around.

### **Week 7, November 8**

No class. Write, write, write. Meet with your advisors.

Turn in your synopsis to professor's box.

The first set of papers is due Friday of week 7, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm.

We will discuss the papers in class week 8, November 15<sup>th</sup>.

The second set of papers is due Friday of week 8, November 17<sup>th</sup>.

We will discuss the papers in class week 9 November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

E-mail your work to everyone in the class.

It is critical that you turn your COMPLETE draft in on time. Ideas need to sit and stew before they really mature.

### **Weeks 8 and 9: In-class peer reviews**

Everyone except the peer critic should come prepared with one a one-page feedback form with copies for the writer and the professor. Please include these prompts in your paper.

I think you were arguing...

I think one thing original about your work is...

I was a little confused about...

One suggestion might be to....

One of your colleagues will be assigned the role of your peer critic. That person will do a 5-10 minute presentation reviewing your paper during our class meeting. They will state your thesis, assess your presentation of the literature review, discuss your intervention in existing literature, explain how your (proposed) research supports your thesis, and the overall strengths and weaknesses of your paper. (The peer critic will give a written copy of his/her comments to the writer and the professor.) You will then have a chance to respond to the critic. We will then open up the discussion to the entire class.

### **Questions to consider as a peer critic:**

Can you state the author's thesis? Can it be revised for clarity?

Does each section connect to the argument?

Are the methods employed best suited to answer the question? What are the strengths and limits of that method?

At what point in the paper do you have a sense of the whole?

Does the author assume his audience knows too much? To little?

Do you have a sense of how the paper will be organized before you get into the paper?

Could any of the key information be presented more clearly in a different format (chart vs. table, verbal vs. graph)?

Are there sentences that are unnecessarily complex? Can they be broken down, pared down? Is the sentence carrying too many ideas?

Week 10: TBD

**Introduction due date: December 6, noon, in the professor's box.**

### **Constant Feedback:**

Ten weeks is a very short time to write an introduction to your masters thesis. With your preparation and accomplishments from 210, however, this is a very feasible goal. A major component of writing a strong research paper will be to work on it consistently. Not a week should go by when you have not made progress on your introduction. Post your timeline up somewhere you will see it everyday and think and realize your goal for that week.

Your advisor and I will be your resources for your paper. We give our best feedback when you produce your best work. As such, you should be meeting or sending detailed e-mails (if that's what works better for your advisor) with your advisor or myself on a regular basis. Strive to share original work with your advisor regularly.

**Possible class meeting:** Endnote workshop. Let's discuss.

**Small steps towards the intro (i.e. grading):**

- October 2, 5 pm- Project Description, 3 Pages, double-spaced, please e-mail to the writing group. (10%)
- October 4-Reading list for your project of 10-15 works, books and articles of things you need to read for your project.
- Ever week, beginning week 3: 1 page synopses, 10 total. (10%)
- Timeline due October 12
- October 13, 5 pm: Outline for the introduction as a whole with the introduction's introduction and literature review filled out. (15%)
- October 27, 5 pm: Revised draft of introduction's introduction, literature review, draft of methods section. (15%)
- Rough draft and peer critique (20%)
- Final rough draft (20%)