

Ethnic Studies 100H -- Honors Seminar

Winter 2019

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Designed to support students toward completing their Ethnic Studies honors thesis, the class walks students through each section of the thesis and engages students in the actual practice of writing. An honors thesis requires that students: 1) conduct original research; 2) use that research to construct a thesis. Therefore, the focus of this quarter will be on conducting original research and coming up with arguments based on your findings. The course provides substantial class time to **structured writing time**, and students work in close proximity to other writers and to instructor feedback.

PHILOSOPHY

This class is designed to be **non-evaluative** of students' writing, and emphasizes process over product. Performance is based largely on how well students use the time provided each week, and how well they meet scheduled deadlines for sections of their paper. The class is meant to provide conversations in support of writing, and as such asks students to be generative and not constrain their writing processes by too much perfectionism too early in the process. When one section is covered, students move on and leave the previous section behind, with the goal of producing a highly imperfect and partial draft. The main goal: to generate writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Attendance:** In order for this discussion-based course to be an intellectually meaningful and productive experience for everyone involved, it is imperative that every student ATTEND ALL COURSE MEETINGS. There are no "free absences" in this course – every session is mandatory; any and all absences will affect your final grade.
- **Participation:** Peer-feedback is a central component of ETHN 100H. In addition to sharing your thoughts and ideas with respect to your peers' work during in-class discussions, you will be providing written feedback to specific classmates at various stages of their projects. Please take the time to read your colleagues' work with generosity and care, and honor each piece of writing with specific, thoughtful, critical feedback.

Questions to consider as a peer reviewer:

Can you state the author's main argument(s)? Can it be revised for clarity?
What is one thing that is original about the paper?
What is one thing that you are unsure about the paper?
Does each section connect back to the argument?

At what point in the paper do you have a sense of the whole?
Does the author assume the audience knows too much? Too little?
Could any of the key information be presented more clearly?
Are there sentences that are unnecessarily complex?
How is this an ethnic studies project?

Also see: Peer review, see: <https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PeerReviews.html>

- **Assignments:** In addition to the weekly assignments, you need to turn in a 10-page paper by 2:30 p.m. on Friday 3/22. This paper will include the sections on a) **methods** and b) **findings and analyses** of your paper (see below).

SAMPLE SECTIONS OF HONORS THESES

1. Introduction

An introduction should be a clear, concise statement of the research question(s) you are addressing, your arguments, and an overview of the evidence you will provide in your thesis. It should also explain why your research is important to Ethnic Studies. Can include personal reflection, relating how you got interested in the project. Don't make the introduction too broad; you shouldn't relate your essay to eternal questions of humanity. It should introduce the main point of the paper as quickly and efficiently as possible and give an overview of the arguments and evidence you will present.

2. Literature Review and Theory

Situate your project in the larger research field(s). What other scholarly attempts have been made to answer your research question(s)? How will your work build on and depart from this existing research? What will your contributions be? You may also define and introduce the **key concepts** you will be discussing in your paper.

3. Methods

This section details how you went about researching your area of interest and what sorts of data you collected. You might want to argue for the legitimacy and need for nontraditional thesis/methodology/form of representation (such as the use of autoethnography, graphic novel, personal manifesto, collection of artifacts, etc.).

4. Findings and Analyses

This section reports and critically analyzes your main findings. Explain how your evidence supports the arguments you make in the intro and literature review/theory portions of your paper. Pay attention to competing explanations for your findings and be able to refute them.

5. Conclusion

This section reminds readers of your argument, summarizes your findings, shows how your evidence supports your conclusions, and reflects on the significance and implications of the findings. You may also suggest directions for further research.

6. List of Works Cited/Bibliography

Important: Every section of the thesis should contribute to a single, unified story that is related back to your research question and thesis statement. The thesis should tell one logical story, and everything in your thesis should support that story

Questions for basic brainstorming at the beginning of your project:

- What do I already know about this topic?
- Why do I care about this topic?
- Why is this topic important to people other than myself
- What more do I want to learn about this topic?
- What is the main question that I am trying to answer?
- Where can I look for additional information?
- Who is my audience and how can I reach them?
- How will my work inform my larger field of study?
- What's the main goal of my research project?

Questions for reflection throughout your project:

- What's my main argument? How has it changed since I began the project?
- What's the most important evidence that I have in support of my "big point"?
- What questions do my sources not answer?
- How does my case study inform or challenge my field writ large?
- Does my project reinforce or contradict noted scholars in my field? How?
- What is the most surprising finding of my research?
- What is the most frustrating part of this project?
- What is the most rewarding part of this project?
- What will be my work's most important contribution?

Week 1 (1/10) - Introduction; scheduling; setting goals; finalizing syllabus

Getting started:

Introduction
Finalize syllabus
Guest speakers? Food?
How do we get independent academic work done?
How do we deal with negative self-talk?
What is an Ethnic Studies project?

In-Class Assignment:

a) Try to fill in the following statement: "I am researching ____ because I want to find out what/how/why ____, in order to help my readers understand ____"
b) "Ten things I don't know about my project" and what I need to do to find answers to them.

Pair Shares: Exchange your writing with a partner and give each other feedback.

Week 2 (1/17) – Research Interest/Generative Arguments/Key Concepts

Discussion

Writing: Create a 1-page project description, including a research statement, a statement of your preliminary argument (including claims, reasons, and possible evidence), and 3-5 key Ethnic Studies concepts that you plan to use in your paper. What is your positionality in relation to this research project? What are your starting beliefs? What are they based on?

Pair Shares: Discuss your write-up with one other person or in a small group

Week 3 (1/24) – Research Methods/Bibliography

Discussion

Bibliography: Turn in complete annotated bibliography of 10 sources

Writing: Draft of research methods. What research methods are you intending to deploy and why? What do you know about these methods? What questions do you have about these methods? Write 10 things you don't know about the method(s) that you choose.

Class Work: Q&A on research methods

* Assignment: Meet with your advisor this week.

Weeks 4 and 5 (1/31 & 2/7) – Research, Research....

Assignment: Begin your research

Class work: Report on your research progress for feedback

Week 6 (2/14) – Colloquium: An Example of ES Research

Class discussion

Week 7 (2/21) – Drafting...

Discussion

Writing and Class Reflections

- Sort your “evidence” or research into analytical categories. You can begin by putting subject headings on your notes as you go along, which you can then use to generate analytical categories.
- Then think about your project’s big picture: What is the overall argument of your thesis? What are the sub-arguments of each chapter and how do they relate to my main argument?
- Can you back up your arguments with evidence that you have collected?

Week 8 (2/28) – Drafting...

Discussion

Writing and Class Reflections

- Divide your thesis into manageable chunks of writing.
- Take one argument or one piece of evidence and flesh them out on paper.
- Write through one point on a chapter outline.
- Just start! These small bits of prose will add up quickly. Start where your evidence is strongest and your ideas are clearest.

Assignment: Meet with your advisor this week

Week 9 (3/7) – Class Presentations

Assignment: Keep writing! Try to get your thoughts on paper without spending too much time fussing over minor concerns. At this stage, it’s all about getting those ideas on paper. Once that task is done, you can turn your attention to revising (spring quarter).

4 Presenters:

- 1) Presenter:
Reviewer:
- 2) Presenter:
Reviewer:
- 3) Presenter:
Reviewer:
- 4) Presenter:
Reviewer:

Week 10 (3/14) – Class Presentations

4 Presenters:

- 1) Presenter:
Reviewer:
- 2) Presenter:

Reviewer:
3) Presenter:
Reviewer:
4) Presenter:
Reviewer:

Assignment: Meet with your advisor this week

Final Papers (10pp.) due by 2:30 p.m. on Friday 3/22