

Graduate Academic Writing Workshop

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

Steven B. Rothman, Ph.D.

Associate Dean, Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies

1. Objective

This is an introductory workshop on academic writing for graduate students that improves students' basic knowledge and academic writing skills necessary for completing a final written thesis or report. The course will be held four (4) times and is designed to the final objective of writing a strong argumentative essay.

2. Background

Our students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and their knowledge of academic writing also greatly varies. Graduate students' academic writing skills are usually cultivated through the curricular course "Research Methods and Academic Writing" (mandatory for GSA students and strongly recommended to GSM students planning to write a thesis) and guidance by the supervisors during the seminars. However, this course alone may not be enough writing practice to establish strong writing skills among students with such a variety of backgrounds.

3. Overview of Schedule

Session 1	<u>Lecture</u> What is a research thesis? <u>Group work</u> Discuss the common normal thesis and try to determine what a typical thesis looks like.
Session 2	<u>Lecture</u> What makes a good research question? Where do good research questions come from? <u>Group Work</u> Discuss how to improve the research question and work on the research question.
Session 3	<u>Lecture</u> What is an argument? How do you write a good argument? <u>Group Work</u> Peer review of the essay.
Session 4	<u>Lecture</u> Research ethics and plagiarism <u>Activity</u> Discuss about the training sessions and feedback from students.

4. Student Requirements:

Students must complete all the assigned readings BEFORE the class lecture. In addition, students must complete an assignment before each session and submit an argumentative essay at the end of the sessions. Feedback/comments will be returned to students at a later date. Planned assignments are as below. Each assignment must be completed before the lecture day.

If you do not complete the assignment, you will not be able to participate in the workshop section of the class.

Assignment 1 Due by Session 1:

Analyze a research thesis (a variety of model theses are provided), by answering questions on a worksheet provided. It is not necessary to read the entire thesis or even a majority of the thesis to finish the worksheet. The goal is to get a general idea of the structure of a thesis, not to understand the content of the thesis. Bring the completed worksheet to class, it will be discussed in lecture and used in the workshop class.

Assignment 2 Due by Session 2:

Choose a research question based on your interests for your thesis. This is an exercise and the question does not need to be your final research question for your project. Type a half page explanation of your research question and bring it to class for discussion. It will be used in the workshop session.

Assignment 3 Due by Session 3:

Prepare 1000 word argumentative essay on a topic of your choice related to your thesis. The essay should make a single argument, and it should use evidence and sources to support your argument. Please type the essay, using 12 point font, double-spaced lines and print it for class. Bring two copies of the essay to class so that you can receive peer-review feedback from at least two other students in the class. You will use this essay during the workshop section.

Assignment 4 Due by Session 4:

Find at least 20 academic sources using the library resources (digital catalog and journal article databases) that might be useful in your essay. Create a bibliography properly formatted with the 20 sources using APA style formatting and bring it to class. The workshop class will review the sources and also evaluate the course overall. Please bring any comments you have about the workshop overall to provide the staff and faculty.

5. Reading Assignments

Reading Due by Session 1:

Choose a thesis from the list of theses we provided. Please only read what is necessary to answer the questions on the worksheet. You do not need to read the entire document.

Roselle, Laura, and Sharon Spray. *Research and Writing in International Relations*. Book. Pearson Education, 2008, 46-64.

Reading Due by Session 2:

Rothman, Steven B. "Comparatively Evaluating Potential Dissertation and Thesis Projects." Journal Article. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no. 2 (2008): 367–69. doi:10.1017/S1049096508080566.

Reading Due by Session 3:

Cottrell, Stella. *Critical Thinking Skills : Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*. Book. Palgrave Study Guides. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 1-16.

Reading Due by Session 4:

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. "For the Sound Development of Science -The Attitude of a Conscientious Scientist-," n.d.

Rothman, Steven B. "Guide to Plagiarism," n.d.