



WRDS 350 Academic Writing and Disciplinary Knowledge

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Getting in Touch

Office hours (my favourite way to help you):
Thu 12:00-2:00 in IBLC Learning Lounge (level 3)
Fri 12:30-1:30 in Orchard Commons #3009

You are encouraged to drop by during these office hours. In the time periods immediately before assignment due dates, however, I recommend [signing up electronically](#) first in order to secure a meeting spot and time.

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What Is This Course about?

Universities are divided into different faculties and departments, and thus different disciplines. Scholars who study these divisions point out how disciplines differ in how they order the world, what phenomena they look at, what questions they ask, how they gather and process evidence, and how they make meaning from this evidence. Given those differences, it seems unsurprising that disciplines also differ in how they present their questions, methods, evidence, and findings in writing. Yet, the assumption that research writing can be judged as good or bad by readers from outside the particular discipline continues to prevail. We will work against this assumption, and will instead presume that the language features that seem to occur frequently in a particular discipline are there because they are functional—they have proven to do the work that scholarly writers want them to do. What, then, are their functions? Why do they function well in one discipline but not another? What do they make possible, what do they constrain?

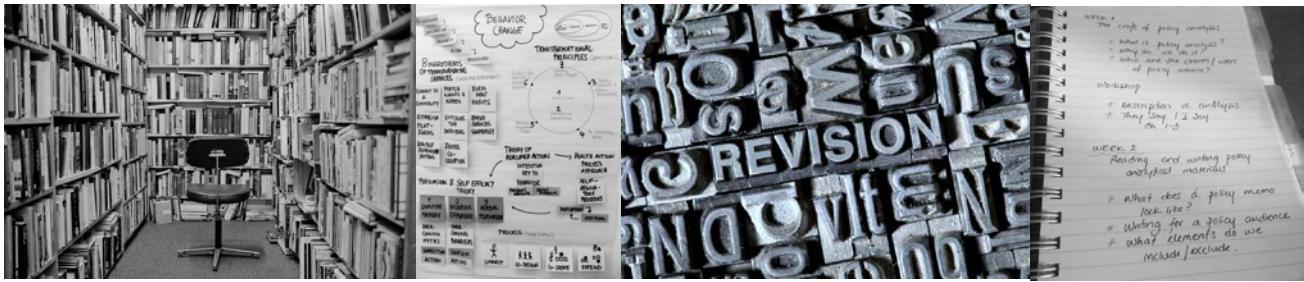
We will read a selection of texts in writing and language studies with the aim of understanding both what this research has found out about disciplinary styles and

how you yourself can conduct such an investigation. Overall, the course is structured to support your own research project in scholarly writing in your chosen discipline (e.g., English studies, history, philosophy, sociology, political science, geography). With the help of the readings we do in language studies research, you will be able to develop in individual research project, analyzing particular elements of writing in your discipline.

In other words, this course asks you to produce original research. By working with your own corpus, your own data, you will be able to make new observations and contribute to our understanding of features of disciplinary styles. Many of you will not have done or even encountered research like that. It takes time and effort to learn how to do research that is corpus-based and language-focused. Such research requires basic knowledge of sentence structures and linguistic categories. Please be prepared for that kind of difficulty; at the end of it stands the promise of truly new insights into scholarly writing and its language features.

Assignments at a Glance

Attendance and commitment to class (incl. drafts, peer review, research presentation)	15%
Collaborative field presentation and report (present Oct 5 & submit report Oct 14)	20%
Research proposal (300 words) & two annotations (2 x 200 words)	15%
2-stage in-class exam of stylistic analysis	20%
Research paper (1500 words, Dec 1)	30%



Weekly Schedule

Please be aware that the schedule is subject to revision; we might change some of the dates or add or remove some of the readings. Additional material (sample corpus, online materials, videos) will be posted via email.

	Topics	Readings & preparation	Due dates & workshops
Week 1 Sep 7	Introduction	Th: Course introductions	
Week 2 Sep 12 & 14	Disciplinarity	Tu: What is disciplinarity? Read Becher, "Significance of Disciplinary Differences" Th: ???	Th: your disciplinary experience
Week 3 Sep 19 & 21	Genre	Tu: What is genre? Read Bawarshi, "The Genre Function" Th: Read MacDonald, "Prose Styles, Genres, and Levels of Analysis"	Tu: introduction due in class Th: forming field report groups
Week 4 Sep 26 & 28	Disciplinary style	Tu: Read North, "Different Values, Different Skills?"; planning the field report Th: Bring notes & documents for field report	Tu: working on the field report
Week 5 Oct 3 & 5	Discourse analysis	Tu: Read Gill, "Discourse Analysis"; practice discourse analysis Th: group presentations on field report	Th: group presentation due in class
Week 6 Oct 10 & 12	Corpus analysis	Tu: group presentations on field report Th: Read Hyland & Tse, "Hooking the Reader"	Th: draft of field report due in class Sat: field report due on Canvas (Oct 14)
Week 7 Oct 17 & 18	Planning your own corpus analysis	Tu: Read Hyland, "Academic Attribution"; planning your research project Tu: Read Bazerman, "Speech Acts, Genres, and Activity Systems"; proposal & annotations as genre	
Week 8 Oct 24 & 26	Proposal & annotations	No classes held this week (I'm away at a conference). Draft submissions and peer reviews of annotations and proposal.	Su: draft of 2 annotations due on Canvas (ComPAIR)

			Tu: peer feedback on others' annotations due (ComPAIR) We: draft of proposal due on Canvas (ComPAIR) Fr: peer feedback on others' proposals due (ComPAIR)
Week 9 Oct 31 & Nov 2	Genre systems	Tu: Read Paré, "Writing as a Way into Social Work" and Tardy, "A Genre System View of the Funding of Academic Research" Th: Read Richardson, "Skirting a Pleated Text" and Scott "Embodying the Social in Writing Education"	Mo: final version of proposal with annotations due on Canvas
Week 10 Nov 7 & 9	Writing against convention & against Western epistemology	Tu: Read Thaiss & Zawacki, "Faculty Talk about Their Writing, Disciplines, and Alternatives" and Archibald, "Coyote Searching for the Bone Needle" Th: Read Kuokkanen, "The Question of Speaking and the Impossibility of the Gift"	
Week 11 Nov 14 & 16	Review	Tu: 2-Stage In-Class Exam Th: Peer review of research paper draft	Tu: exam in class Th: paper draft due in class
Week 12 Nov 21 & 23	Research presentations	Tu: Research presentations Th: Research presentations	Tu/Th: research presentation due in class
Week 13 Nov 28 & 29	Final review	Tu: Research presentations Th: Review and preparation for final exam	Fr: research papers due on Canvas (Dec 1)

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course you will be able to:

- 1) understand the role that differences in topics, questions, and methods between disciplines play in how scholarship is written (collaborative field report; proposal & annotations; research paper);
- 2) discuss the role that written genres play within disciplinary and university systems (collaborative field report; final exam)
- 3) analyze scholarly texts with the help of methods from discourse analysis, writings studies, and applied linguistics (research paper; final exam);
- 4) design and carry out a research project on disciplinary language with the help of writing studies methods (proposal & annotations; research paper).

Criteria for Attendance & Participation (15%)

- you attend almost all classes
- in preparation of each class, you have read course readings and taken notes on the readings
- in class, you have hard copies of the readings with you and are ready to comment on the readings
- when questions are posed, in groups or in class as a whole, you actively participate in the discussion
- you can make connections between readings and integrate ideas from previous classes

For the collaborative field reports, you will be asked to assess group members' contribution; I will include the results in the participation grade. I will ask you who was most and least active in: 1) managing meetings between group members and coming up with ideas for how to structure the presentation and report, 2) finding and reading articles, providing notes and summaries, 3) putting together and practising the presentation, 4) writing the report and editing and revising it carefully.

Introduction Assignment (no grade)

Your family and you occupy a certain space in this world. It's a space shaped by geography, social structure, migration, ethnicity, political and spiritual beliefs. Patterns of writing and reading are a part of that cultural space in which you grew up: what kinds of texts (literary, non-literary, books, articles, news, essays) did family members encourage or discourage each other from reading; were those texts part of leisure or work or community life; which texts were spoken or written about and which weren't; and what kinds of situations prompted private or public writing by family members? In this 650-750 word assignment, I ask you to introduce yourself by speaking about how your family made and maintained itself and its culture—and shaped you—through reading and writing. You can, for instance, focus on a particularly illuminating anecdote, describe a particular text and its role, emphasize a moment of conflict if it was particularly indicative of family writing culture, highlight aspects that made your family different from others, or ponder how bigger historical forces have shaped (enabled or hindered) your family's practices of reading and writing. Please bring a printed copy of this introduction to class. We will read each other's introductions in class.

Collaborative Field Report: Presentation & Written Report (20%)

In class we will form disciplinary teams of two to three students. The plan is that all group members have recently been or are currently enrolled in a course in the same discipline. You are asked to **1)** produce a set of **individual notes** that reflect on your experience of the course, and **2)** gather some of the **records you have of the course** (syllabus, assignment instructions, some of your assignments, feedback you received). Please bring those notes and materials to class on the day of the field report workshop. Together with your partner(s), you will use all your notes and documents as basis and data for your analysis.

The field presentation and report will focus on the disciplinary nature in which classes in that discipline are taught: how do students and instructors interact; what kinds of materials are being studied and used in the course of this class; how are students assessed; what are relations among students throughout the course? In order to develop your argument for the report, please do some research on the **history of teaching** in this discipline. Where does this style of structuring classes and their interaction come from? What are older

elements of this style of teaching, what are newer elements (e.g. lectures, seminars, tutorials have been with us for a long time but data projectors, laptops, and iClickers haven't)? Each individual class is the result of a multitude of decisions—some of these are institutional decisions about classroom schedules, class size, and standardized aspects of a course (e.g. all first- and second-year courses at UBC have to have a final exam). Other decisions are made within disciplines (e.g. all sections of ENGL 110 are supposed to have fiction, poetry and drama on their reading list), yet others are the choice of the individual instructor. In this field project, you are asked to focus on questions of disciplinarity. This focus on disciplinarity will help us to make links to how research is carried out in the discipline. Teaching will in part be shaped by the kind of methods and materials with which the professors who teach this course are doing their research. What is the relation between this research and the interactions that happen in the course? Is there a close relationship—if so how is this evident in the class—or is it a more distant one?

The grade for this assignment includes both the presentation (10%) and the final report (10%) and is a shared grade among group members.

The written report will be about 1200 words long. Your group can submit it in the digital format of your choice: as a text file in the form of a research project, or as a blog post on one of your own blogs or on a blogging platform (like medium.com), as a podcast or video (in which case, please send the text script along as well), or...another format you would like to try out. I encourage you to experiment with these forms of digital publication, but please make sure all group members agree to publish it.

Research Proposal & Annotations (15%)

For the research project that you are proposing, you will study genres of research writing in your discipline of choice. You will gather samples of the research writing you are analyzing, develop an interesting research question, and decide on the method with which you'll pursue that question. In your **300-word proposal**, you should lay out the following aspects of the research project:

- (1) What are the research concerns to which your analysis relates? What are the big questions here? (Your paper will not answer them fully. Rather,

these questions signal your participation in ongoing discussions among scholars.)

- (2) On what writing studies research does your project build? What branches of scholarship do you bring together? How does a research gap emerge by looking at branches of scholarship side by side?
- (3) What is your research question? Working down from the bigger concerns through what scholarship already exists, what is the central question that will structure and guide your research?
- (4) How will you collect your data, what are your methods?
- (5) What findings can you already describe; what findings do you anticipate?

Attached to the proposal will be **2 annotations** (summaries) of articles that are central to your research. Each annotation should be 150-200 words in length. Annotations should not be general summaries of the whole article; and they must not be the abstract or part of the abstract. Instead, they should be short summaries that are geared toward your research question. While the first draft of the annotated bibliography will be finished before the proposal, when you submit it together with the proposal, please put it at the end.

For this assignment, and for the research paper that follows, it is possible for two students to collaborate on the same project. If you have a research partner who agrees to work with you on the same project, submit the same assignment with both your names on it, and get the same grade, please let me know well ahead of the assignment deadline! Of research pairs I require that the proposal is accompanied by 4 200-word annotations. Should you set up a proposal partnership that doesn't work out (at this stage or when you're working on the research paper), please keep using the material you developed together, shape it each into your own project, and each submit your version of the project.

Research Paper (30%)

The research paper is where you get to carried out the project you proposed and received my feedback on. Length 1500 words.

2-Stage In-Class Exam (20%)

This in-class exam, held toward the end of term, is a way to assess your knowledge and preparation for the final exam. It's not a simple practice exam, because it has a delightful twist: we'll conduct it as a 2-stage exam.

(1) In the first stage of the exam (50/80 mins), exam tasks are completed in a traditional exam set up: you work individually and in silence. These individual responses are handed in and account for 10%.

(2) In the second stage (30/80 mins), the same exam tasks are completed in small groups (up to 4 students) who discuss their ideas and suggestions for the exam tasks. The group must come to a consensus and hand in one copy with all names attached. This part accounts for 10%.

This 2-stage exam will work on the same tasks at the final exam, but since time is much more limited, you are asked to respond in point form rather than in the essay answers that are expected in the final exam.

Grade Averages in My Past Sections

Many of you will produce excellent original research in your projects for this course. Each term I've taught ASTU 400A, there've been students who have been able to further the work they did in the course by presenting it at student conferences at UBC and elsewhere, and several have considered growing it into a full-fledged research publication. I encourage you to consider that as well. That's in addition to all that you will learn about the ins and outs of doing and writing research in a professional setting.

For me, giving hard numbers to the work produced in this course is the least pleasant aspect of teaching this course. However, UBC requires me to do so. There's also an expectation for the class grades to stay within a certain range and average. As you look at the numbers below, please always remember that these numbers don't define the work that's done in the class, and that none of the grades you receive define you.

Fall 2014

average 73 | highest grade 92 | lowest grade 55

Winter 2014

average 70 | highest grade 91 | lowest grade 42

Winter 2015

average 77 | highest grade 90 | lowest grade 58

Winter 2016

average 77 | highest grade 87 | lowest grade 52

Fall 2016

average 74 | highest grade 85 | lowest grade 55



Course Readings

- Becher, Tony. "[The Significance of Disciplinary Differences.](#)" *Studies in Higher Education* 19.2 (1994): 151-161. Web.
- Bawarshi, Anis. "[The Genre Function.](#)" *Genre and the Invention of the Writer*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2003. 16-48. [Print.](#)
- MacDonald, Susan Peck. "[Prose Styles, Genres, and Levels of Analysis.](#)" *Style* 36.4 (2002): 618-639. Web.
- North, Sarah. "[Different Values, Different Skills? A Comparison of Essay Writing by Students from Arts and Science Backgrounds.](#)" *Studies in Higher Education* 30.5 (2005): 517-533. Web.
- Gill, Rosalind. "[Discourse Analysis.](#)" *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sounds: A Practical Handbook for Social Research*. London: Sage, 200. 172-190. Print.
- Hyland, Ken, and Polly Tse. "[Hooking the Reader: A Corpus Study of Evaluative that in Abstracts.](#)" *English for Specific Purposes* 24 (2005): 123-139.
- Hyland, Ken. "[Academic Attribution: Citation and the Construction of Disciplinary Knowledge.](#)" *Applied Linguistics* 20.3 (1999): 341-367. Web.
- Bazerman, Charles. "[Speech Acts, Genres, and Activity Systems: How Texts Organize Activity and People.](#)" *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices*. Eds. Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004. 309-339. [Print.](#)
- Paré, Anthony. "[Writing as a Way into Social Work: Genre Sets, Genre Systems, and Distributed Cognition.](#)" *Transitions: Writing in Academic and Workplace Settings*. Eds. P.X. Dias and Anthony Paré. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton. 145-166. Print.
- Scott, Tony. "[Embodying the Social in Writing Education.](#)" *Dangerous Writing: Understanding the Political Economy of Composition*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009. 1-35. Project MUSE.
- Tardy, Christine. "[A Genre System View of the Funding of Academic Research.](#)" *Written Communication* 20.1 (2003): 7-36. Web.
- Tompkins, Jane. "[Me and My Shadow.](#)" *New Literary History* 19 (1987): 169-178. Web.
- Richardson, Laurel. "[Skirting a Pleated Text: De-Disciplining an Academic Life.](#)" *Qualitative Inquiry* 3.3 (1997): 295-303.
- Thaiss, Chris, and Terry Myers Zawacki. "[Faculty Talk about Their Writing, Disciplines, and Alternatives.](#)" *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2006. 32-57. Print.
- Archibald, Jo-ann (Q'um Q'um Xiem). "Coyote Searching for the Bone Needle." *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008. 35-57. [Print.](#)
- Kuokkanen, Rauna. "The Question of Speaking and the Impossibility of the Gift." *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 74-96. [Print.](#)

Note on Photos and Their Publication

To help document teaching practices in ASTU 400A, I will take photographs throughout the term. With your permission, photos of you engaging in the course may be used in public materials (in slides of talks and conference papers I deliver, on my faculty website or the ASRW website, on the course Twitter account). If you have serious concerns about this, please talk to me before the end of September.

Sample Introduction: Katja Thieme

I grew up in an atheist and largely apolitical family in East Germany. My parents were both born just a few years after the formation of the German Democratic Republic within families who before the war had mostly been peasants. While there were deprivations in the post-war years, a decided advantage for lower-class East German families was the communist state's goal of putting workers and peasants into power. One of the strategies was to make education available, and that was a clear benefit to families like mine even if the nature of this education was tightly sanctioned by the East German planned economy and its five-year plans. In those post-war years, one of my grandmothers, formerly a housemaid, was able to become an elementary school teacher. One of my grandfathers began to work his way up to becoming a manager in a consumer goods coop. My parents were each the first in their families to enter high school—which was still an extremely exclusive path but no longer one just reserved for the upper classes—and from there they went onto college to become an engineer and a teacher (and not in the gender distribution you might presume).

Ongoing reading of literary texts was a practice that fit well into this developing status of my family. In a family where there's no religion to pass on, novels helped in asking complex moral questions and discussing what makes a good person. In a family that had moved socially upward but continued to be critical of the elite, the habit of reading novels in one's leisure time could stand for both one's social aspirations and one's social criticism. And so we read guided by those aspirations and criticisms. I absorbed the high principles that we seemed to relate to reading: a good student (and a good citizen) is a person who always reads novels, who chooses challenging books, who reads both great works by great authors and newly published books, who turns to novels to ask the big questions about life and society and the world. In line with those beliefs, I hugely admired when my father read the multi-volume tomes of Russian novelists during our summer camping trips and spoke about the dilemmas of Russian history as he did so. Mikhail Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* had four volumes, each about 400 pages. I myself made plans to work my way up to longer and longer books, and saw this process as a clear measurement of intellectual growth. Can you read a 400-page novel yet? No? Then your mind might not yet be as developed. (I tried once but didn't make it very far into *Ulysses*—and then decided to abandon that particular theory of reading development.)

Part of the elevated role that novels played also had to do with the particulars of German history. On the one hand, our anti-fascist East German state kept reminding us about the ways in which Nazi Germany had suppressed certain artistic expressions and persecuted critical thought. On the other hand, East Germany itself was oppressive and took various measures to outlaw criticism, including through the censorship and prohibition of certain books. All of these attitudes combined made books extremely precious possessions. At the time, I wasn't aware at all of current issues of censorship, but the rare status of books informed our habits of book preservation, and those I fully absorbed. Don't fold pages. Don't write on them except in pencil. Always keep books dry. Don't eat while you are reading. Slide books carefully into your bag and make sure they stay upright. Don't bend the binding.

It's fair to say then that novels had a sacred quality when I grew up. While we passed novels around and shared them widely, we had high expectations of how they should be handled. Living in Canada, the historical context is a different one, but I still have all the habits. I make only minimal pencil marks in books I use for teaching. I don't fold pages and don't bend spines. I'm deeply shocked each time I notice that someone has written—in permanent ink!—in a library book (really, it is one of the more horrible things). Mostly though I wonder more broadly what status novels have in the very different society I live in now, where there is freer flow of books as goods, where they are cheaper and more disposable, but where they also seem to matter less.