

15.301/310, Managerial Psychology
Prof. Dan Ariely

Recitation 2: Writing as Thinking

Okay, good morning everyone. Didn't we say the last four rows are prohibited?
Welcome to another... exciting day...

Mary will enlighten us about writing today.

Before we move onto that - everyone has submitted the 1 page proposal.
If you don't have feedback yet, you will get it today
Your ideas will have to be consolidated

After you submit 4 page proposal, there is no turning back.

Finally: CUHS committee on the Use of Human Subjects proposal.

Our CUHS is fantastic. Great at MIT
We will send guidelines tonight of how to write CUHS Proposal.

Speaker: Mary E. Caulfield, Technical Instructor, Writing Across the Curriculum

Does anyone feel confident in writing their proposal?

Raise your hand if when you are writing in the sciences, you are writing for experts?
How many think if you write for non-experts, you are dumbing down your writing? (a few hands)

How many think that when you are talking about a concept, you should generate lots of synonyms so you can restate your concept many times?

I do want you to keep your own answers/preconceptions in mind

Writing the Empirical Journal Article by Daryl J. Bem

Don't skip reading this article, it can save you a lot of time. When you turn in your 4 page proposal, 3 of us will read your paper. If you read this article, you will avoid being shocked when you get your proposal back. We are going to have comments for people, don't see that as a failure. We are trying to save you agony in the future. The purpose of giving us this 4 page article to give you ways to think about your concepts, phrase your concepts to write more clearly.

Writing as thinking

Putting your ideas on paper is a difficult transition. If the proposal is not everything you want it to be, don't worry about

Writing and thinking are interchangeable.

Write the article that makes sense to your results. There is a lot of planning now, but at the end you will have to look closely at the results you get.

Think as a process. You are going to be doing interim writing, not to show anyone, but to process your results

If you can educate your reader, that is a success. It is not a failure when things don't turn out how you expect them to be

Introduction – gives context

Becomes more specific

Introduces the study

Discuss your results – relate to world at large, give context

Conclusions

Craft of Research (book)

Start one thing, introduce tension with new info, then a new thing evolves

Introduction – establish context

New information discovered

“Since the dawn of time, parallel processing has been an important concept”

-too general

Methods – What it's like to be a participant in the study.

Be explicit when discussing the facts – don't speak too much in abstract terms

We will want to see the 4 page proposal, the 1st draft, and the final draft all together at the end.

Finding a Topic: Notes from The Craft of Research – Daryl Bem

Research = Problems to be solved (all initial observation, can be proved? Verifiable?)

Lots of raw data, but important to think about context of report. New perspective? Facts are helpful only in context

Provide new perspective (the dreaded “so what”)

Why do we write? To remember, Understand, Gain perspective

Test your ideas against other perspectives

Anticipate audience's questions.

Writing instructors – detectors of unclarity

“as unclarity detectors, readers are never wrong” –Daryl Bem

Target audience may ask questions that you think are dumb, but there are times you have to clarify what seems to be obvious. You may be making assumptions that the audience has not yet made, or using different vocabulary, or the audience wants to know that you have done due diligence. Writing in several drafts will help you do this. Can't do this midnight-6am on the day it is due

Research may extend beyond the semester. Primary audience: TA, immediate supervisor, research supervisor. Be aware of possible secondary audience: students, co-workers, others that do similar work.

Define terms, use clear wording, state your assumptions in your work

Regardless of how much you prepared, there will be things you do not anticipate. Keep writing about your topic.

Take notes

Outlines

Diagrams

Write bad drafts

“horrible drafts”

Break the process into manageable parts.

Getting ready to write:

Find a specific/manageable topic

Generate questions, find some that intrigue you – a good way to anticipate audience

Determine evidence readers expect

Research Sources? Available?

Your topic will evolve

Your argument will take shape gradually

Some research sources will prove more useful than others.

Academic writing does not have to be abstract.

Look at Daryl Bem article!

The more reading you do for models in this field, the more you see what we are looking for.

Give your project a working title

Focus on the “how” and “why” questions

Use unknown areas to construct a “to do” list

Think about what you don't know yet

List the things you don't know yet

Set some tasks to give you information to do the things you need to do.

Translate writing into outline

Have it somewhere where it can be changed, altered, modified

Outline the small steps

Topics and subtopics

Articles you have found and would like to read

Complete the tasks as you are able to (not necessarily in list order)

Time Management

Try to write every day (or regular times)

Don't judge your writing – be curious instead

Pace yourself and allow time for real life

Moving from hard science to social sciences – switching disciplines, languages

Consulting to software to academics – all different

Don't judge your writing

Don't set unrealistic goals – all nighter won't work

Few pages per day, let that mount up

Other class – New Yorker cartoons

Boy with sled, but just starting to snow. Mom: don't worry, it will accumulate

Don't neglect reading time

How to Keep Going

Find articles and read them – how to emulate, what is good about that

-How do we find articles to look at?

Anything that interests you is a good place to start, look at sources

Ariely: I'm a big fan of my own writing. I will post a couple of articles for an example

Technical/Grammatical Tasks

Last, as it should be

Keep underlining most important sentences

Ask if they communicate your point effectively

Look at a couple sentences

Don't try to make every sentence, every draft perfect. Make sure you have 2-3 sentences that really “punch those things forward”

Write a sentence that encapsulates your goal, post it on a sticky note

Make sure quotes, etc, include full citation while you are doing research.

There will be a last minute adrenaline rush when you get down to it

That's when plagiarism happens. We're not bad, we just don't have it, no one will notice right? We will notice, we read enough that we can tell the difference between something published and student writing

Look at verbs in your writing
Avoid repeating things "each and every"
"pink in color" "many in number"
Make things more simple

Great example, passage reduced by half.

p. 12 of article – 2 inches went down to 1 inch without losing information

How many people feel you have to dumb down your writing to write for people?
-a couple of people

Get rid of "meta-language" to make writing clearer

When you get back your 4 page papers, you will probably see we crossed out a lot. Pay attention to what we crossed out. You can live a full and happy life without using extra verbs

Passive voice – see what you can put into active voice
Shorter, more precise, more lively

Fix writing mistakes – make good research better, make your writing clearer

Conclusion – write early, write often
Keep asking yourself how to make it better

Get people to critique your work. Pay attention to what they point out. You don't have to follow suggestions, but look at what is unclear.

Make sure your project has a title – specific and as close to your research as you can
There are plenty of unanswerable questions – ask something you can answer this term.
Ask yourself "who cares"

Plan as concretely as you can

Be explicit about any assumptions you have

Results

4 page maximum. If you can do less, that's okay, but make sure you have enough information. Don't use smaller than 12pt font, should be double spaced.

Ariely

Why is it not a good experiment to see who came today and see if you do better on the proposal grade?

-introducing choice

How could we do it instead?

-tell everyone to come, separate into writing lecture/ Ariely lecture groups

-tell some people not to come to lecture

Good .

If you want my help tonight, send email before nine.

We are passing out a survey, answer 1 question at a time, don't look ahead.