

WRITING PRACTICUM

University of Colorado Denver
Department of Communication
COMM 4700/5700
MW 3:30-4:45
Student Commons Building 3018
Fall, 2017

Part A

PROFESSOR

Dr. Sonja K. Foss

Office: 3317 Student Commons Building

Office Hours: Unless I have a meeting or other obligation, I can be found in my office between 11:30 and 12:15 and between 2:00 and 3:00 on Monday and Wednesday. I am available at other times by appointment.

Telephone: There is no telephone in my office. If you need to reach me during my office hours, please email me. My home telephone number is 303-355-5320.

Email: Sonja.Foss@ucdenver.edu

(For more information about who I am, see the final pages of Part B of the syllabus or go to my Web site: SonjaFoss.com)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To provide you with practical guidance and writing advice as you complete a major paper of original research. This paper is likely to be the longest and most complex piece of writing that most of you have completed, and you will face a number of challenges along the way. As a result, we will focus much of our attention on the processes involved in writing an extended work. To accomplish this objective, we will cover a variety of topics related to writing a work of original research, including conceptualizing a topic, developing a research question, writing the literature review, coding or analyzing data and texts, motivating yourself to write, drafting, revising and editing, and presenting research orally.
- To bring you together with other writers to share experiences, interests, strategies, and successes in an environment of collegiality and intellectual exchange. Comparing approaches, exchanging advice, and staying current with the work of your peers will help to dispel the confusion and frustration often encountered by writers at any level. In this

way, the course will function as a writers' group to help you significantly advance the process of conceptualizing, organizing, and writing a research-based paper.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To learn and apply the principles of good research design
- To apply research methods used in the communication discipline
- To explain and apply relevant communication theories and strategies in a chosen area
- To interpret data and draw original conclusions from those data
- To organize a large amount of information effectively
- To understand and employ standard revising and editing practices
- To develop time-management and planning skills
- To build self-discipline and the capacity to work independently
- To present and defend research findings in a professional manner

COURSE PREREQUISITES

To be eligible to enroll in this course, you must be: (1) A Puksta Fellow in the Communication Department working on a major paper for the Puksta Foundation (and if you qualify by GPA, that paper can be a Latin honors thesis); (2) A senior majoring in communication working on a thesis for Latin honors who has a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and a GPA in communication coursework of 3.5; or (3) A graduate student in the Communication Department.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

The materials for the course are: (1) *Destination Dissertation: A Traveler's Guide to a Done Dissertation*, 2nd ed. by Sonja K. Foss and William Waters; and (2) A reading packet of about 125 pages that is available on Canvas. Reading assignments are listed on the course schedule at the end of the syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Attendance:** Although you are not penalized or rewarded in any formal way for attendance, you are not likely to produce a good paper if you do not take advantage of the various opportunities offered to you in the class. There are three kinds of sessions—overview sessions, workshop sessions, and individual coaching sessions.
 - *Overview sessions:* Overview sessions are sessions where I will explain concepts and processes or we will engage in exercises related to writing.

- *Group workshop sessions:* Group workshop sessions are sessions where I and other class members will work with you to develop sections of your paper. Everyone is welcome to attend any or all group workshop sessions. Attending workshop sessions other than your own will give you an opportunity to see what others are working on in their papers and allow you to contribute to the brainstorming on them. For each of the two group workshop sessions (developing a topic and developing an explanatory schema from data), please attend at least one session besides the one at which we work on your project.
- *Individual coaching sessions:* In the individual coaching sessions, you will meet individually with me so that you can ask questions, show me what you are doing, or have me read a draft of a section on which you are working. You do not need to attend any individual coaching sessions; they are designed to give you individual help on your project if you would like it. Those who have produced the best papers in the past, however, have taken advantage of these sessions.
- **Writing Process Questionnaire:** A questionnaire in which you will answer seven questions about your own writing process. Your answers may be typed or handwritten, and you do *not* need to use complete sentences (bullet points and phrases are just fine). Due: Wednesday, September 27. Points available: 10.
- **Editing Exercise:** An exercise in which you will be asked to edit four exercises of six sentences each and explain why you made the revisions you did. Each of these will be graded as follows: 1-2 errors = 5 points; 3-4 errors = 4 points; 5-6 errors = 3 points; 7-8 errors = 2 points; 9 or more errors = 1 point. Due: Monday, November 27. Points available: 5 points each; 20 points total.
- **Oral Presentation of Research:** A presentation in which you explain your research project. Discuss your motivation for doing the project and the key components of your study, including your research question and your method. The majority of the presentation should highlight your explanatory schema and the most interesting findings of your research. Competence in oral communication is expected. Length: 4-5 minutes. Due: Wednesday, December 6. Points available: 20.
- **Drafts of Sections of Your Paper:** Your primary focus in the class is on writing an original research paper. In this paper, you will analyze some kind of qualitative data such as literary texts, films, historical records, diaries, speeches, works of art, newspaper articles, buildings or interior spaces, Congressional debates, websites, or blogs. Your method of analysis will be the qualitative method of inductive analysis. The paper should be properly formatted and should follow either APA or Chicago style guidelines. Length: 20-25 pages. You will be writing this paper in sections:

- **Research-Alignment Worksheet:** A summary of the key decisions regarding your paper on the “Research-Alignment Worksheet.” Length: ½ to 1 page. Due: Monday, September 18. Points available: 10.
- **Draft of section on literature review:** A draft of the section of your paper in which you review the literature relevant to your research question. Length: 3-5 pages. Due: Monday, October 9. Points available: 50.
- **Draft of section on research design:** A draft of the section of your paper dealing with the elements of your research design, including research question(s), data, method of data collection (if required), and method of data analysis. Length: 2-4 pages. Due: Wednesday, November 1. Points available: 20.
- **Draft of section on analysis/explanatory schema and conclusion:** A draft of the section of your paper in which you present the explanatory schema you developed from your analysis of the data. Length: 10-15 pages. Due: Monday, November 20. Points available: 50.
- **Draft of section on introduction:** A draft of the introduction section of your paper. Length: 1-3 pages. Due: Wednesday, November 29. Points available: 20.
- **Completed Paper:** Submission of your revised paper, following the suggestions made on earlier drafts. Length: 20-25 pages. Due: Monday, December 11 (by midnight; please email it to me at Sonja.Foss@ucdenver.edu). Points available: 100.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Any assignment submitted late (after midnight on the day it is due) will receive half of the points you otherwise would have received. Please make sure that your assignments are completed well ahead of time so that if an emergency occurs, you can still submit the assignment on time. We will be learning about ways to write regularly in this class, so you should not have to complete assignments at the last minute.

GRADING

You have a choice about the grade toward which you want to work.

Final grade of “A”: If you would like to earn a grade of “A” and possibly Latin honors, you must meet the following requirements:

- Write all sections of the paper.

- Resubmit all sections of the paper—introduction, literature review, research design, analysis/explanatory schema, and conclusion—fully addressing the suggested revisions for both content and form.
- Earn a minimum of 180 points on all assignments total excluding the resubmitted final paper.

You have the possibility of earning Latin honors only with this option. There are two levels of Latin honors—the highest is *summa cum laude honors*; the next is *magna cum laude honors*. Even if you earn a grade of “A” in the course, you may not qualify for Latin honors at either level. The primary criterion for Latin honors is the production of an exemplary piece of original research that exhibits a high level of writing in terms of style; you may earn enough points for an “A” without producing exemplary research at a high level of writing quality. If you do not qualify for *summa cum laud* or *magna cum laude honors*, you still will receive credit for the course, and you still may be eligible for *cum laude* honors, which are determined solely by your GPA.

Final grade of “A-”: If you would like to earn a grade of “A-” in the course, you must meet the following requirements:

- Write all sections of the paper.
- Resubmit all sections of the paper except for the introduction, research design, and conclusion. Your resubmitted paper, in other words, must include the two sections of the literature review and the analysis/explanatory schema, and you must fully address the suggested revisions for both content and form in these sections.
- Earn a minimum of 175 points on all assignments total excluding the resubmitted final paper.

Final grade of “B+”: If you would like to earn a grade of “B+” in the course, you must meet the following requirements:

- Write all sections of the paper.
- Resubmit all sections of the paper except for the introduction, literature review, research design, and conclusion. Your resubmitted paper, in other words, will have one section—the analysis/explanatory schema—and you must fully address the suggested revisions for both content and form in that section.
- Earn a minimum of 170 points on all assignments total excluding the resubmitted final paper.

Final grade of “B”: If you would like to earn a grade of “B” in the class, you must meet the following requirements:

- Write all sections of the paper.
- No sections of the paper have to be resubmitted.
- Earn a minimum of 165 points on all assignments total.

Final grade of “B-”: If you would like to earn a grade of “B-“ in the class, you must meet the following requirements:

- Write all sections of the paper.
- No sections of the paper have to be resubmitted.
- Earn a minimum of 160 points on all assignments total.

The resubmitted paper is due on Monday, December 11. Please note that, to earn the final grades in all of the categories above, the resubmitted version must show significant effort to revise the required section(s) in both content and form. I reserve the right to decide that some or all of the resubmitted sections are not adequate and that the desired final grade is not deserved. In that case, I will determine the final grade based on the quality of your resubmitted work.

AN OPTION: EARLY START TIME FOR SOME CLASS SESSIONS

Because there are so many students in the class, on class days when we are working as a group to help individual students develop topics for their papers or devise their explanatory schemas for their analyses, I am offering the option of starting class an hour earlier (at 2:30) on some days. Those students who are able to come early will be able to leave class an hour early—at 3:45. We will meet in our regular room for these meetings. The dates when class will begin at 2:30 for some students are August 30, September 6, September 11, October 25, October 30, November 1, and November 6.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Mon., August 21	Introduction to course and to one another
Wed., August 23	<p>Overview: Expectations for a Latin honors or convention paper, possible outlets for papers, and developing a topic.</p> <p><i>Reading: Take a quick look at the four sample papers by Laura Knaster, Andrew Gilmore, Rebecca Burris, and M. Rosie Russo (Reading Packet, pages 2-92) so you have an idea of the kind of paper you will be expected to write in the class.</i></p>
Mon., August 28	<p>Overview: Achieving research alignment</p> <p><i>Reading: Destination Dissertation, chapters 3 and 4</i> and</p> <p>Group Workshop: Developing the topic and research design of your paper with a conceptual conversation (we will sign up for workshop days so you know when we will focus on your project)</p>

- Wed., Aug. 30 **Group Workshop:** Developing the topic and research design of your paper with a conceptual conversation
Class begins at 2:30 for some students
- Mon., Sept. 4 No class: Labor Day
- Wed., Sept. 6 **Group Workshop:** Developing the topic and research design of your paper with a conceptual conversation
Class begins at 2:30 for some students
- Mon, Sept. 11 **Group Workshop:** Developing the topic and research design for your paper with a conceptual conversation
Class begins at 2:30 for some students
- Wed., Sept. 13 **Overview:** Coding literature and writing the literature review
Reading: Destination Dissertation, chapter 5
- Mon., Sept. 18 **Overview:** Coding literature and writing the literature review
Due: Research-Alignment Worksheet
- Wed., Sept. 20 **Overview:** Coding literature and writing the literature review
- Mon., Sept. 25 **Overview:** Enacting the scholar role: Writing regularly
Reading: Destination Dissertation, chapter 12
- Wed., Sept. 27 **Overview:** Enacting the scholar role: Writing regularly
Due: Writing Process Questionnaire
- Mon., Oct. 2 **Individual coaching:** Come if you would like help with coding your literature or developing a schema for your literature review.

- Wed., Oct. 4 **Overview:** Fast writing and slow revising
Reading: Destination Dissertation, chapter 9; and “Short Assignments” and “Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott (pgs. 93-100 in Reading Packet)
Bring: If you have one, bring your laptop or iPad to class. If you don't have one, let me know, and I'll bring one for you.
- Mon., Oct. 9 **Overview:** Coding qualitative data and developing an explanatory schema
Reading: Destination Dissertation, chapter 7
Due: Literature-review section of paper
- Wed., Oct. 11 **Overview:** Coding qualitative data and developing an explanatory schema
Bring: A photograph of someone you know (this may be on your phone, laptop, or iPad, but be sure it is charged up before class so we will be able to see it)
- Mon., Oct. 16 **Overview:** Coding qualitative data and developing an explanatory schema and Conclusions
Reading: Destination Dissertation, pages 279-311
- Wed., Oct. 18 **Overview:** Writing the section on research design; writing the introduction; creating a title; and presenting research at conventions
Reading:
 - *Destination Dissertation, pages 135-180*
 - *Reading Packet, pages 101-127*
- Mon., Oct. 23 **Group Workshop: Developing your explanatory schema**
Some class members bring: Categories of coding from your data
Class begins at 2:30 for some students.
- Wed., Oct. 25 **Group Workshop: Developing your explanatory schema**
Some class members bring: Categories of coding from your data
Class begins at 2:30 for some students.
- Mon., Oct. 30 **Group Workshop: Developing your explanatory schema**
Some class members bring: Categories of coding from your data

Class begins at 2:30 for some students.

- Wed., Nov. 1 **Group Workshop: Developing your explanatory schema**
Some class members bring: Categories of coding from your data
Class begins at 2:30 for some students.
Due: Research-design section of paper
- Mon., Nov. 6 **Overview:** Review of grammar and punctuation; oral presentation of research
- Wed., Nov. 8 **Overview:** Review of grammar and punctuation
- Mon., Nov. 13 **Individual coaching:** Come if you would like help with any aspect of your paper
- Wed., Nov. 15 No class: I will be attending the National Communication Association convention in Dallas. Work on writing up the analysis section of your paper.
- Mon., Nov. 20 No class: Fall break
Due: Analysis/explanatory schema and conclusion sections of paper
(email it to me by midnight at Sonja.Foss@ucdenver.edu)
- Wed., Nov. 22 No class: Fall break
- Mon., Nov. 27 **Individual coaching:** Come if you would like help with any aspect of your paper
Due: Editing exercise
- Wed., Nov. 29 **Individual coaching:** Come if you would like help with any aspect of your paper.
Due: Introduction section of your paper

- Mon., Dec. 4 **Individual Coaching:** Come if you would like help with any aspect of your paper.
- Wed., Dec. 6 **Oral presentations of research**
Due: Oral presentations
- Mon., Dec. 11 Final date to submit completed paper (please email the paper to me by midnight at Sonja.Foss@ucdenver.edu)