The time to begin writing an article is when you have finished it to your satisfaction. By that time you begin to clearly and logically perceive what it is you really want to say.

~Mark Twain

This course is designed to help students in any discipline and in any phase of the dissertation process move their work forward. Whether you are a beginning student who has no idea what your topic is or an advanced student facing the submission process in a few months, you will be able to use this workshop to help you focus your efforts more effectively and find out best practices for doing dissertation work here at JHU.
We will begin with a selection of speakers—the Graduate Board, the MSE Library, the Counseling Center’s Dissertation Support Group, professors, recently graduated students, and representatives from the JHU Press—in order to give you a broad overview of the dissertation process from beginning to end. These panels will also give you access to relevant experts, contacts, and mentors so that you can find answers to your own specific questions. During these informative panels, you will be expected to interact with the speakers, do preparatory assignments designed to help you to think through different aspects of your own dissertation work, seek out and develop mentoring relationships, and apply what you learn to your own writing process.

We will also conduct a workshop/consultation environment that helps you focus on completing one piece of the dissertation that you will identify early in the semester as your stated goal or objective for the course. This piece could be anything from narrowing/identifying your topic; writing your proposal, prospectus, or outline; drafting an introduction, a single chapter, or your epilogue; editing/reorganizing several chapters; conducting a final polish/edit of the entire manuscript; or preparing your defense commentary. The focus is less on critiquing the content and more on facilitating the production and completion of pages of work. If you do not have a page-related goal at this point in your dissertation work, I will still expect you to come up with a page-goal that relates to your current project—i.e. this could be pages of thinking about your topic, pages of an outline, etc.

Throughout the entire semester, you will be asked to read a number of writing-related texts—some specific to dissertation writing, some specific to the writing process in general, and some specific to that squishy category of “self help.” The goal of all the course’s reading is to help you learn how to develop a sane writing process that will sustain you not just through the dissertation process but later in life as an academic or working professional.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Demystifying the Dissertation Process
Peg Boyle Single
ISBN: 978-1579223137

How to Write a Lot
Paul J. Silva
ISBN: 978-1-59147-743-3

The Now Habit: The Fiore Productivity Program for Overcoming Procrastination and Enjoying Guilt-Free Play
Neil Fiore

Revising your Dissertation: Advice from Leading Editors
Beth Luey
ISBN: 978-0520254015
OTHER BOOKS THAT SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS MIGHT FIND HELPFUL:

*Science Theses: An Insider's Guide to Writing a Successful Thesis or Dissertation*
Alan G. Howard
**ASIN:** B00546FFV4 [Kindle Edition; no ISBN available.]

*Writing Science: How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded*
Joshua Schimel
**ISBN:** 978-0199760244

OTHER BOOKS THAT HUMANITIES/SOCIAL SCIENTISTS MIGHT FIND HELPFUL:

*They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*
Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
**ISBN:** 978-0-393-92409-1

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Pass/Fail Grading
The grading for this course is PASS/FAIL only. No audits. No incompletes. Your grade for the course will be largely determined by your ability to meet the goals you set for yourself, to complete your work, to act as a thoughtful and substantive workshop commentator for your peers, and to attend class. I have set the “passing” bar as follows:

**Pass**
- Actively participates in every class session.
- Misses no more than two of the thirteen class sessions.
- Attends all scheduled appointments with me.
- Commits to a daily dissertation work schedule (5 days/week x 1 hour/day). (NOTE: this does not necessarily mean 60 minutes of writing but can also include research, meeting with advisors, outlining, revising, etc.)
- Commits to tracking diligently and logging at least 65 work entries (13 x 5) in a spreadsheet or other format—regardless of whether work occurred.
- Completes all reading, assignments, and peer editing/commentary.
- Meets at least 50% of all self-designed goals.
- Completes a sizeable chunk of the component/piece/task of the dissertation set as a goal at the beginning of the semester.

Time-Tracking Spreadsheets
For this workshop, you will be expected to track your time in a spreadsheet or other format in the manner outlined on page 48 in *Demystifying Dissertation Writing*. I will distribute a sample
spreadsheet that you can use. You are welcome to modify the format or build it in any platform/tool you’d like, but you will need to create a system that records the same information Single tracks. In this spreadsheet, you will also be expected to record what you did or did not do, your feelings about the work you did, and any reasons why you couldn’t complete your work that day. If you wish to keep your feelings private from the rest of the class, you may create a separate sheet in the workbook that is separate from your time tracking one. At the beginning of each class, you will be asked to submit a hard copy of your spreadsheet of your previous week’s work.

**Email, Listserv, and Class Wiki**

Email is a great way to contact me, and I am happy to answer any course- or dissertation-related questions you might have. My personal email address is julie.reiser@gmail.com. I can usually respond within 24-48 hours. In the event that I have become inundated, please re-email me and increase the level of urgency in your subject line.

This course uses a Google listserv: JHUdissertation@googlegroups.com. The list will be used to conduct all classroom-related announcements and to distribute written work for peer review workshops. My course assistant will help you get subscribed to the listserv. Please feel free to use the listserv to send announcements out to the class or connect with other students.

This course also has a wiki: https://jhudissertation.wikispaces.com/ This wiki is slowly being populated with dissertation-related resources, JHU-specific rules and deadlines, helpful hints, useful contact numbers, references, books, etc. My course assistant and I would love to incorporate any useful resources that you discover throughout your dissertation experience. We also welcome any suggestions about the structure/organization of the wiki.

**Ethics:** The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

In addition, the specific ethics guidelines for this course are:
(1) If you commit plagiarism in this writing course, you will not pass the course and you will be asked to withdraw immediately.

Report any violations you witness to the instructor.

You can find more information about university misconduct policies on the web at these sites:
• For undergraduates: http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergrad-students/student-life-policies/
• For graduate students: http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/grad-students/graduate-specific-policies/
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<td>T 9/2</td>
<td>COURSE INTRODUCTION</td>
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<td>T 9/16</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td>T 9/23</td>
<td>PANEL: “LESSONS LEARNED FROM RECENT JHU PHD. STUDENTS” NETWORKING RECEPTION</td>
<td>Track Your Time. Fill out your spreadsheet on a daily basis. Bring a weekly printout to share with the class. Assignment: Conduct an informational interview with a recent grad from your own department. Take notes to share with the class.</td>
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<td>T 9/30</td>
<td>PANEL: “HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE DISSERTATION STUDENT,” JHU Faculty Members</td>
<td>Track Your Time. Fill out your spreadsheet on a daily basis. Bring a weekly printout to share with the class. Workshopping: Pre-circulate your draft to your workshop group according to the deadline we establish in class. Read through your group’s drafts and write down any notes/commentary.</td>
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<td>T 10/7</td>
<td>CONFERENCES WITH JULIE</td>
<td>Sign up for an individual conference in 106C Whitehead.</td>
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<td>T 10/14</td>
<td>READING/DISCUSSION: Time Management and Productivity Tools PANEL: “USING RESEARCH TOOLS EFFECTIVELY,” MSE Librarians</td>
<td>Read: How to Write a Lot Track Your Time. Fill out your spreadsheet on a daily basis. Bring a weekly printout to share with the class.</td>
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<td>T 10/21</td>
<td>SPEAKER: “SUBMITTING THE DISSERTATION”, Graduate Board &amp; CBO</td>
<td>Track Your Time. Fill out your spreadsheet on a daily basis. Bring a weekly printout to share with the class.</td>
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<td>T 10/28</td>
<td>READING/DISCUSSION: Procrastination and Perfectionism, Debunking the Magnum Opus SPEAKER: “DEALING WITH DEPRESSION AND ISOLATION DURING THE DISSERTATION PROCESS,” JHU Counseling Center</td>
<td>Track Your Time. Fill out your spreadsheet on a daily basis. Bring a weekly printout to share with the class. Read: The Now Habit</td>
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<td>T 11/4</td>
<td>GROUP WORKSHOPPING OF DRAFTS</td>
<td>Circulate Your Work: Email your work to your group by your pre-arranged deadline. Track Your Time. Fill out your spreadsheet on a daily basis. Bring a weekly printout to share with the class and then submit.</td>
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| T 11/11 | GROUP WORKSHOPPING OF DRAFTS                | **Circulate Your Work:** Email your work to your group by your pre-arranged deadline.  
**Track Your Time.** Fill out your spreadsheet on a daily basis.  
Bring a weekly printout to share with the class and then submit. |
**Track Your Time.** Fill out your spreadsheet on a daily basis.  
Bring a weekly printout to share with the class and then submit. |
| T 11/25 | NO CLASS--THANKSGIVING                      |                                                                                                                                         |
| T 12/2  | BUILDING A REVERSE CALENDAR FOR COMPLETION  | **Re-read:** *The Now Habit*  
**Assignments:**  
1) Skim three recent JHU dissertations—one from a student who has worked with your advisor, one from a student who has worked with someone else in your department, and one from someone who has the kind of job you want. Using these dissertations as a guide, write out a map, schema, or template for the kind of “baseline” dissertation your department expects. Bring it to share with the class.  
2) Create and print out a reverse calendar for the completion of your dissertation following Fiore’s model in *The Now Habit.* |