Humanities Graduate Research Workshop

Writing your Thesis: Having a Story

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Setting out: what do you need?

• Map that shows the terrain
• Means of travel – how will you get there?
• Timeframe
• Identifying landmarks
• Who is accompanying you?
• What do you need to bring with you?
• The cost? How will you cover this?
“WRITING” APPLIES TO:

- Traditional Masters/PhD Thesis
- Masters/Doctor of Creative Arts Exegesis
- Thesis by publication (includes exegesis)
How do you tell a story?

- Discipline/s: rules/conventions
- Style: the way that you do it
- Format: what it looks like
- Structure: how it progresses
- Other: Hitchcock
Basic Ingredients

• Abstract & Table of Contents (TOC)
• Introduction,
• Argument/proposition/hypothesis/question
• Literature review – context/background
• Method
• ‘Evidence’
Other ingredients a la Hitchcock

- Clear communication
- Every paragraph counts (relevance)
- Importance of flow - connection
- Suspense – not surprise
Disciplines

- Identifying your field of studies: lit reviews
- Multi-disciplinarity (inter-, cross-, trans)
- Language, conventions, debates, voices
- Topics, keywords, concepts
- Theories, methodologies, objects, subjects
THAT QUESTION:

What is your thesis about?
Breaking (It) Down

• A collection of essays or chapters
• Chapter: a collection of sections
• How can these be organised – what is the flow?
Argument

- Thesis central argument
- Narrative: demonstration of argument
- Chapters’ specific argument
- How does each chapter contribute to demonstrate the thesis argument
- Mapping
Some examples (1)

• ‘traditional’ social science – linear chapters
  – Introduction,
  – Literature review
  – Method
  – Results
  – Discussion
  – Conclusion
Example 2

- Creative output + exegesis
- Relationship between 2?


(reference at end of ppt)
Example 3

- Chapters but thematically structured
- 5-8 chapters of roughly equal length
- Literature review spread throughout
Example 4

• Chapters as sections or parts book-ended:

One large question: number of ways of answering the question
My Thesis TOC

• 2 parts:
  a. theory of key concepts and,
  b. looking at these through the lens of 3 writers

• Bracketed with an introduction and conclusion
Part One: establishing a Framework for theorising community, technology and inter/subjectivity

- Chapter One: Concept of Community
- Chapter Two: Technology and Sociality
- Chapter Three: Inter/Subj ectivity, Technology and Community
Part Two: Approaches to Community

- Chapter Four: Charles Taylor and the Social Communitarians
- Chapter Five: Jean-Luc Nancy’s notion of community
- Chapter Six: Mark Poster and virtual community/ies
Activity

• Write your current table of contents on a piece of paper

Think about the story this tells – you will need to be able to explain it to a non-specialist – what the relationship between the various parts are; and why they are there.
Group Activity

• Find a partner from your group (the person on your left?)
• Ask “the” question
• Then ask for their map (TOC) to be explained to you
• Discuss how and why it tells a story: (consider field, key debates, object of analysis, methodology, argument etc)
Writing Without a Plan

- Disorientation
- No sense of location or direction
- Regular, lengthy re-reading
- Difficult recall
- Circular or Disjointed Writing
- Repetition
Writing with a Plan

• Big/small/smaller chunks
• One segment at a time/“back burner”
• The outline
• Itinerary-like sequence
• Thinking linearly and logically
• A journey or trajectory narrative
• Rearranging & recombining when you are not writing
The End of Reshuffling

- Endless possible recombinations
- A flexible structure is still a structure
- When to stop...or why you might have difficulties
References

Some light relief

- Piled Higher and Deeper: PhD Comics


Or Facebook:

https://www.facebook.com/piledhigheranddeeper