

Humanities Graduate Research Workshop

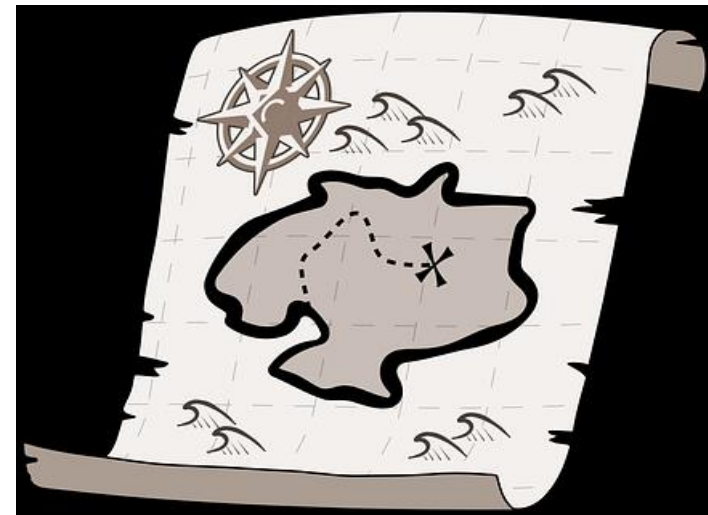
Writing your Thesis: Having a Story

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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?

See: B.Milech & A.Schilo (2004) 'Exit Jesus':
Relating the Exegesis and Creative/Production
Components of a Research Thesis

(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/Subjectivity, 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

- Early pages
- Acknowledgements
- Thesis Abstract
- Thesis Introduction
- Body
- Thesis Conclusion
- Bibliography

References

- Castleden, S. & Slatter, N Creative Production as Research, <http://hgso.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/workshops/creative-production-as-research.pdf>
- Cryer, P. (1996) *The Research Student's Guide to Success*, Open University Press
- Kirshner, J. (1996) Alfred Hitchcock and the Art of Research, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 29 (3), pp. 511-513
- Milech, B. & Schilo, A. (2004) 'Exit Jesus': Relating the Exegesis and Creative/Production Components of a Research Thesis, *TEXT*, Issue 3. <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue3/milechschilo.htm>
- Zerubavel, E. (1999) *The Clockwork Muse: a Practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books*, Harvard UP

Some light relief

- Piled Higher and Deeper: PhD Comics

<http://www.phdcomics.com/comics/archive.php?comid=715>

Or Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/piledhigheranddeeper>