

ANTHROPOLOGY 6410 Writing for Archaeologists

Fall Semester 2014

Professor Steven Simms

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Tuesdays 9:00 – 10:15am Main 201

Student Drop-In Visitation Hours: Monday 10:00 – 11:00 am; Tuesday, Thursday 1:45 – 3:00 pm. Other times: Please email me for an appointment. Drop-ins are welcome, but subject to time constraints.

Style in writing is something like style in a car, a person, or a Greek temple—a kind of linear mastery of materials that stands out from the landscape and compels a second look. It is some unique and unobtrusive synthesis of matter available to everyone; and, if a writer's style is really good, it will hang in the reader's memory and continue to bring wonder to the mind. Style is the product of a craftsman alive to experience and to the possibilities and the obstinacies in the material he works. It is a labor of love, and like love it can bring pleasure and satisfaction . . . style is not only for the gifted. Quite the contrary. There is a certain mystery about writing, just as there is about life. But the stylistic side of writing is, in fact, the only side that can be analyzed and learned. The stylistic approach is the practical approach; you learn some things to do and not to do, as you would learn strokes in tennis. Your ultimate game is up to you, but you can at least begin in good form. Naturally, it takes practice. You have to keep at it. Like the doctor and the lawyer and the golfer and the tennis player, you just keep practicing—even to write a practically perfect letter. But if you like the game, you can probably learn to play it well. You will at least be able to write a respectable sentence, and to express your thoughts clearly, without excessive puffing and flailing.

Sheridan Baker, *The Practical Stylist*

Effective communication is essential to be a successful, professional archaeologist. Anthropology 6410 is a venue for improving your writing. Writing is hard, even for professional authors. This course will take the form of a graduate seminar, and will provide the immersion necessary to take writing seriously, as hard work, and as something that will always be center stage in your archaeological career.

We begin the course by creating a culture of writing. You will become your own critic and editor, and you will be critic and editor for your compatriots. Our first tasks will employ the most fundamental form of writing: the essay. You will begin the process of becoming a critic and a builder. You will engage fundamentals such as finding a thesis, middles, closers, diction, proofreading, and revision. You will review elementary rules of usage, the principles of composition, and through it all you will lay the groundwork for style.

As we proceed there will be opportunities to practice specific forms of writing common to archaeology: writing research papers, cultural resource management reports, environmental documents, grant proposals, bids for archaeological contracts, popular documents such as press releases and newsletter contributions, letters to clients or colleagues, e-mails, curriculum vitae and cover letters, and conference-caliber PowerPoint presentations.

RESOURCES

Required

Fagan, Brian. *Writing Archaeology: Telling Stories About the Past*. 2010. 2nd ed. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Strunk, William Jr. and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 2000. 4th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Society for American Archaeology. 2013. *SAA Journal Style Guide*. SAA website.

Required Resources I will provide

Andres, Christopher, Eric Bartelink, Mark Hill, Heather Lapham, Mary Ann Levine, and Sarah McClure. 2011 Putting the Power Back in Powerpoint: A Guide for Student (and Non-Student) Presenters. *The SAA Archaeological Record* 11:11-13.

Smith, Bruce. 2010. How to give a bad presentation at a professional conference. Web.

Homburg, Jeffrey A. 2005. Tips for Improving the Quality of Your Poster Presentation. *The SAA Archaeological Record* 5:22-24.

Optional Reference Resource

The Chicago Manual of Style. 2010. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Optional Writing Manuals

Trimble, John R. 2000. *Writing With Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing* 2nd ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall,

Baker, Sheridan. 1969. *The Practical Stylist*. New York: Thomas Crowell.

SAMPLE OF SEMINAR ACTIVITIES

The seminar will take form as we proceed, discover our pacing, and realize opportunities for you to use writing from your other courses current and past in this seminar. For that reason there will be no predetermined schedule of activities. The list below identifies likely writing activities during the semester and implies no particular order.

- Essay: What you can gain from the study of archaeology?
- CRM writing sample that can be improved upon.
- Transformation of your research paper into format, style, length for publication in *Science*.
- Grant proposal for research and/or CRM bid.
- Press release or newsletter article on your research.
- Site interpretation statement to support significance justification.
- Revision of your letter of intent for graduate school.
- Curriculum Vitae.
- Emails and letters.
- Conference Powerpoint presentation on a topic of your choice.