

# *Exposing the Null Curriculum in Graduate Religious Education*

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**G**RADUATE EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP ARE RIDDLED WITH expectations—both those delineated in syllabi and tenure requirements and those underlying, tacit expectations that create an implicit culture that is challenging to name and untangle. For students especially, who are learning to navigate the academic environment at the beginning of their careers, trying to meet expectations, achieve goals, and earn grades, parsing the unspoken expectations of academia can be frustrating and seemingly impossible and can create a major barrier to success. Librarians, who are within the academic system and yet inhabit a third space separate from the faculty/student dichotomy, are uniquely situated to understand the mechanics of the academy and communicate them in a way that is accessible and effective.

This essay will discuss some of the implicit assumptions placed on students, how they come to be and what effect they have, and the challenges presented to both students and faculty because of the unspokenness of requirements and expectations. It will also propose possible solutions to these challenges, suggesting ways librarians, in their particular position, can address these assumptions to make them explicit and support students in their academic flourishing.

The data for this essay is primarily anecdotal, gleaned from a variety of both formal and informal conversations with graduate students of religion, professors of various ranks and seniority, and librarians, from a variety of institutions—community college, state schools, and private universities from small to large, liberal arts to R-1. In analyzing notes from these conversations, several themes became apparent. Issues arose around the following: foundations—where students came from and the background knowledge they arrived at school with,

as well as the goals they had for their education; writing—assumptions of skills and abilities and the standards of the discipline; reading—how students approach and analyze texts; and the general culture of shame engendered by the academic environment. Because these issues are so often at play under the surface of education and academic work, it can be hard to talk about them explicitly, but I'm confident that they will resonate as recognizable concerns that are virtually universal in higher education. To make plain these unspoken issues is the first step in bringing them to light so that they might be addressed in our institutions and result in a more fulfilling and successful academic experience for both students and faculty.

## *Foundations*

Graduate theological education benefits from the broad diversity of backgrounds from which our students come to us. I've known students to enter divinity school with degrees in everything from chemistry, engineering, and physics, to English, international business, and psychology. This range of experiences is often a boon for the community, resulting in rich and lively conversations, but the variety of perspectives also means a variety of skill levels, abilities, and approaches to academic work that may lend themselves more or less readily to religion specifically. Some students come to graduate school with a solid foundation of subject knowledge and context, while others are being introduced to the vocabulary and key figures for the first time. Some students are comfortable analyzing texts and writing research papers, while others are unfamiliar with the mechanics of humanities work. For many students pursuing ministry as a second career or a later-in-life calling, returning to school means learning anew how to manage coursework and educational technology. International students encounter any and all of these challenges, in addition to working in a foreign culture and language.

Not all students come to graduate school properly prepared for the road ahead of them. The amount of reading and writing can be a shock and can take significant adjustment. If students come from a different discipline or perhaps did not initially plan to pursue graduate work, they may not feel confident or ready for its academic challenges. The tricks of the trade, as it were, that are picked up over years of practice seem to be second nature and are taken for granted by faculty and more experienced and prepared students. If these skills are not taught explicitly, we do a disservice to a significant portion of our student population and risk leaving them behind. This issue is exacerbated by factors like race and class—students from wealthy backgrounds have the luxury of increased

preparation, tutoring, and other resources that put them ahead. First generation students may not have the benefit of parents or other mentors teaching them what to expect and how to achieve their academic goals. In order to level the playing field and bring all students up to speed, it's essential that educators make plain the skills and expectations that are required for success.

Beyond the differences in background, students also have differences in goals. Their assumptions of the purpose and trajectory of their programs can differ widely, both from each other and also from those of the faculty and the administration. Because degrees in theology and religious studies are lauded as versatile, with career options in ministry, nonprofit, academic work, and more, students come to their work with different reasons for why they are there, and this can be at odds with other students and faculty. Academically-minded students may struggle with “practical” courses or assignments, while ministry-focused students may be frustrated by more heavily theoretical work.

Much of the conflict in backgrounds and goals is unspoken—either regarded as unimportant and therefore unaddressed, or simply ignored, undetected, or uninterrogated. The challenge that emerges again and again for educators in this context is how to get so many different people on the same academic page. Again, I believe the solution lies in making the implicit explicit. Laying bare the expectations. Setting a common baseline. There should be a clear explanation of what students can expect out of their program—what they will learn and what they won't, what will be attended to in the classroom and what should be addressed elsewhere.

A common concern to this effect, particularly in divinity schools that are training ministers, is the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of students. There are often conflicting expectations regarding “pastoral care” in the classroom, as well as additional support for students struggling with questions of deep significance to their own religious life. Programs and schools that are not clear about where, when, and how these kinds of conversations are handled will face dissatisfaction, discomfort, and disappointment on the part of both students and faculty. Further, other support staff (including librarians) often will be expected to perform the additional emotional labor of guiding and counseling students, and whether that labor is recognized and officially expected makes a difference in the way their professional vocations are carried out and again affects the experience and outcomes of students.

Even within the single field of religious studies there are multiple disciplines, each with their own ethos and conventions. For example, biblical studies, theology, and religious anthropology are vastly different areas. Students need to be taught how to interact with the texts and do the kind of work expected in each area. Skills don't always translate directly between classes or assignments, and

explicit instruction is how students will become acquainted with the disciplines. It is unrealistic and unfair to expect students to pick up the subtleties and specialized ways of thinking, particularly at the master's level, and especially if it is their first introduction to the discipline. For many students, graduate work begins as an exploration of possibilities. Students need definitions of and training in the different genres of academic writing and different kinds of classes, and this instruction needs to be clear and explicit. Educators should take the opportunity to properly introduce the discipline and its attendant expectations and protocols. Not only will students then have a more complete understanding and appreciation of the subject and its scholarly context, but they will also be better equipped for success in the class itself.

While much of this work must be done at an administrative, department level—visioning clear program goals, setting specific student learning outcomes—some of the practical execution of establishing a cohesive academic program can benefit greatly from librarian involvement. Librarians can help translate the expectations and goals into actionable programming for student learning.

One possibility for setting a foundational standard would be a pre-matriculation “boot camp,” where students are told explicitly what to expect as well as what is expected of them. This can entail more discursive topics, such as the practical/academic “divide” mentioned above, as well as discussion and practice of necessary skills, such as research, reading, and writing. Both professors and students express frustration over the expectation of the modes of reading and writing specific to the study of theology—faculty identify a gap in the students' ability, and students feel ill-equipped to learn these modes and perform at the graduate level without sufficient guidance. Such a boot camp could introduce students to the modes of reading and writing that faculty expect and give them space to practice and understand, if not master, these mechanics. Not only would a boot camp provide a vital introduction for students, but it would serve as an understood common starting place for faculty's expectations. Instead of being uncertain regarding students' background abilities and knowledge, faculty would be assured of at least a base level of common knowledge and skills. Likewise, students would be caught up on the minimum expected and required background knowledge and writing and reading styles particular to the field.

Librarian involvement in such a boot camp would be vital. The information to be taught would need to be collated and structured into manageable, programmable pieces, and librarians' facility at one-shot information literacy sessions and stand-alone workshops gives them a unique ability to design the necessary instruction. Librarians also provide support that is knowledgeable about and in tune with the specific needs of the subject matter and the

community, but may be fit to focus on general or more broadly applicable mechanics than subject-specific content.

## *Reading*

Reading in graduate school is its own specialized skill. Depending on genre and purpose, students should be utilizing different methods of reading. But it often seems that no one teaches students what they are or how to do it. Students are overwhelmed with the volume of assigned reading; faculty are frustrated with students' lack of facility with handling texts. Students are expected to be able to read for comprehension, trace an argument, perform a close reading, and critically engage, but many students have not been explicitly taught these skills.

Some faculty members expressed that students are too used to the "teach to the test" style of pedagogy, which is clear about foregrounding expectations, but does not encourage the kind of critical and creative thinking that most graduate programs seek to foster. Faculty recognized that students have difficulty reading to identify the author's thesis and argument, instead simply responding with their own opinion of the topic or a thin assessment of either agreement or dissent without a thorough analysis of the text. Teaching how to do this level of reading is more complex than teaching to the test, but it can still be done in a way that is clear about the methods and expectations. Students' reading should be exploratory and critical and should encourage further questioning and engagement. Rather than merely reading for surface-level understanding in order to parrot back facts or quotes, students should be reading to engage texts' arguments, interrogate their evidence, and analyze the validity of their conclusions. This interaction with the text should go beyond mere reflexive, reflective reaction or opinion of agreement or disagreement, but should engage with the logic and context of the text as well. And, as with everything being discussed here, students must be *taught* this kind of method of engagement.

An additional distinctive challenge for theological education is teaching religion to religious students. When teaching Bible to practicing Christian students, for example, students can be too close or too familiar with the subject matter and therefore have a hard time stepping back and reading without the influence of their preconceived ideas. If they are already familiar with the text and their own idiosyncratic reading, it can be difficult for them to read it a different way, particularly if the desired method of reading is not made clear or demonstrated explicitly. This can be especially true if students approach their graduate religion education from a personally religious point of view with religious goals. Teaching them to read religious or theological texts in an

academic manner, *as texts*, on their own terms, can be a challenge—even more so if this expectation is not made explicit.

Some professors and teaching assistants I spoke with found that students were resistant to performing critical readings of biblical texts. They were uncomfortable practicing some of the skills of questioning provenance, perspective, purpose, and authorship, and had a hard time when asked to consider the texts might be saying or doing different things than what they had grown up hearing or what they had assumed previously. This resulted in challenges in class and in paper writing, where there seemed to be a barrier in learning that students ran into and could not get past. The resistance limited their ability to learn and explore various textual possibilities, and thwarted teachers' plans and desires. Again, clear communication of what is expected and how to *do* what is expected is essential for overcoming this challenge. Faculty must be clear about the kind of reading students should be performing, and students should be equipped to perform the reading adequately.

Since the job of librarians is practically synonymous with literacy, teaching the skills of specialized reading should be an obvious fit for librarians' engagement. If librarians can teach people to read as children, then why should academic librarians not have a hand in teaching people to read as graduate students? Reading workshops in conjunction with course readings or assignments could be a good opportunity for librarians to teach the unspoken nuances of reading at the graduate level. Demonstrations of how to read in certain modes could serve as a kind of academic story time, where students are exposed to methods of reading and can experience an expert practicing them first hand. Additionally, having an explicit, step-by-step method outlined and distributed would be an invaluable resource for students first learning how to do a critical reading and being able to practice and recreate it on their own.

## *Writing*

An issue that came up again and again in conversations with both students and faculty was the challenge of writing. Students felt ill-equipped to write in a way consistent with the discipline of religious studies or to write in a theological mode. They often had not received explicit training in skills such as developing a thesis statement, outlining an argument, or using evidence to support an assertion. Students expressed a constant feeling of being behind—that they were always trying to catch up to expectations for writing that they had never been taught. Undergraduate instructors assumed they had been taught skills in high school; graduate instructors assumed they had been taught skills in undergrad.

But few instructors were *actually* teaching these skills at any level. Therefore students end up cobbling together ad hoc writing skills, perpetually satisficing rather than absorbing and mastering the necessary methods of the discipline. The result is faculty disappointed with student products but unwilling or unable to teach the skills they believe students should have already learned. Some faculty I spoke with even admitted that they assign far fewer research papers—or none at all—because of the poor outcomes. They found that students were not prepared to write an academic paper with a thesis and evidence-based argument, but were more familiar with journal- or reflection-type essays. Rather than teach them how to construct a research paper (because where is there space in the semester for that?) they simply have turned to other methods of assessing student learning—either by assigning more reflection-type essays or by encouraging alternative creative projects.

The importance of the research paper in graduate education cannot be understated. The process of formulating a research question, proposing a thesis, constructing an argument, and presenting evidence toward a logical conclusion is the bread and butter of scholarship, and to deny students proper instruction toward this end is nothing short of academic negligence. To neglect the development of graduate students' skill in writing the standard research paper is to disregard their learning and to set them up for future difficulties as they continue work in the academy.

Often I find in the course of instructing students in writing that they are not familiar with the five paragraph essay or other very basic writing and organizational methods. Organization and outlining are completely nebulous processes to them. But when they are presented clearly and explained, it's like a revelation and students feel empowered and capable to construct organized arguments with appropriately sourced evidence. The difference that actual, forthright instruction can make! Students don't know what they don't know, and if we want them to display certain abilities and skills, we must teach them explicitly, or at the very least make plain paths for their learning. There is no virtue in making learning more difficult than it already is, in placing a stumbling block in front of students, in the academic hazing of forcing students to figure things out for themselves.

Again, librarians' penchant for programming can come in handy for developing supplementary workshops to teach students the skills they are expected to know but have not been taught. Because there are already such great demands on time and syllabus space for content in the classroom, it's often not tenable to simultaneously teach the mechanics of writing. Having time outside the classroom that is nevertheless directly connected to class assignments is, I would argue, the most effective means for teaching writing. There is a practical

application for the information; students can try concepts directly and put them into practice in a way that feels concrete and useful and results in an actual product.

One method of connecting skills-based instruction with a practical application is to think of the library as laboratory. In the same way courses in the sciences might have two meetings of lecture a week plus a lab component, courses in theology and religion could have a lab portion in which they worked in the library or with a librarian to get writing instruction and apply it to their coursework. If a seminar course required a term paper, the lab could be used to pace the students' work and ensure the quality of students' research questions, thesis statements, and resources. Such a lab would provide support for the research and writing process, mitigating the possibility of last-minute, poor-quality papers as well as providing students with writing skills to use in their future work.

Another ready example of library writing support is the thesis writing workshop course my colleague Bobby Smiley and I have developed for students in the Master of Theological Studies program here at Vanderbilt Divinity School. We team up with the school's designated writing tutor to teach sessions on research questions, thesis statements, literature reviews, outlining, citation management, and writing strategies. (See Appendix 1A for a sample syllabus with the full course schedule.) The first half of the semester is dedicated to demystifying the research and writing process, giving the students clear structure for designing their projects, and providing tools, templates, and skills to empower their work. One unfortunate discovery we have made teaching this class is that often students are learning this valuable information in their last semester of the program. We hear time and time again that students wish they would have known these things earlier. The fact that students receive this explicit instruction so gratefully—if not frustratedly—is proof of the disservice being done to them by continuing to rely on unspoken assumptions about their skills and expectations. Giving explicit instruction about the concepts, mechanics, structure, and process of writing a research project results in increased student confidence and ability and better final results. Nothing is gained by keeping students in the dark about how to write well, and assuming they will figure it out themselves only sets them up for failure.

## *Shame*

The unspoken nature of all of these tacit assumptions results in a culture of shame when it comes to students' academic research skills and abilities. Because



they are expected to know things, there is a barrier to actually learning them if they don't. There is not space or encouragement for asking questions and the shame is compounded in that so many students likely have the same concerns and questions but are afraid to share them and so suffer in silence. Students avoid speaking up for fear that they are the only ones who don't know something, perpetuating the façade that everyone is on the same page, resulting in further shame when their work is not up to the faculty's standards. It is a cycle that becomes impossible to break without conscious, intentional, and honest conversations regarding expectations and foundational skills.

Research and learning is a vulnerable process, even for the most seasoned scholars. To start from a position of ignorance requires an attitude of humility, curiosity, and openness that is not typically encouraged in the competitive, individualistic academic environment. To further admit ignorance by asking for help or seeking support or collaboration is seen as weakness. The irony of the resistance of professional learners to pursuing the knowledge they need should not be lost. The double-speak of the educational system—that we encourage students and researchers to learn new things and simultaneously shame them for not already knowing—creates a Catch-22 in which everyone, and all of our work, suffers.

One faculty member I spoke with expressed her sense that there is profound fear and shame in classroom discussion. Students don't speak up in class to ask for clarification for fear of revealing their ignorance to the professor and their peers. By staying quiet, they may relieve themselves of the discomfort of vulnerability, but they also then limit their learning and that of others. Students assume they are the only ones who don't understand and so they remain silent and their work suffers, but often if one student has a question, others do too, and everyone would benefit by the vulnerability of asking. The oppressive layer of shame in the classroom keeps students from taking ownership and responsibility for their education and keeps them from helping themselves and others thrive.

Librarians have a unique role to play in changing the academic culture of shame. Because they often are not faculty or course instructors, librarians tend not to create assignments or assign grades, therefore the library can serve as a lower-stakes, lower-pressure environment for leaning into the vulnerabilities of education. To admit ignorance, particularly when one is expected to know, can be a scary prospect. Librarians can create a safer, more comfortable place to learn. By explicitly valuing as well as modeling honest questions, vulnerability, humility, and intellectual hospitality, librarians can begin to change an academic culture of shame to one of exploration and collaboration.

There are many ways librarians can engage students that can minimize shame and fear. Reference desks in libraries are going out of fashion, in favor of on-call,

appointment-based reference consultation services. However, consider the frequency with which students approach a circulation desk apologetically, saying “I’m sorry to bother you,” or “Excuse me for interrupting.” If an official-looking desk is already a barrier, how much more so would students fear entering the office of a stranger, or jumping through hoops to book an appointment? If the goal is to lessen the fear and the barriers inherent in asking for support, then our first concern should be accessibility. Being available and approachable, and recognizably so, means students will be more likely to actually utilize librarians and their resources.

Educating students about the library and the role of librarians is paramount in achieving a recognizable level of accessibility. When students understand what librarians’ jobs entail and what they actually *do*, they become increasingly likely to use library services. Building relationships with students and being present in the course of their program in such a way that they can actually get to know us and our expertise not only lets them know the ways we can help them but also lowers the barrier of approachability. Students are much more likely to visit or book an appointment with someone they know than a complete stranger. In my experience, students who know me personally will seek me out for consultations before they go to my colleagues, even if their area of research is more suited to another librarian’s expertise, simply because we have a preexisting relationship and the fear of imposing or of meeting with a stranger is diminished.

Exposing the implicit assumptions and expectations in graduate education goes a long way in ameliorating the shame of the current academic culture. Being upfront and straightforward and bringing hidden things to light creates an environment of transparency and honesty where students can feel safe asking questions and being open and vulnerable, which is a necessary part of the learning process. When students feel comfortable discussing their work, they will be able to ask for the help they need, and it will result in a better product. And when the expectations are clear, and the process forthright, resources and support can be readily identified, asked for, and provided without fear of retribution or shame.

## *Conclusions*

The work of graduate education is already challenging enough without having to also do detective work to uncover the expectations and guidelines for your learning. When expectations are clearly communicated and when students are explicitly equipped with the skills they need to meet those expectations, everyone wins. Students achieve their goals and meet their learning outcomes and faculty

receive high-quality products and are successful in their own right. So many of the frustrations we hear from both students and instructors over and over again can be ameliorated through straightforward communication and clear exposition of expectations and assumptions inherent in graduate theology and religion programs.

Librarians have much to offer in the way of elucidating academic processes and standards for the specific disciplines of theology and religious studies. We can facilitate communication between faculty and students from the outset, demonstrate and train students in best practices for vital skills like reading and writing, and, perhaps most importantly, we can model the kind of academic environment where shame is abolished and open inquiry and seeking support are encouraged and fostered in earnest. The position of librarians in the educational milieu of the academy is well-suited to do the essential work of bringing clarity and focus to the goals of theological education and to equip students and faculty for success, and we should use this position to bring what's hidden to light and create the kind of environment where transparency and openness result in rigorous and meaningful scholarship for everyone involved.

## Appendix 1A : Thesis Writing and Research Methods Workshop Syllabus

DIV 7996 ❖ DIVINITY LIBRARY, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY ❖ SPRING 2019

### M.T.S. Thesis Writing and Research Methods Workshop

Meeting Time/Date TBD | Divinity School 120

<b>Keegan Osinski</b>	<b>Bobby Smiley</b>	<b>Laine Walters Young</b>
Divinity Library, 215B	Divinity Library, 213	Grad. Dept. Religion
keegan.osinski@Vanderbilt.edu	bobby.smiley@vanderbilt.edu	laine.c.walters.young@vanderbilt.edu

### Course Description

This is a zero-credit course designed to guide, help, and offer a collective and collaborative venue for completing the M.T.S. thesis. Combining guided practice and workshoping, DIV 7996 will cover how to design, structure, and draft a thesis, as well as introduce academic research best practices and citation tools. Emphasis is placed on practical exercises and instruction for thesis writers, such as formulating research questions, outlining structure, and building a cogent argument for an extended paper (10K plus words/35 pages or more). Ideally, we would like students to be “buddied” up for the semester with their writing partner serving as their principal workshoping respondent and reviewer. While voluntary, students are *highly encouraged* to attend every session. Through attendance, workshoping is made possible, and community building fostered around the often solitary enterprise of thesis writing.

### Course Goals and Learning Objectives

The goals of this course are to:

- Envision, draft, write, and submit a thesis on schedule with stipulated deadlines
- Recognize and accommodate the qualitative and quantitative differences in writing for a thesis
- Organize and structure an extended writing project
- Become familiar with the workshoping process and its protocols, as well as best practices around information

## Organization

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Formulate research questions appropriate for a thesis project
- Identify, locate, evaluate, and organize sources needed in research
- Design and outline a master’s thesis
- Apply the practices of workshopping and helpful peer-criticism for future writing projects

## The Intellectual Work of the Course

The scholarly diversity among thesis writers is also reflected in our instructors’ research interests (Theological Studies = Keegan, Historical Studies = Bobby, Religion, Psychology, and Culture = Laine; for Biblical Studies, Chris Benda will be available). As such, we’ve collectively marshalled knowledge about citation conventions, key resources, and methodological questions from most research areas in religion, and hope we’ll be able to direct and equip you with the resources and perspectives to help you envision and frame the research questions unique to (or more frequently posed in) your area of focus. As part of that process, we will explore how to build out the writerly architecture of master’s thesis, and learn about the analytical components for constructing academic arguments and techniques for positing cogent and well-formulated theses.

## Suggested Readings

We will be using selections from the following texts:

- Belcher, Wendy Laura. *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. 1st Edition. New York: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2009.\*
- Abbott, Andrew. *Digital Paper: A Manual for Research Afterword: Writing for the Public*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.†
- Blair, Ann M. “Information overload, the early years,” *The Boston Globe*. November 28, 2010.‡

Additional miscellaneous readings and handouts will be distributed in class, or made available electronically.

\* This book is *highly* recommended but not required for purchase. A pricey volume, it runs \$50 used on Amazon, or anything north of \$65 new. It is,

however, a very useful workbook for coaxing you along the writing process.. A copy will be made available on print reserve in the Divinity Library

‡ This title will also be made available on print reserve in the Divinity Library. Portions of the text may distributed for in-class or assigned recommended reading.

‡ There's the full version of Blair's argument that's well worth reading, which is available as an ebook. See Blair, Ann M. *Too Much To Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2010

## Course Calendar

date & topic	agenda & suggested readings	what to bring
Tuesday 1/8 <i>Introduction to the course</i>	Introductions & Syllabus <b>Writing buddy</b>	Ideas & Questions!
Tuesday 1/15 <i>Research Qs &amp; theses</i>	Research questions Abbot, 64-71 How to not jump to the thesis statement <b>Possible workshopping</b>	Preliminary research questions & thesis statements
Tuesday 1/22 <i>Arguments &amp; Outlines</i>	Making a good argument & Outlines Belcher, 82-92 Summary of <i>The Craft of Research</i> (on BrightSpace) <b>In-class outlining</b>	Preliminary outlines
Tuesday 1/29 <i>Peer feedback: proposals</i>	Proposals for peer feedback (think pair/share) Abbot, 77-85 <b>PROPOSALS (THESIS, OUTLINE, WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY) DUE FRIDAY, FEB 1</b>	Preliminary proposals & preliminary bibliography
Tuesday 2/5 <i>Literature review: Source finding</i>	Source finding & Managing research Blair, "Information overload, the early years" (online) <b>Zotero</b>	Working bibliography
Tuesday 2/12 <i>Literature review: Source reading</i>	Strategies for reading Belcher, Week 5 Abbott, Chapters 6 & 7	Preliminary literature review
Tuesday 2/19 <i>Structure &amp; argument</i>	Strengthening your structure Belcher, Week 6	Outline

Tuesday 2/26 <i>Literature review: Source Finding</i>	Belcher, Week 7	
Tuesday 3/5 <b>SPRING BREAK!</b>	<b>Time to write!</b>	
Tuesday 3/12 <i>Editing &amp; feedback</i>	Getting, giving, using peer feedback Belcher, Week 9	<b>FIRST DRAFT</b>
Tuesday 3/19 <i>Peer editing</i>	<b>Workshopping New buddy(?)</b>	<b>FULL DRAFT DUE MONDAY MARCH 25</b>
Tuesday 3/26 <b>NO CLASS!</b>	<b>Await feedback!</b>	
Tuesday 4/2 <i>Individual meetings</i> <b>NO CLASS!</b>	<b>FACULTY FEEDBACK RECEIVED BY FRIDAY APRIL 5</b>	Draft
Tuesday 4/9 <i>Editing &amp; feedback: The sequel</i>	Faculty feedback & incorporating edit/suggestions Belcher, Weeks 10, 11	Draft & faculty comments
Tuesday 4/16 <i>Editing &amp; feedback: The finale!</i>	Final Edits <b>FINAL DRAFT DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 19</b>	Almost final draft
Tuesday 4/23 <b>LAST DAY OF CLASSES!</b>	Drinks? Food? Fun!	

## Course Policies

### Contacting the Instructors

Please refer the email addresses on the first page of the syllabus for contacting us electronically.

### Course Technologies

A laptop computer will be required for all workshopping sessions. A limited number of library laptops are available for checkout, and our classroom may have laptops available as needed. This course will also use Brightspace to post suggested readings, handouts, as well as the syllabus.

### Attendance

Attendance for all class meetings is *highly encouraged*, but voluntary. Consistent attendance will afford you the best opportunity to draft and develop your thesis paper in a collective and collaborative environment.

## **Ethics and Academic Integrity**

The Vanderbilt Honor Code applies to all student generated work. Please consult the Code for a more fulsome explanation of the Honor system, as well as examples of its violation: [https://www.vanderbilt.edu/student\\_handbook/the-honor-system](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system)

## **Special Needs and Accommodations**

All accommodations for students with documented needs will need to arrange those accommodations through the Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services (EAD). For information, please contact EAD directly: [https://vanderbilt.edu/ead/disability\\_services/contact\\_us.php](https://vanderbilt.edu/ead/disability_services/contact_us.php)

## **Caveat Emptor**

This is a piloted course (and only the second time offered, no less!), and therefore much of the foregoing is open for change. We'll work with you to switch sequencing or refocus emphases if needed. Your feedback throughout the course is very much welcomed and encouraged.

## **Syllabus Acknowledgments**

Special thanks to Wendy Belcher, who generously furnished multiple iterations of her syllabi for *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks* courses.