1 Key information

Instructor: Assistant Professor David Hsu, office 9-334, ydh@mit.edu
Administrator: Takeo Kuwabara, 9-332, takeok@mit.edu
Time & Place: Wednesdays, 9 am - 12 pm, room 9-450B
Contact: The best way to reach me is by e-mail.
          You can expect a reply in 1-2 business days.
          For anonymous feedback, use anonymous.org/anonemail.html.
Office Hours: Book an appointment at www.meetme.so/davidhsu, or by e-mail.
Website: Be sure to check Stellar settings for notifications and materials.

2 Learning Objectives

My goal is to teach how to:

1. take apart individual papers (yours and that of others) to understand how they work
2. structure your work into a publishable or useful format
3. break-down the process of writing into discrete and manageable steps
4. revise, edit, and re-envision your research
5. navigate and participate in the peer review process
6. be a good colleague to your classmates

3 Introduction

This is a practical class towards a very abstract goal, that is, to teach you a concrete process to develop your capacity for independent scholarship. Becoming an independent scholar in your own right requires contributing to the scholarly literature, and making a meaningful contribution to the literature requires a strange blend of thoughtful reflection, creative insight, and mundane craft. All of these elements are improved by both solitary work and engagement with other scholars, which happens above all through the written word. Writing is about sitting down and committing words to the paper (or at least screen). In this class, we are only going to focus on and discuss what you write. In order for us to have good discussions in person, you will each be writing, reading, and re-writing a lot.

This is the second in a sequence of three classes in our doctoral program designed to teach you this process. You developed a research idea into a proposal and plan in 11.233. You then gathered data during IAP. During first year or so, you are also simultaneously learning methods of analysis appropriate to your area of interest. After this class, you will be either be
working with your advisor or collaborators to develop your work into a publishable format, which your advisor will grade in 11.801.

It is worth remembering a few things about your first-year paper (FYP). First, you write the FYP to go through the process once, because for many of you, the FYP will be the first time where you may be fully responsible for conceiving of and writing up research from beginning to end. Second, the ultimate requirement for your PhD is for you to write your dissertation as proof that you can execute this process. The relationship between the FYP and dissertation depends on every student and their circumstances: this might ultimately be a project in collaboration with others, or your advisor, or solo; this might get published or it might not; it might point the way to your dissertation research, or it might be a tangent or side branch that you fully explored but turn from later. Third, and finally, it is worth keeping in mind that you will be repeating (and getting better at) this process over the rest of your long academic careers. What you put into your first-year paper, what it becomes, and what you get out of it, is really up to you!

Furthermore, the act of writing down your thoughts to communicate creates an artifact in time with both permanent and temporary aspects. If you are successful in writing something that people want to read, then you can expect to receive feedback from me, your student colleagues, your advisor and collaborators, your committee, peer reviewers, editors, and down the road, other scholars who want to learn from and build on your work. You will also look at your work differently in time. Through all of this, and with the best of intentions from everyone, most people will not perceive your work the same way, or be in agreement on how to go forward.

A diverse cacophony of feedback is just the nature of academic research (and life). The thing to be really concerned about is not getting any feedback, which only indicates indifference. This class therefore seeks to reproduce this diversity of opinion by focusing on workshopping, feedback, and different viewpoints from other students and faculty. Deciding what to respond to, how to change your work in response to feedback, is also up to you. The author Neil Gaiman some wonderful advice for writing: “Remember: when people tell you something’s wrong or doesn’t work for them, they are almost always right. When they tell you exactly what they think is wrong and how to fix it, they are almost always wrong.” (You can also read about other authors and their rules here, your mileage may vary).

Finally, becoming an independent scholar is also about becoming a part of a community. Though you will certainly encounter criticism in varying forms throughout your career, we will in this class all work to build our skills as thoughtful, constructive, and helpful collaborators on your individual projects.

## 4 Structure

We will begin the class with a series of short intensive lectures laying out some basic steps towards writing a scholarly paper. Since we all work in different fields and areas of interest, these lectures will sketch out general steps and features in the landscape. After giving you some time to pull together your work from IAP and the fall semester a bit, we will begin the heart of the course, which is workshopping your papers. Each of you will get two rounds of one-hour of discussion devoted to your written work, and you will write four reviews.
5 Norms, expectations

- submit your work well ahead of time, so each of your classmates can come to class prepared with their feedback
- do the reading and be very prepared for discussion, with notes, talking points and discussion questions as appropriate

Also, we will NOT be using laptops, tablets, or cellphones in the classroom. There is a large and robust literature that indicates that the vast majority of people:

- do not read with less comprehension or speed when reading on screens (Dillon, 1992)
- are less productive when multi-tasking and are unable to perceive this: APA summary
- are frequently distracted by the laptops of other people (Hembrooke and Gay, 2003; Sana et al., 2013).

Therefore, please bring paper materials as necessary to refer to the readings during discussion. You are welcome to scan and post your hand-written reflection or notes on documents on the Stellar site as long as they are legible.

6 Schedule

Numbers at the center indicate student to be reviewed (in parentheses), and two peer reviewers, to be randomly assigned on the first day of class. We will also randomly select three people to begin discussion of the three written works in each class, to ensure student engagement and preparation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>9-10 am</th>
<th>10-11 am</th>
<th>11-12 pm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Introduce class</td>
<td>What I did over IAP</td>
<td>Structure of a paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>Theory, lit review, audience</td>
<td>Peer review and response</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>Steps to finishing a draft</td>
<td>The publication process</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>(A) 3 9</td>
<td>(2) 6 10</td>
<td>Kelly Dunning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>(3) 7 J</td>
<td>(4) 8 A</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>(5) 9 2</td>
<td>(6) 10 3</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>(7) J 4</td>
<td>(8) A 5</td>
<td>Larry Susskind</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/23</td>
<td>Vitamin D replenishment break!</td>
<td></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3/30</td>
<td>(9) 2 6</td>
<td>(10) 3 7</td>
<td>Karthik Rao Cavale</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>4/6</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>(4) 8 A</td>
<td>(5) 9 2</td>
<td>Linda Shi</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4/27</td>
<td>(6) 10 3</td>
<td>(7) J 4</td>
<td>Brent Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>(8) A 5</td>
<td>(9) 2 6</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5/11</td>
<td>(10) 3 7</td>
<td>(J) 4 8</td>
<td>Class feedback, next steps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Preparing for class & assignments

All documents on Stellar unless noted otherwise.

- Feb. 3: Introduce class; talk about what you all did over IAP; structure of a paper
  - Read this draft syllabus; note any questions. You don’t have to print it unless you want to, I will bring a final paper version to class.
  - Read Christensen (2006), Forsyth (2012), and Fulmer (2012)
  - Write a short abstract (less than 300 words) describing your envisioned product.
  - Revise your one-sentence research question, bring to class.
  - Write down what you did and didn’t accomplish over IAP. Reflect on whether your plan was realistic, and what this means that you have to do going forward. We will discuss this in class.

- Feb. 10: Theory, literature review, audience; peer review and response letter
  - Read chapters 1-3 in Alford (1998).
  - Read Sovacool (2014)
  - Read Aronowitz and Ausch (2000)
  - Read the draft manuscript of my latest paper, Hsu (2015), as well as the multiple response letters. This is a very big packet of information, but you will want to pay the most attention to the initial manuscript, the reviews and response letters, and then the incremental changes in the marked drafts afterwards.

- Feb. 17: Checklist to finish a draft; the publication process
  - Read documents on JPER statistics and publication process.
  - Read author guides and editorials for Antipode, Chatterton et al. (2011); JAPA, Rosenbloom (2015); Energy Policy, Brown et al. (2015).
  - Revise your short abstract (less than 300 words).
  - Make a draft outline of the sections of your paper. Make a checklist of what you will have to do to complete each section.

- Feb. 24 - Apr. 6: First round of review
  - One week before class, for the student being reviewed:
    * submit an outline and pieces of your paper as you have them, including abstract, and at least one of the following: introduction, literature review, methodology, or discussion sections. Minimum 1500 words that are intended to be part of your FYP and must have advanced significantly from your proposal.
* submit a paper or piece of writing (maximum 30 pages) as an “exemplary work” – that they may be aspiring to, modeling their paper after, or that their advisor recommends – so we can discuss how it works and how to get there. Since many of you may be working on your literature review first, you may want to look for a comprehensive literature review in your area/field. You may also want to talk to your advisor about this.

- Four days before class for reviewers:
  * submit reviews of a minimum 500 words.

• Apr. 6 - May 11: Second round of review

- One week before class, for the student being reviewed:
  * submit draft paper with all of its parts, a target journal, and this must roughly conform to the publication guidelines of the paper, most importantly in total number of words. Do your best to sketch out the complete paper, even if parts remain in draft form or need to be completed later.
  * response letter to your reviewers, that details how you have changed your work in response the feedback that you received in the prior round.

- Four days before class for reviewers:
  * submit second reviews of a minimum 500 words.

8 Grading

|Submitted work for review (2) | 40% |
|Submitted reviews (4) | 30% |
|Reading preparation, contributions to discussion | 30% |
|**| 100% |

8.1 Discussion criteria

You should come prepared for discussion each week by having done the reading and by doing active and critical reflection on the readings. Since we will start with three random people to present the reading and start discussion, you may want to write a set of talking points or discussion questions in advance.

8.2 Paper criteria

The submitted work will be graded on the extent that it advances your work from the proposal towards a workable FYP. The reviews will be graded on the extent that they are helpful, constructive, and have real insight into ways for the author to move forward. Also, in general:

- Format: Avoid overly fancy graphic layouts for your paper. Please use black text, white paper, 1.5 or double-spacing, a font with serifs, minimum font size 11.
• Bibliographies: Anything that you submit (paper or review) should include a full bibliography in a common citation format (for example, University of Chicago). This will not count towards the total word count of the paper.

• Tables & graphics: You are encouraged to use any tools that you need to communicate, such as maps, figures, or tables, but these exhibits may not exceed 10% of the total number of pages. Captions and references help to integrate graphics and text. These exhibits will also be graded for clarity, cogency, and the degree to which they support, inform, or extend the argument presented in the text.

8.3 Snow days (!):

Per MIT policy, in the event of a snow day, we cannot schedule mandatory make-up classes. In that event, we may bump some of our guest lectures so we can focus on reviews and modify our class schedule accordingly.

8.4 Extensions

Due to the tight schedule for reviewing each other’s work, there can be no extensions on your submitted work. If there are extreme physical or emotional circumstances, any further extensions should be requested from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Education (http://odge.mit.edu); if they decide that an extension is warranted, they will then send me a generic note, which preserves your privacy.

8.5 ADA accommodations

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements with MIT’s Student Disabilities Services: http://web.mit.edu/uaap/sds/index.html.

8.6 Academic integrity

Plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, cheating, and facilitating academic dishonesty are academic crimes. It is your responsibility as students and scholars to understand the definition of any such activities, and to avoid and discourage them. Engaging in these activities either knowingly or unknowingly may result in severe academic sanctions, and you are therefore expected to familiarize yourself with MIT’s policies: https://integrity.mit.edu.

9 Tidbits about writing

10 Issues TBD on first day

1. decide order of student reviews and submissions
2. any other questions?

Last updated: January 27, 2016
References


Zwaf, E. (2013). 8 reasons I accepted your article.