

THE CRAFT OF WRITING ABOUT THE ARTS FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

PREPARE, PRESENT, GO PUBLIC

University of Stockholm



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Welcome to the course

This course provides a new opportunity for PhD students and Early Career Researchers in the Nordic countries to focus on the craft of writing about the arts in different contexts and settings. Writing about the arts presents very particular challenges, particularly when researchers are writing about their own practice. Capturing the liveness of the work, the responses of participants and finding an appropriate academic 'voice' to conceptualise and theorise practice all present challenges. Today's academics are increasingly expected to present their research to different audiences, and writing for academic readers and non-academic audiences requires dexterity.

The course will address different genres for writing about research in the arts (e.g. applied drama and theatre, community-based arts projects). We will consider how to address academic audiences, particularly focusing on how to write about the processes of making theatre for academic journal articles and paper presentations.

The course will also consider how research in different aspects of the arts and arts-based research methods can be communicated to a wider public, including those who have been involved in the research process. This will open questions about documenting practice, single authorship, collaborative writing, ethics of co-created research, practice-based research and confidentiality.

The course is designed to be responsive to participants needs and interests. We hope that you will become a community of dynamic researchers who will, together, shape the future.

Helen Nicholson

Aims of course

- To consider different ways to communicate research to specific audiences
- To develop approaches to academic writing
- To learn about other's research in the field
- To develop confidence and competence in writing for different audiences.

Assignments

There will be two assignments for this course. Deadlines to be agreed.

1. Writing for an academic audience either prepare a journal article or present an academic paper.
2. Writing for a wider public or target audience (teachers, care home managers, artists etc)
Article for a professional journal, blog, podcast, vlog or short presentation.

Feedback and Assessment

By the end of the course each student will:

- Communicate their research in different aspects of the arts to varying target and stakeholder groups in a relevant way.

To achieve this, each student will receive:

- Formative feedback on their work in progress from the course tutors
- Peer feedback from fellow course members
- Summative feedback on two assignments and advice on publication.

Assessment Criteria

Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- give feedback and respond to feedback
- construct an argument in an academic article
- use related research and reading to inform argument
- structure an article
- articulate research for different audiences
- Ability to inform and inspire non-academic audiences.

FIRST WORKSHOP 22-24 OCTOBER 2024

Pre-course preparation

Reading

Denzin, N. K. (2006) 'Pedagogy, Performance, and Autoethnography'. *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26(4), 333–338. (6 p.)

Thomson, Pat, and Barbara Kamler. *Detox Your Writing : Strategies for Doctoral Researchers*. London: Routledge, 2016. Chapter 6

Bring

- Five images that represent your research
- An idea for a journal article based on your research
- Laptop
- Note Book for reflective journal

Aims of First Workshop

The first workshop aims to open questions that will inform the rest of the course. The course is divided into three sessions, each of which are designed to take you through a range of techniques and questions about reaching different audiences.

The course is structured to enable you to learn about each other's research and to share your own research in a supportive environment. By the end of the course you will have:

- Introduced your research to each other
- Represented key elements of your research in an accessible way
- Understood the structure of an academic article
- Considered how to write about practice
- Prepared to write a publishable article.



COURSE STRUCTURE

DAY ONE:

Building a Community of Researchers

2pm: Welcome and Introductions

Introducing the course and its aims. What do you want to learn? What do you want to get out of it?

2.30-4PM SESSION ONE: SHARING RESEARCH

In this session we will introduce our research to each other and start to build a community of researchers. We will consider how to distil complexity into accessible form so that you can find points of connection and synergy.

Indicative activities:

- Describe your research in keywords
- Describe your research for different audiences
- Introduce each other's research

Break: 4pm

4.30-6 PM SESSION TWO: COMMUNICATING RESEARCH

In this session we will start to consider the craft of communicating your research. This will open questions about the disciplinary space your research occupies, and how this knowledge might inform a community of practice. We will begin with practical exercises that will communicate the content of your research, and also consider how the context informs the structure and form.

Indicative activities include:

- Using five images (20 seconds each), tell the story of your research processes/ methods/or findings
- Summarising your research in a tweet.

We will conclude the session by considering what it means to become a community of practice. The term 'community of practice' is largely associated with Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave, whose co-authored book described the social conditions for learning. Definitions of a community of practice generally share three specific domains.

- Knowledge: a common body of knowledge within the community.
- Community: commitment to forming a group for networking.
- Shared practice: sharing of ideas, resources and strategies.

We return to the idea of a community of practice, and consider how you will become a supportive network, and what tools you need to put it in place.

Reference

Lave, Jean and Wenger, Etienne. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.*, New York: Cambridge University Press

EVENING: SOCIAL EVENT

DAY TWO:

REACHING AN ACADEMIC AUDIENCE

This session will consider how to move from the 'big picture' of your research to the focus of a research article. The day is structured to analyse the structure and form of a research article. We will also consider how to maintain an argument and capture the liveness of experience in your writing.

9.30-12.30 SESSION TWO: WRITERS AND READERS

The Irish poet Seamus Heaney commented that writers need to start out as readers. In this session we will begin to consider how other reading other people's writing can inform your own style.

We will begin by considering how academic writers introduce their arguments and set up debates and agendas. The session will begin by reading and writing abstract (abstracts provided).

Indicative activities include:

- Analysing different abstracts (what debates do they set up? What is the context? What methods have been used?)
- Writing your own abstract
- Sharing your abstract: what questions do they raise? What do you want to know more about? (e.g. I would like to know more about the methods/ context?)

We will move to consider how an article is structured and analyse what this indicates about the argumentation. By the end of the session you will have:

- Read and written an abstract
- Written the headings that structure your own article.

1.30-4.30 SESSION THREE: RESEARCH METHODS AND PRACTICE

One of the biggest challenges facing academics in the arts and arts education is how to write about practice. Often practice is embedded in the research methods, which brings its own challenges. We will address research methods needed to capture practice, and on how to take account of the multiple perspectives of participants.

The session will begin with discussion, and will consider the following questions:

- What can we learn from arts criticism about writing about practice?
- How can research processes capture the liveness and messiness of arts practice in different settings?
- How can researchers attend to the sensory and affective qualities of art-making and the experience of audiences?

You will then work on your own and in pairs to write a short piece about practice.

Reading (extracts provided)

Kershaw, B. and Nicholson, H. (eds.). 2011. *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (248 p.)

Pink, S. 2009. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: Sage. (168 p)

5-6pm: Building Communities: Reflections on Learning

We will conclude the day by considering what has been learnt, and what questions are raised by the learning. We will also consider the purpose of keeping a reflective journal and how to share practice as a community of researchers.

DAY THREE 9.30-12.30

PRESENTING RESEARCH: BITE-SIZE RESEARCH

The third day will bring together learning from the previous sessions, as well as introducing new ways to present your research.

It will build on previous work by focusing on:

- Articulating and summarising the key aspects of your research
- Presenting an argument in a succinct form
- Writing about practice.

It will also introduce how to put yourself into the writing and research presentation. The session will begin by considering what issues arise from the pre-course reading:

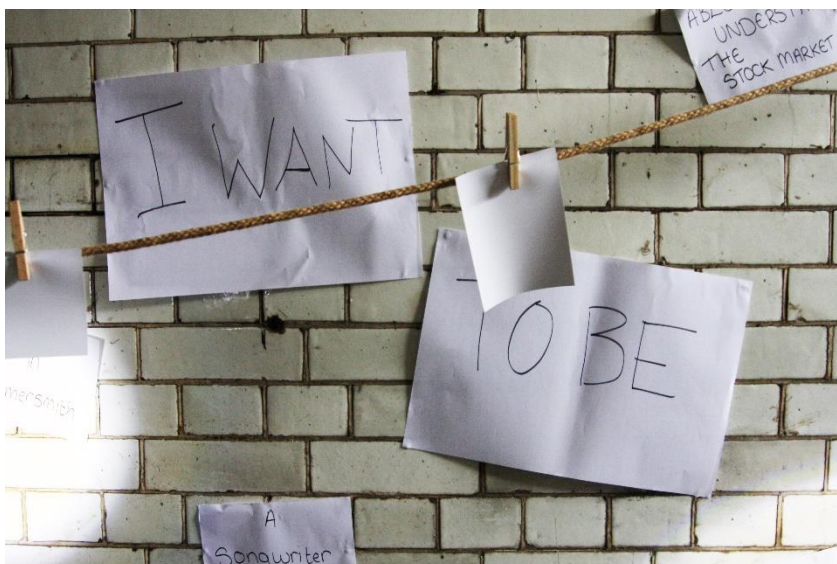
We will then analyse a five-minute podcast about research before moving to a practical task:

- Storyboard and in pairs make a short film (3 minutes) about your research or
- Develop a poster presentation of research using images

The session will conclude by sharing research and considering the different outputs from the three days:

- Research keywords
- Journal abstract
- Structure of journal article
- Capturing research methods
- Writing about practice
- Presenting 'bite-size' research.

12.30-1pm Reflections and Ways forward.



WORKSHOP TWO: WRITING FOR AN ACADEMIC AUDIENCE

8-10 JANUARY 2025

This will be an intensive writing retreat for journal articles. It will build on the January workshop, and provide further opportunities to develop your academic voice.

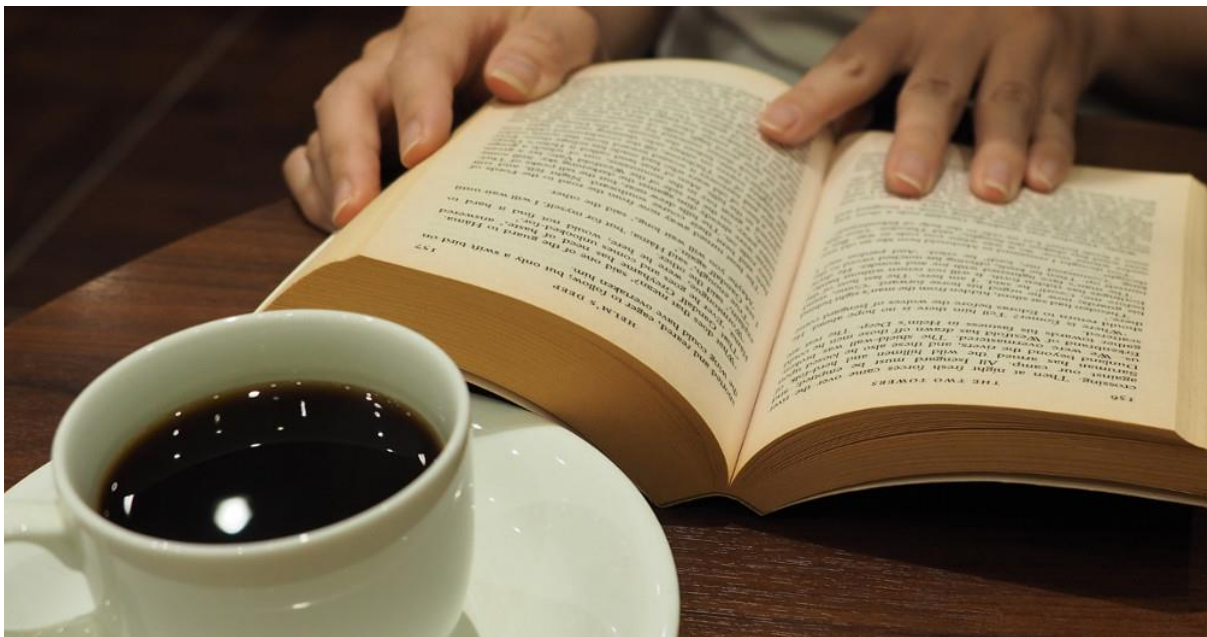
To prepare for this session, please bring with you:

- a) An annotated bibliography of five or so articles or books that inform your article
- b) a detailed analysis (around 1500 words) of one of the books or articles that informs your work

Supporting Reading:

Fleishman, M. (2012) The Difference of Performance-as-Research. *Theatre Research International*, 37:1, 28-37. (10 p.)

Delgado, M. M., Gale, M. B. and Johnson, D. (eds.) (2015) The Politics, Processes, and Practices of Editing. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 25(1). (158 p.)



DAY ONE:

Welcome back 2pm

We will begin with reflections on the learning from the workshop in October. What key aspects have become embedded in their writing and presentation of research? What skills and knowledge would you like to develop further?

Session One: 2.30-6pm

Building a theoretical framework: 2.30-4pm

The first session will focus on how reading informs the argumentation. What is the theoretical architecture that defines the article? How can you engage critically with key authorities? What does it mean to engage in close reading?

We will begin by presenting the key ideas of one of your key readings. We will consider how to describe the argument accurately and succinctly, and with attention to close reading of the author's ideas.

Offering an analysis 4.30-6pm

It can be difficult to critique an argument, and this means that many authors only quote others' work approvingly. In this part of the session, we will consider how to open a set of debates for critical scrutiny, and in ways that are productive for your argument.

By the end of this session, you will have written a summary of the argument, and considered how you can bring research into your work in ways that add depth. It will also involve debate about where your writing is placed within the broad field of the arts, and where you want to place the publication of your article.



DAY TWO:

Writing about Context

The second session will focus on writing about context. Many authors pay insufficient attention to the specifics of context, and this is one reason for journal articles to be rejected. What is specific about the context in which you are working? How does it shape your analysis?

9.30-12.30

In the first session we will reflect on the importance of locating your work, both theoretically and in a specific geographical, institutional and/ or cultural context. What do your readers need to know about where your work takes place? What kind of research methods are you using to capture and document the ideas and findings that your writing will address?

We will analyse some examples of writing about practice.

1.30-4.00

This session will be spent writing. You will work individually and in pairs to write about the context in which your research takes place, and consider how this relates to your theoretical ideas.

4.30-6pm

The third session will address how to write about live performance. It involves considering how practice is experienced and documented. It will consider ephemera of theatre, and what can be learnt from how theatre historians have understood the liveness of performance.



DAY THREE:

Editing, Revising and Presenting

The final session will consider the process of editing, revising, rewriting. There will be an opportunity to edit your own and each other's work, and consider how an emergent article might be presented as a conference paper.

There will be an opportunity to reflect on your learning, and on the course as a whole.



FINAL PAPERS: A tentative schedule.

