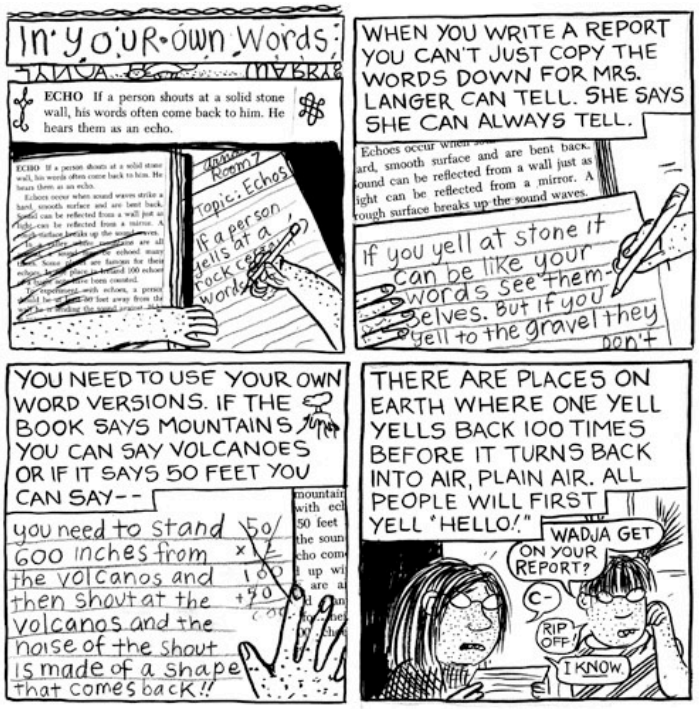
Writing Guide

For

Graduate Students



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Stating a Thesis

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Although it's not always necessary or desirable to state a thesis and defend it, this convention for writing is prevalent and generally expected in academia. A good argument is *de rigueur* in academia. It is quite common to hear the professor reiterate "what is the thesis?" or the editor impress on the author the "need to state an argument."

Hence, it is crucial that graduate students can confidently write with this convention of stating and defending theses (claim, premise & warrant, argument, etc.). Quite often, student receive a pattern of comments or margin notes from professors: 'Thesis too vague… paper unwieldy;' 'Thesis too narrow or factual… cannot be developed into a full essay;' 'Did not take a stance… observations are stated instead of assertions.'

The purpose of stating a thesis or argument is to provide dialogue (inspire, raise questions, provoke thoughts, etc.) over an idea, issue, data, knowledge, information, etc. that can be demonstrated to be the case, "hold water," be true, considerable, persuasive, understandable, etc. The challenge is to *state and demonstrate* a thesis (i.e., provide evidence for the thesis stated). In this way, all theses are debatable and discursive; a thesis is an assertion or stand on a topic. It is an arguable position, not an observation The thesis anchors the essay and provides its direction by asserting a controlling idea. It keeps the content of the essay focused.

In academia, this convention typically implies entering an ongoing (current, timely, historical, etc.) conversation within a discipline, across disciplines, between or among authors, etc. This gives the thesis currency but also means that students have to be finely tuned into the discourse and arguments within disciplines, and clear about who is saying what, and where they said it. Of course, this places a burden on the student of interdisciplinarity to engage with numerous and various discourses and sources. But this interdisciplinarity can be powerful for demonstrating contradictions and shortcomings of ongoing arguments.

This convention is not merely limited to academia. Journalists, for example, commonly draw from, or begin with a clear thesis. Witness Anna Maria Tremonti introducing a program on her show, The Current, on the morning of 8 January 2008:

> Today Mr. Arar is a household name. The ordeals of Abdullah Almalki and Ahmad El Maati have been well documented, including on this program. Mr. Nureddin's case, however, has never generated the same kind of heat. Perhaps it's because his time in a Middle Eastern prison can be measured in weeks rather than months or years. Or perhaps it's because of his reluctance to speak publicly for fear of destroying the life he's trying to rebuild.

Notice how she states the thesis in conversation with the literature and other journalists. "Arar is a household name… ordeals of Abdullah Almalki and Ahmad El Maati have been well documented…"— She sums up the literature review, so to speak. Then she

states the thesis: “Mr. Nureddin's case, however, has never generated the same kind of heat. Perhaps it's because his time in a Middle Eastern prison can be measured in weeks rather than months or years. Or perhaps it's because of his reluctance to speak publicly”

Stating and demonstrating a thesis does not imply a defensive or argumentative style. Some defenses of theses truly are arguments and some defenders truly are defensive. However, the vast majority of academic arguments are focused engagements with discourses and ongoing conversations, and range from deadly serious to entirely playful.

Argument Tips

Argument by Symmetry

1. If we are entertaining something called the learning sciences, I will argue here that we have to necessarily entertain what I’ll call “the learning arts.”

Argument by Extension or Implication

1. If web 2.0 transforms the everyday reader into an everyday writer, then by extension the author must be dead. The reader may not have killed the author, as Bathes implies, but…

Argument by Contra-distinction

1. While Voithofer argues that new media research emerges from the principles of new media (i.e., Manovich, 2001), I argue that new media based research has much less to do with new media than with the rhetorical and spiritual power of the new medium. By new medium I refer to…

2. Contrary to Everett who proposes…, I argue that…

Argument by Corrective

1. Although Hayles attends to the nuances of code representing or embodying the unconscious, my point here is that she fails to distinguish programming code from machine code and thereby overlooks an already fragmented unconscious. The implications are that…
2. I wish to throw into sharp relief Stone’s association of the body and embodiment with feminism in order to effectively distinguish liberal from material feminisms in cyberspace.

Argument Traps

1. **Tautological Argument**- Argument based on circular logic
   e.g., Teachers should use technology because the net generation uses technology
2. **Axiomatic Argument**- Argument of or for the obvious (often criticized as trivial, superficial, inconsequential or irrelevant)
   e.g., New media can make a difference in how we learn
3. **Inflationary Argument**- Argument drawn from or generating a ‘tempest in a teacup.’
   e.g., There is a crisis in policies protecting teachers from student gossip and defamation posts in online forums, such as FaceBook.

4. **Idiosyncratic or Solipsistic Argument**- Argument that is self-centered, self-serving, or overly myopic
   e.g., My students made great progress when I used Moodle
5. ***Prima facie* Argument**- Argument that mistakes surface for depth
   e.g., Young students are digital natives requiring different teaching approaches
6. ***Ad hominem* Argument-** Argument that makes personal attacks
   e.g., N.A. Publication has no credibility here and is otherwise a greedy bureaucrat
7. ***Ad nauseum* Argument-** Argument that unnecessarily extends or prolongs an argument
   e.g., Cognition is a function of the brain.
8. **Redundant Argument**- Argument that has already been made
   e.g., Communities of practice are, by nature, both centralized and decentralized
9. **Red Herring or Straw Man Argument**- Argument that misrepresents, misconstrues or distorts a position for rhetorical advantage
   e.g., Hutchins argues that the brain has no role in cognition

Guides

The *Craft of Research* organizes the convention of stating arguments as follows:

7 Making Good Arguments: An Overview 114
7.1 Argument and Conversation 114
7.2 Basing Claims on Reasons 116
7.3 Basing Reasons on Evidence 117
7.4 Acknowledging and Responding to Alternatives 118
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7.6 Building Complex Arguments Out of Simple Ones 121
7.7 Arguments and Your Ethos 122
Quick Tip: Designing Arguments Not for Yourself but for Your Readers: Two Common Pitfalls 124

See also:
http://www.logicalfallacies.info/
http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/How_to_Think.htm
http://www.fallacyfiles.org/index.html

Developing & Writing a Theoretical Framework

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1. Theory, Method(s), Data, Self & Site(s)

Principle: Researchers see, and basically find, what they look for.

However simple this truism may be, there is something profound here. This is not to say that researchers will not see or find the unexpected. Rather, this principle addresses the role or purpose of theory in research. What researchers "see" when they peer into classrooms, cyberspace, homes, lakes, museums, offices, or any cultures and ecologies for that matter, are liberated or constrained by what they "look" for. What we gain in analytical purchase through theory, we may give up in narrative. Or are agency, con/text, narrative, and structure more literary than methodological problems (see First Principle)? In other words, is providing a relative balance of theory and descriptive narrative more a literary challenge than a challenge of commensurability?

Among other things, such as providing an imprimatur for research, theory moves us to articulate, effect, join, perceive, depict or predict that which would otherwise be inarticulate, fleeting, isolated, occluded, unimaginable or obscured. Theory helps us represent— describe, explain, evaluate, interpret or deconstruct. Theory makes data, but makes them imperfectly. Data test, challenge, morph and re/produce theory, however imperfectly. Like method, both theory and data are generative.

No observation is theory-free. Or better yet, no participation is neutral. This is to say that (research) practice is never atheoretical. Research may be undertheorized but is never done without some theory of something. This or that theory may be inadequate for the task but research is always shaped by theory, method, data, site and self, however insufficient. Think of a clinic, outdoor centre or school. What do you observe— feel, see or hear— when you walk inside? Think of a corporation. What does it do? Think of a relationship. What does it involve? Think of thinking. What comes to mind?

As you imagine walking into this clinic, outdoor centre, school, corporation or relationship, however open-minded or how you manage expectations, what you (eventually) find (i.e., what is "there") is dependent on who you are (i.e., identity and positionality) and what you theorize(d) (or looked for). The quality of your data and representations are dependent on the quality of your identity, positionality and theorizing, among other things. This is *not* to say that the quality of your data or representations are dependent on the quality of your life. What is "actually" or "really" there *is* "actually" or "really" there, unless you are an ontological relativist. Research is about persuasively representing (i.e., describing, explaining, evaluating, interpreting or deconstructing), not parroting or mirroring, what is there. Of course, when we represent, we change (see next Principle).

Principle: We produce the phenomena we study— and we are co-produced with our phenomena.

Another way of saying this is that identity determines, forms, or shapes observation and representation (of data) but observation and representation (of data) determine, form, or shape identity. This may appear as a paradox but it also suggests that identity (of a researcher) along

with data are interdependent, distributed and malleable. But there is also something durable about identities and data. This is a principle of standpoint epistemology, subjectivity or positionality. The researcher's identity, standpoint, subjectivity or positionality— their ethics and ontologies— matter. Researchers' identities are partially constituted by ability, class, gender, race, and sexuality, which matter. This principle also suggests that there is no such thing as a neutral or objective observer; hence, there is no such thing as a neutral or objective observation (see previous Principle).

Principle: Theory, method, data, site, self.

This principle is more a mantra to be repeated when necessary than a principle. The relationships among theory, method, data, site and self, or among participant-subjects, researchers, methods, theories, data and sites (settings) are interdependent. This is a logical outcome of the previous Principles, which suggest that the various aspects of research do not stand in isolation to each other. Data make sense only in relation to methods, theories and sites (and relative to participants-subjects' and researchers' identities or ethics). Methods and theories determine, form, or shape, data and sites (and relative participant-subjects and researchers) (see Second and Third Principles). Data and sites ground, form, and locate theories and methods (and relative to participant-subjects' and researchers' identities or ethics).

This principle could also be restated as an assertion of the artifacticity (or artifacuality) of research: All data, sites and selves are manipulated (by theories and methods, among other things). This automatically precludes distinctions between "experimental" and "naturalistic" methods, or between "designed" and "emergent" or "grounded" research. Everything and everyone are manipulated. The challenge is identifying the source(rer) and acknowledging complicity (see previous Principles).

Tracking, Mapping & Framing

Researchers in cultural studies and media studies tend to approach events, sites, etc. by tracking, mapping and framing. In fact, these researchers often refer to their frames or framings of data, phenomena, and sites of interest as *frameworks*. Tracking refers to an observation or documentation of trails, traces, performances, etc., while mapping refers to an articulation or coordination (forms of relationships) of beings, things, figures, interests, ideas, ideologies, elements, entities, nodes, etc. Mapping may take a form of modeling (strengths of relationships) and is what it suggests— cultural or social cartography (Paulston, 1977).

Framing refers to influence over meaning or a packaging of meanings, and not merely to a "lens" through which a participant or researcher "views" events, things, data, phenomena, or sites (see Principles). This is one aspect that makes social science so interesting— both research participants and researchers invariably and simultaneously frame or draw on frames to influence, filter, orient, package, or shape data, phenomena, meanings, etc. Erving Goffman (1974), the renowned sociologist and theorist of performance, defined a frame as a "schemata of interpretation…. to locate, perceive, identify, and label," which creates meaning, shapes experience, and gives direction, etc.

"Framing is concerned with the way interests, communicators, sources, and culture combine to yield coherent ways of understanding the world… frames organize by providing identifiable patterns or structures, which can vary in their complexity…. Frames structure. That is, they impose a pattern on the social world, a pattern constituted by any number of symbolic devices" (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001, pp. 11, 12, 17).

A theoretical framework necessarily shapes meaning and enables the researcher to collect and order (categorize, code, limit, represent, manipulate, rearrange, select, etc.) data or phenomena for meaning. It frames or composes the reader as well. The point is not to "cast" data, phenomena, etc. into a theoretical framework, but rather to influence, filter, orient, package, or shape data, meanings, etc. The key is to recognize that theoretical frameworks are not *cast* or *fixed* in time or space. As Reese, Gandy and Grant remind us, frames actively "bring otherwise amorphous reality into a meaningful structure, making it more than the simple inclusion or exclusion of information. Thus frames are active, information gathering, as well as screening devices" (p. 11).

2. Examples of Theoretical Frameworks

Example #1: Theorizing Curriculum Innovation

From: Petrina, S. and Dalley, S. (2003). The politics of curriculum reform in Canada: The case of technology education in British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education*, *3*(1), 117-144.

In this example, technology education (TE) was addressed as an innovation in the BC school system. The innovation is framed through the work of Goodson (1988), Hall and Hord (1995), Hargreaves (1997), and Rogers (1995):

According to Rogers (1995), there are a series of attributes of an innovation or reform that more or less determine the rate of adoption. The first is relative advantage. TE had the perception that it was better than its predecessor; it had a relative advantage over IE. The reform of IE in England and the USA validate this advantage. The second is compatibility. TE was compatible with the teachers' experiences and values; the reform came from the teachers' everyday practices and lives. The third is complexity. Perhaps TE was too complex, yet it was simple enough that a number of schools and teachers followed through with adoption. Trialability is the fourth attribute and teachers were given as much time as they wanted to experiment on a trial-by-trial basis. The final attribute is observability. Trial sites and demonstrations of TE were made available for any administrator or teacher who wanted to observe TE in action.

Hall and Hord (1987, p. 60) theorized that adopters of reforms, groups and individuals, proceed through a series of "stages of concern." The adoption of reforms, according to Hall and Hord, is dependent on levels of concern about the reform. There are seven levels or stages of concern: awareness, informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration and refocusing stages. The lower levels, awareness, informational and personal stages relate to the collection of information and assessment of demands. At the middle stage, management concerns shift to adopting or opting into the reform. At the stages of consequence, collaboration and refocusing, concerns shift again to impacts of the reform, coordination of resources to make the reform work, and

ultimately an exploration of the universal benefits and permanent adoption. Collectively, the BCTEA proceeded through each stage of concern, from awareness through a collaborative refocusing of the TE profession toward adoption. Some individual teachers shifted their concerns to refocusing while others maintained concerns at lower stages. Everyone it seemed, was shifting toward higher stages of concern and eventual adoption of TE. But once BC MOE published the TE curriculum, once the reform was sanctioned, the BCTEA downshifted the collective concern to rejection. A host of individual teachers dropped their concern with TE.

TE had all the ingredients of what Hargreaves (1997, p. 114) has called the "New Deal" for educational reform. The TE teachers, more so than other teacher coalitions, were a self-regulating group throughout the 15 years of the reform. As Goodson has argued, interest groups or coalitions have the power to make or break reforms. Historically, technology teachers were not strangers to the reform of their practice. The technology teachers began with a new historical image that was generated and nourished from within their ranks in the mid 1980s. In schools where this occurred, material structures in timetabling and space were shifted to accommodate the reforms. And so on. Yet, even the best of what Hargreaves (1997, pp. 107-117) suggested were the ingredients for wholesome change does not necessarily translate into reform. In the final analysis, we argue, *a la* Hargreaves, that TE was the perfect reform, and question, *contra* Hargreaves, whether the process of reform ought to be privileged over the results.

Hence, we argue that the case of technology education in British Columbia demonstrates quite readily the invulnerability of teachers, as a group, to curriculum reform in Canada. While the BCTEA and its technology teachers have negotiated centralized reform with relative political ease and autonomy, they have been much more vulnerable to cultural, economic and demographic forces. We concur with Goodson who argues that the identity and survival of school subjects do not merely hinge on historical fate. Rather, school subjects require a fair amount of political upkeep.

Goodson, I. (1988). *The making of curriculum*. New York: Falmer Press.

Hall, G. E. and Hord, S. M. (1987). *Change in schools: Facilitating the process*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Hargreaves, A. (1997). From reform to renewal: A new deal for a new age. In A. Hargreaves and R. Evans, Eds., *Beyond educational reform: Bringing teachers back in* (pp. 106-125). Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Rogers, E. M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4th ed.). New York: Simon and Schuster.

Example #2: Theorizing Curriculum Change

From: Petrina, S. (2006). C&I high. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, *3*(2), 125-147.

In this example, curriculum and instruction in universities was compared to the arrangements of subjects in high schools, which allowed me to draw on theories of curriculum changes dealing with subjects and subject status (e.g., good subjects qua requirements v. bad subjects qua electives, etc.):

Most departments of curriculum studies or C&I in North America were and are organized like an average high school (C&I High). It is unclear whether form follows function or function follows form. Some argue that the primary function of these institutions is re/producing the school subjects, and the bureaucratic form of C&I High logically follows. Others note that the form of C&I High determines its function, re/producing the school subjects. Certainly, it is arguable that C&I High is the bureaucratic form— the (surrogate) parent figure— necessary to re/produce subjects. In this case the child grows desirous, resentful and suspicious of the parent. But like psychoanalysis, this metaphor reduces cultural or social possibilities to familial prohibitions. The high school cannot re/make (it with) C&I High. And C&I High must not defy or invade the high school. Surely more or less bio/logical and re/productive metaphors can be found to capture the uncanny resemblance between C&I High and the schools. Perhaps C&I High is in a parasitic or symbiotic relationship with high schools. Or as Marx and some materialists to follow noted, both of these institutions are superstructural, built on a base of economic circumstance. Their resemblance is less a coincidence or necessity than an achievement.

Like the average high school, C&I High requires routine political upkeep. The boundaries of what counts as legitimate knowledge, along with a subject's identity, form and scope have to be actively defended and managed. According to Goodson (1992, 1993), proponents for school subjects actively compete or politick for status, which is conferred, not earned, through disciplinary forms. As he concludes, "the battle over the *content* of curriculum whilst often more visible is in many senses less important than the control over its underlying *form*" (1987, p. vii). For Hargreaves (1994), school subject practitioners actively guard against reforms that debalkanize conditions, blur boundaries, and flatten disciplinary status. It is in the interest of subjects with status to establish and maintain privilege, power and rank. Siskin (1994) observed similar activities in maintaining school subjects, and suggested that practitioners defend their subjects' identity to maintain relations with other subjects. On micro levels of decision-making, practitioners— administrators, teachers and professors— of the disciplines or subjects actively compete or politick for power, privilege, and prestige or status (Petrina, 1998). In these types of competitive environments, alternative alliances and structures are established. C&I High endures, but how long can it last?

Goodson, I. (1987). Series editor's preface. In T. Popkewitz (Ed.), *The formation of school subjects* (pp. vii-viii). New York: Falmer Press.

Goodson, I. (1992). On curriculum form: Notes toward a theory of curriculum. *Sociology of Education,* 65(1), 66-75.

Goodson, I. (1993). *School subjects and curriculum change* (3rd edition). London: Falmer Press.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. New York: Teachers College Press.
Hargreaves, A. & Macmillan, R. (1995). The balkanization of teaching. In J.W. Little & L.S. Siskin (Eds.), *Subjects in question* (pp. 141-71). New York: Teachers College Press.
Little, J. W. & Siskin, L. S. (Eds.). (1995). *Subjects in question*. New York: Teachers College Press.
Petrina, S. (1998). Multidisciplinary technology education. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, *8*(2), 105-38.
Siskin, L. S. (1994). *Realms of knowledge: Academic departments in secondary schools*. London: The Falmer Press.

Example #3: Theorizing Piracy

From: Philip, K. (2005). What is a technological author? The pirate function and intellectual property. *Postcolonial Studies, 8*(2), 199-218.

In this example, Kavita Philip theorizes piracy through the myths and historical realities of "the pirate." She also ties this to questions of authorship, and theorizes the "technological author" through Foucault's "What is an Author?"

The pirate figure has commonly functioned as a raced, gendered subaltern who effects the inversion of hegemonic power relations…. Pirates who threaten to invert power relations through appropriating things less tangible than ships and bodies have become a growing concern for the managers of twenty-first-century economic globalization. Appropriating, modifying, and sharing a range of less tangible but equally crucial objects, intellectual property 'robbers' today traffic in images, music, and software. Although business analysts regard this as a novel problem, supposedly precipitated by the unprecedented importance of 'knowledge' as a force of economic production, historians of science and law tell stories of intellectual property theft that predate the current IPR discourse by two centuries…. What can we learn if, rather than joining the chorus of libertarian or radical critiques of corporate ownership and intellectual property, we investigate the assumptions that undergird the current discussion of piracy? We might track the ways in which certain narratives of authorship, creativity, and ownership emerge.…

What are the cultural politics of riffing and ripping off, and how do they help us understand technological authorship? The question of technoscientific discursivity was something Foucault briefly touched on in What is an Author? but he saw it as radically different from discursivity in art and fiction. How does the digital revolution, with its mantra of rip/mix/burn, and its interpellation of high bandwidth, multicultural youth, make a difference to how we read modern authorship? Modes of technological authorship throw into relief and exacerbate many of the internal tensions Foucault noted in the author function, and blur the lines between cultural and technological creativity. I also want to re-frame the question about authorship, via the context of the political and epistemological question of the postcolonial margin.

Example #4: Theorizing Literacies

From: Petrina, S. (2000). The politics of technological literacy. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education 10*(2), 181-206.

In this example, technological literacy was reconceptualized as critical literacy, which meant that I had to draw on critical theory and new literacies:

'Technological literacy' rolls off the tongue quite smoothly, much like computer literacy, cultural literacy, ecological literacy, scientific literacy or workplace literacy (Greenwood-Gowan, 1992, 1994; McLaughlin, 1995; Noble, 1984a, 1984b; Orr, 1992; Shamos, 1995; Westbury & Purves, 1988). Although these constructs are nebulous by design, they are *not* impotent or meaningless. These constructs serve as links between action and ideology—they serve to govern some economic, political or social course of action. They are socially distributed and shared ideologically across groups with contradictory articulations and meanings. They help to diffuse a range of motives with popular appeal. This is to say that these constructs are 'always already' political.

For Paulo Freire (1970), literacy was an empowering, consciousness raising process, enabling people to analyse, resist, and transform social conditions which underlay inequality, oppression, and power. Literacy had little meaning for Freire outside of everyday practices, where particular technologies and texts form particular literacies. In Freire's work with underprivileged and disenfranchised adults, literacy was constructed through reading and writing. That which was read and written was selected for its emancipatory, political content. Texts were selected to inspire critical investigations of oppression and possibilities for liberation through collective action. Reading and writing engaged one in critical, conscious action to transform the world— to liberate oneself from oppression and power through praxis or reflective action. As a teacher, Freire recognised the 'always already' political nature of education, and consciously selected tools and texts to expose oppression and oppressors. Critical literacies were counterpoints to domination in practice. The processes of becoming literate—of forming a critical consciousness— and of teaching were, for Freire, overtly ideological and political.

Critical theorists of literacy have generally worked from Freire's ideas to reposition the politics of literacy. No more can literacy be seen as autonomous, neutral and without context. This 'autonomous' view of literacy, which has been the norm in technology education, fails to capture the political nature of reading and writing in practice. Street (1984, p. 95) argues that a much more robust notion can be found in an 'ideological' view of literacy. In this view, there is no essence of literacy— no essential meaning that can be derived through synthetic or interpretive work. Rather, the nature of literacy, or particular literacies, is situated in social practices taking place in specific cultural settings. Literacy is an issue of how reading and writing are constructed and practised through the politics of these settings. These politics involve power that structures inequality or social relations between competing individuals and groups and across class, gender, race, and sexuality (Lankshear & Lawler, 1987, p. 43-52). What literacy is or means depends on the practices whereby one learns, the purposes for which particular literacies are used, and the settings in which this takes place. Being critical generally means that first, 'there is the element of evaluation or judgment'. And second, 'there is the element of knowing closely and "for what it is" that which is being evaluated: the object of evaluation or judgment' (Peters & Lankshear, 1996, p. 54).

Freire, P.: 1970, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. by M.B. Ramos, Continuum, New York.
Lankshear, C. & Lawler, M.: 1987, *Literacy, Schooling and Revolution*, Falmer, New York.
Peters, M. & Lankshear, C.: 1996, 'Critical Literacy and Digital Texts', *Educational Theory* **46**, 51-70.
Street, B.: 1984, *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

3. Assembling Theoretical Frameworks

1. Theoretical frameworks will always be dependent on the clarity of the thesis— that is, on how well an author articulates an argument or thesis (For directions on stating a thesis, see the *Writing Guide for Graduate Students*). First articulate a thesis, which will shape and be shaped by theory— a theoretical framework will follow in coversation with the thesis.

2. Widely explore theories that seemingly emerge from and resonate with your topic, problem, or data— you want your data to speak to, suggest and give rise to your theory. For example, a research topic or problem focusing on teenage girls could suggest gender theory, media theory and the body, or theories of ennui or liberty (i.e., desire for autonomy and independence). However, there will also be times when you may want to work from a theory (e.g., psychoanalysis) toward generating a topic, problem, or data, etc. (Alert: aim for theory grounded in a topic or data and not grounded theory).

3. Once you have identified theories that are emergent from and appropriate to your topic and data, begin by assembling and articulating the various authors and ideas into a brief (300-400 words or so) summary. Write in conversation with theorists and your thesis. Write to frame the topic or problem— the thesis will focus and the theoretical framework will frame the topic or problem.

4. In this summary of the framework, take the opportunity to clarify theories and concepts. Also write to orient the framework toward the topic or data. Like the thesis, the theoretical framework frames the reader for understanding or making meaning. Think through a rewrite to frame and orient the reader.

5. If writing a scholarly essay, after you have assembled a summary of the theoretical framework, proceed to write iteratively to thread and weave the framework throughout the essay. If conducting research, after you have assembled a summary of the theoretical framework, proceed to write iteratively to thread, weave, and account for the framework throughout the essay. The emphasis in both cases is on framing for meaning-making.

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Petrina, S. (2008a). *The principles of research (as rhetoric)*. Unpublished manuscript.

Reese, S. D., Gandy, O. & Grant, A. E. (2001). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Reviewing Literature
(use also if your scholarly essay takes the form of a literature review)

1. Overview/ Introduction of subject, theories and issues involved.
    - Type of literature review (theory, methodology, policy, quantitative research, qualitative research)
    - Scope- what type of resources are best
    - Search for information: wide enough and narrow enough
2. Categories selected as natural divides of thesis and reviewed material:
    - Organize material around the research question or thesis
    - Include areas of controversy
3. Analysis and interpretation of overarching similarities and variances of ideas: Include
    - Provenance: credentials, evidence
    - Objectivity: authors point of view and representation of other views
    - Persuasiveness: which theses are most convincing vs least?
    - Value: Does this work contribute in a significant way to understanding the subject.
4. Summation or conclusions of thesis generating idea in context with materials reviewed.
    - What is known and not known
    - Areas of further research
    - Relevant, appropriate and, useful

Literature Review Matrix

Question (author's view)	**Article Information**	**Analysis** (strengths & weaknesses)
Formulation of problem/issue		
Clearly defined: Scope, severity, relevance		
Would another perspective be more effective?		
Researcher's orientation: interpretive, critical science, both?		
Author's theoretical framework (psychological, developmental, feminist?) what voice?		
Relationship between theoretical and research perspective		
Relevant and representative literature (inclusive) used?		
If research, how well was it done (measurements, analysis, validity)		
"Popular readership", language use, emotional, rhetorically toned, or reasoning		
Structure clear? Deconstruction possible? Cause-effect		

*Matrix 1 adapted by Linda A. Cannon

Category	Criterion	1	2	3	4
Coverage	Justified criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review	Did not discuss the criteria inclusion or exclusion	Discussed the literature included and excluded	Justified inclusion and exclusion of literature	
Synthesis	Distinguished what has been done in the field what needs to be done	Did not distinguish what has and has not been done	Discussed what has and has not been done	Critically examined the state of the field	
	Placed the topic or problem in the broader scholarly literature	Topic not placed in broader scholarly literature	Some discussion of broader scholarly literature	Topic clearly situated in broader scholarly literature	
	Place the research in the historical context of the field	History of topic not discussed	Some mention of history of topic	Critically examined history of topic	
	Acquired and enhanced the subject vocabulary	Key vocabulary not discussed	Key vocabulary defined	Discussed and resolved ambiguities in definition	
	Articulated important variables and phenomena relevant to the topic	Accepted literature at face value	Some critiques of literature	Offered new perspective	
Methodology	Identified the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used in the field, and their advantages and disadvantages	Research methods not discussed	Some discussion of research methods used to produce claims	Critiqued research methods	Introduced new methods to address problems with predominant methods
	Related ideas and theories in the field to research methodologies	Research methods not discussed	Some discussion of appropriateness of research methods to warrant claims	Critiqued appropriateness of research methods to warrant claims	
Significance	Rationalized the practical significance of the research problem	Practical significance of research not discussed	Practical significance of research discussed	Critiqued practical significance of research	
	Rationalized the scholarly significance of the research problem	Scholarly significance of research not discussed	Scholarly significance of research discussed	Critiqued scholarly significance of research	
Rhetoric	Was written with a coherent, clear structure that supported the review	Poorly conceptualized, haphazard	Some coherent structure	Well developed, coherent	

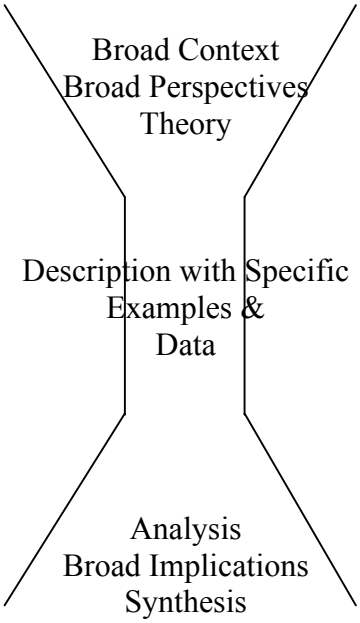
Boote, D.N. and Beile, P (2005). Scholars before researcher: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation, *Educational Researcher, 34* (6). p.3-15.

Approaches to Writing

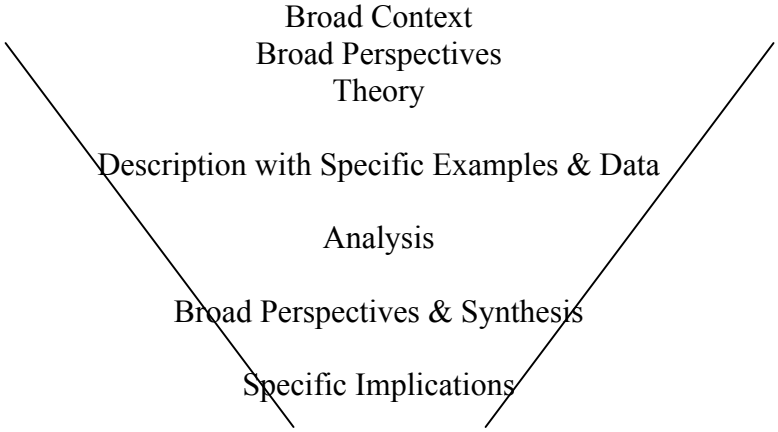
Stephen Petrina

There are a variety of general approaches to writing, including the hourglass, funnel and inverted funnel approaches. Generally, it is important to **introduce** a topic, **describe**, **analyze** and **synthesize**. Depending on the methodology, it may also be important to **deconstruct**. In cultural studies, writing (and research) often involves **tracking**, **mapping** and **framing**. Hence, one might track (describe) trends or discourses, map interrelationships among (analyze) trends or discourses, and frame (deconstruct or synthesize) the trends or discourses.

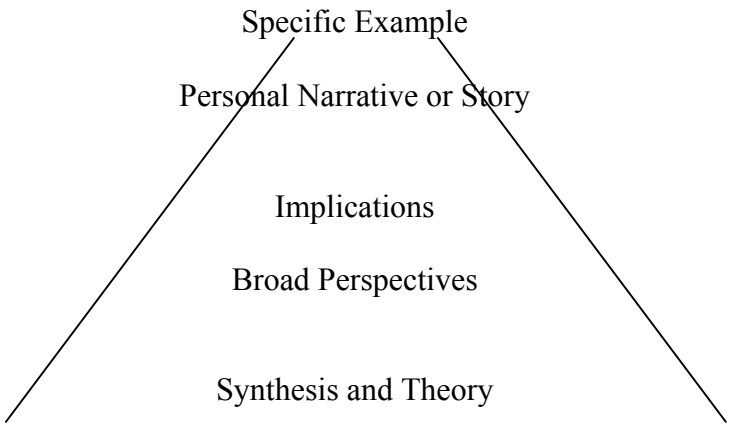
1. Hourglass



2. Funnel



3. Inverted Funnel



Writing Process

1. **Organization**
    a. Chronological Organization
    b. Conceptual Organization
    c. Practical Organization

2. **Description**
    a. What did the author(s) and texts actually say?
    b. What did they not say?

3. **Analysis**
    a. How do the authors and texts compare? Contrast?
    b. What is beneath what they say? What are they *really* saying?

4. **Deconstruction**
    a. What are the binary oppositions in the texts?
    b. How can these oppositions be deconstructed?

5. **Synthesis and Explanation**
    a. How do the authors and texts fit together?
    b. What underwrites what these authors and texts are saying?
    c. Can new directions be created from the totality of authors and texts reviewed?
    d. How does my work or narrative relate to this?

Writing Tips

- **Active Language:** *Always* use active (as opposed to passive) language. This is helpfully presented in Diana Hacker's A Pocket Style Manual. In fact, this is the best guide for writing:

Hacker, D. (2004). *A pocket style manual* (fourth ed.). Boston: St. Martin's Press.

- **Action verbs:** Use active verbs to give voice to authors. APA style suggests that verbs be in past tense for writing reviews of literature, research reports, etc. MLA style advises authors to use the present tense in writing. The key is to be consistent!

  APA Style Manual, 5th ed. suggests the use of past verb tense for reviews of literature. Use past for data and findings. And use present for conclusions, etc to draw the reader into the discussion (see p. 41 and section 2.02).

  APA also states that present perfect tense is suitable for a literature review, although it suggests past tense be used. "MLA disagrees with the concept of citing any written material in past tense on these simple grounds: the cited text exists here and now, regardless of when it was written or when it is read. This is fundamentally what distinguishes publication from oration. It is the essence of written text: technologies for writing give rise to the concept of the "living" word. I, along with others from my foundational discipline (the humanities), disagree with any notion that what exists in manuscript, print or digital artifact should be spoken of in the past" (Teresa Dobson, email correspondence, 2005).

- The following list will help provide variety in giving voice to authors:
  a. acknowledged
  b. according to
  c. agreed with
  d. argued
  e. asserted
  f. cautioned
  g. compared
  h. concluded
  i. contended
  j. continued
  k. concurred with
  l. determined
  m. entertained
  n. identified
  o. illustrated
  p. issued
  q. indicated
  r. inferred
  s. insisted listed
  t. located
  u. maintained
  v. manipulated
  w. obtained
  x. proposed postulated
  y. reasoned
  z. reported
  aa. said
  bb. stated
  cc. stipulated
  dd. suggested
  ee. supported
  ff. wrote

Appendix
Top 10 Tests of Writing

1. Screen Test (Would this research have a role or "play" in other venues (e.g., from education to sociology?)
2. Substance Abuse Test (Is the "so what?" question exaggerated, neglected or mishandled?)
3. Radioactive & Radon Test (Is it ‘hot’? Is the "so what?" question addressed? Is it relevant?)
4. Vision & Hearing Test (Is there an oversight or myopia? Is there evidence of listening?)
5. DNA Test (Is there evidence of disciplinary or interdisciplinary structure?)
6. Fertility Test (Are there creative insights to generate new interpretations?)
7. Litmus & Acid Test (Are there signs of ideas having gone through tests of trials? Is there wisdom?)
8. Vocational Dexterity & Intelligence Test (How were the data and evidence handled?)
9. Lie Detector (Test of Integrity) (Is what was promised or said really what was done?)
10. Standardized Test (Test of Style) (How is it said? Is it (merely) a reliable, standard form? Is there a form or story to what is said?)