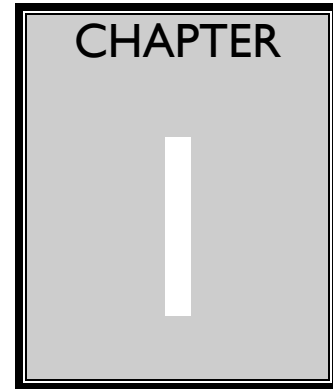


Senior Essay Guide 2017

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Writing a Successful Senior Essay

How does one eat an elephant? In many small pieces!

Welcome to your final year at Yale College and to the Senior Essay Seminar (RLST 491a/492b)!

The senior essay provides you with a unique opportunity to pursue an independent research project of your own interest.

The following pages summarize some important points about how to go about the writing process. Consider this the syllabus for the year—even if it isn't specifically cited, you should be following it.

Good luck in your reading, research, and writing! If you have questions about the senior essay process (or just want to vent), write an email to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Harry “Skip” Stout at harry.stout@yale.edu during the Fall, and Phyllis Granoff in the Spring at phyllis.granoff@yale.edu.

Your Project

By the end of the year you will most certainly know more about your topic than most in the university and academy (including your advisor). You will have spent countless hours in the library or your favorite study spot, solved hard problems only to encounter new ones, fretted over lost quotations and the perfect formulation of sentences. You will have contributed to the rich tapestry of scholarship in the humanities. Most importantly, you will have found your own voice and you will have begun to stake out your place in the academic study of religion and beyond.

Make it interesting for you – but not just for you!

Whether you see the essay as the crowning achievement of your four years of college, as a tentative exploration into an area with which you are deeply concerned, or as the answer to a burning question, the important point to remember is: this is your project.

W hat does that mean?

The Three Thesis Commandments

1. You are the person who will write this thesis.

- It should reflect your academic interests.
- You should offer an answer to a question you have.

2. You are responsible for every part of this thesis.

- It is your job to plan a year-long project.
- It is your job to follow keep the deadlines. Your advisor cannot extend the deadlines set on pages 30 and 31.
- It is your job to use effectively the available resources: your advisor, the library, historiography, other faculty, and relevant course work.

3. This is supposed to be fun.

- Work on something that keeps you motivated.
- Work on something that keeps you creatively restless.
- Work on something that is manageable.

**self-contained
sustainable
stimulating**

Eating the Elephant

We expect from you a well-argued, well-organized, well-documented piece of work. Right now this might feel overwhelming. Perhaps you have never tackled such a big project and you wonder how to organize an essay that is 12,000-15,000 words long (the length established in the Blue Book). Here are some suggestions...

1. Break the essay down into manageable individual tasks.

What are the primary, overarching questions? What are secondary questions? And what are the individual elements of each question? (This is the architecture of your argument.)

What needs to be done first and what can wait for later? In what order should your tasks be done? The deadlines on the calendar are designed to help you think about these questions. (This is the flow management of your project.)

Be an Intellectual Architect and a Project Flow Manager

2. Find resource persons with whom to talk about your project.

Your advisor is a primary resource person. But who else in the department or the university might serve as a conversation partner? Email people in the field. Perhaps a specialist in the area will be intrigued and reply to your queries. Don't be shy! Talk to friends, roommates, and colleagues about your work.

Network

3. Write early and often.

Start jotting down ideas on paper. To refocus yourself at different stages, write one sentence encapsulating what your essay is about.

Start Writing Now

4. Budget your time.

Manage your time: How much time do you need to spend to complete each task? Try to work every day on your project – even if it's for only half an hour. Work backwards from the deadlines to determine how much time you need. Remember to take study breaks and factor in time for final tasks like binding, printing, and delivering the essay. Think about your spring break now.

Don't rely on all-nighters to get your essay done

Many Words about Advisors

Your advisor is an important resource.

However, you must take the initiative in shaping this important academic relationship. This may be intimidating, but it is a valuable learning experience to manage such professional interactions effectively. I think that you'll be pleasantly surprised: our faculty love working with undergraduate students.

YOU need to make sure that you are meeting on a consistent basis. Ask your advisor whether he or she is willing to meet with you once a month (or once every two weeks). Try to schedule follow-up meetings **WHILE YOU ARE STILL IN THE OFFICE**.

Your advisors often have many other responsibilities at the university. Don't wait to send an email to them in the middle of November, following up on a meeting that took place the first week of September and asking for detailed comments to meet a deadline the next day. Give your advisor appropriate time to respond to your requests.

You need to find out **EARLY ON** how much time and flexibility your advisor has for working with you, and whether you feel comfortable working with him or her. Every advisor has his or her own style. Some will want to meet regularly; others less so. Some will ask you to write short papers for them; others will not. What process and method would help you best to achieve your goal? Make sure you know what your expectations are and make sure to communicate them to your advisor.

CONTACT THE DUS IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS. Do this sooner rather than later: to discover in the spring that you are not well is late in the game and can result in unnecessary complications. The DUS is authorized to intervene when appropriate, to help resolve problems in communication and to seek solutions. Sometimes talking about your frustrations with the DUS can help in defining new goals and strategies. Sometimes, it may be best to switch advisors.

Your advisors are, of course, not supposed to write the essay for you; neither are they supposed to serve as your primary library catalogue. They will help you think through your project by asking questions, questioning your answers, and helping you identify the strengths and weaknesses of your argument.

Think of your advisor as a coach or personal trainer

Check your advisors: Do they respond to emails? Do they meet with you? Are you satisfied with their guidance? Ask: How can we make this relationship better?

Speak with the DUS if you feel your relationship with your advisor is not working. matched

Your advisor is a facilitator, not a copy editor!

Grading in the Fall: RLST 491a

The DUS assigns first semester grades based on

1. Timely submission of all required assignments in consultation with your advisor (see the check-list below). You must have completed the assignments on or before the deadlines listed in the senior essay calendar to receive a grade of SAT. Two or more late submissions will lead to a grade of NSAT for RLST 491a. These requirements are not negotiable. Your advisor does not have the authority to override these requirements.
2. Participation in ALL mandatory meetings as outlined on the timetable. If you miss two or more meetings without excuse, the DUS will not grant an SAT.

While the senior essay grade in the spring overrides the fall grade, many employers and graduate schools request to see a copy of your fall transcript.

Extensions can only be granted by the DUS. To be eligible for an extension you need a dean's excuse outlining the reason you cannot meet the deadline.

If you pass RLST 491a satisfactorily, your grade for 491a will be replaced at the end of the academic year by the grade of the essay. However, should you receive a grade of NSAT for RLST 491a then your final grade for the entire course will be lowered by a third of a grade. For example, if you received a grade of NSAT for RLST 491a and a grade of A-minus for your senior essay, the resulting grade for RLST 491a/492b will be a B+.

During the spring term, a grade of NSAT in 491a will be changed only if the grade was recorded in error. There are no make-up assignments.

Students who receive an NSAT in RLST 491a should still complete RLST 492b.

Grading in the Spring: RLST 492b

To begin writing sooner rather than later, you are required to hand in to the DUS and to your advisor ONE CHAPTER of your essay on the due-date in early FEBRUARY as specified in your senior essay calendar.

Failure to submit this chapter on time will lower your final grade for RLST 492b by a third of the grade. For example, if your first chapter was late and your essay received an A-minus, the resulting grade for RLST 491a/492b will be a B+. If you receive a grade of NSAT for RLST 491a *and* your chapter is submitted late, a grade of A-minus on the essay will be converted to a grade of B for the entire course. The final grade for RLST 491a cannot be changed – except in the case of an administrative error.

After you hand in the final version of your essay, the DUS will assign a second reader for your work. The second reader and your advisor together assign a grade for your senior essay. You will also receive a reader's report by both readers. If the two readers are unable to agree on a grade the DUS will assign a third reader. The final grade for the essay will then be determined by the DUS based on the three reader's reports. If the DUS is one of the readers, they will assign another faculty member (usually the chair of the department) to assign the grade for the essay.

The advisor or the DUS (upon receiving the readers' reports) can also nominate your essay for prizes.

Fall Check-list: Receiving credit for RLST 491a

To Earn an SAT in 491a you must:

- ✓ Register
- ✓ Attend ALL mandatory meetings (two excused absences are permissible)
- ✓ Submit a Statement of Intent (signed by you and your advisor)
- ✓ Attend an individual library colloquium
- ✓ Submit a three-page prospectus
- ✓ Submit an annotated bibliography

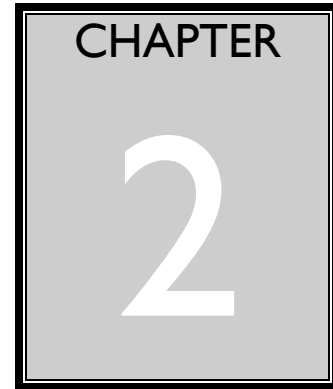
**EVEN IF YOU
RECEIVE A
GRADE OF
NSAT FOR
RLST 491A,
YOU NEED TO
REGISTER FOR
RLST 492B**

ALL REQUIREMENTS MUST BE FULFILLED ON OR BEFORE THE DEADLINES SPECIFIED IN THE SENIOR ESSAY CALENDAR

Don't forget to register for the second semester.

Note

YOUR ADVISOR CANNOT EXCUSE YOU FROM ANY REQUIREMENT OR FROM ANY DEADLINE SPECIFIED IN THE SENIOR ESSAY CALENDAR. ALL EXTENSIONS MUST BE REQUESTED IN ADVANCE FROM THE DUS. ONLY THE DUS HAS THE AUTHORITY TO GRANT EXTENSIONS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT.



The Senior Essay in the Fall

What is an Advisor?

Who can your advisor be?

Your advisor will typically be a member of the Religious Studies Department. Exceptions to this (i.e. advisors from other departments or one of the professional schools) must be approved in advance by the DUS. You cannot write an essay without an advisor, and you are responsible for finding an advisor by the deadline outlined in the Senior Essay Time-Table.

The expert or your favorite teacher?

Ideally, you will ask a faculty member whom you already know to be your advisor—someone with whom you have already taken classes, or someone whose approach to scholarship captures your academic interest.

If you are not acquainted with an obvious candidate to serve as your advisor, you can select a faculty member according to two criteria:

1. He or she is the expert in your topic. Such an advisor would be deeply knowledgeable about the material supporting your research, and you would hope to profit from your advisor's specific expertise.
2. He or she is somewhat familiar with the larger field that provides a context for your research. In this case, you would hope to profit from your advisor's ability to guide you in breaking down the complex task of research into a streamlined and productive process.

In any event **MAKE SURE YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE MEETING WITH AND TALKING TO YOUR ADVISOR.**

What is the first step?

Meet with your advisor **RIGHT AWAY**. Remember that you need to be proactive in finding a topic and in finding the right person to work with. To prepare for this meeting you should bring an idea about the topic you want to explore (**WRITE IT DOWN** beforehand).

What is the Statement of Intent?

The Statement of Intent
is a thoughtful (*albeit preliminary*)
answer to three questions:

- 1. What do you want to research?**
- 2. Why is the effort worthwhile?**
- 3. How do you want to go about it?**

The Statement of Intent is one page in length (double-spaced, size 12 font) and needs to be signed by both you and the advisor.

Be sure to choose a topic that interests you. In order to decide if this is a topic you should address, see if you can develop strong questions about it. Just because something interests you does not mean that it is a good topic. What makes a topic a good thesis project is if it can propel your inquiry.

As you are considering a possible topic, try to ask three questions you want to know about it. Then determine three types of primary sources to which you might go to answer those questions. If you cannot do these things, rethink the topic, but be sure that you focus on something absolutely compelling to you.

Briefly search through relevant secondary literature to determine what scholarship exists (and what does not exist) on your topic. At this early stage, you want to be sure that there is enough secondary literature to guide you to new questions and sources, and you want to be sure that someone has not published an important book that answers all of the questions you want to ask of a topic. Do not worry if, at first glance, there seem to be no free topics left. A good topic springs from a unique combination of your interests, education, experiences, and temperament.

If you are having trouble identifying a topic that you find compelling, try to identify a collection of primary sources that interests you and develop questions based on that. These questions can then lead you to relevant secondary literature.

**Tips on
finding a
topic**

Department of Religious Studies / Yale University

STATEMENT OF INTENT
STUDENT PORTION

name / college / _____

e-mail / class of / _____

telephone number / _____
*where your advisor or the DUS
can reach you in urgent situations:*

ATTACH a typewritten one-page description of the proposed project (double-spaced, size 12 font). State your research questions and possible hypotheses. Indicate what types of sources you might use.

Write a **one-sentence** description of your project below.

Courses taken relevant to topic:

Languages that are relevant to the project / _____

Will this essay also be submitted to a program other than Religious Studies?

Yes ___ No ___ What is the other program and advisor's name?

student SIGNATURE / _____

STATEMENT OF INTENT

ADVISOR PORTION

To be filled out by advisor

STUDENT name / _____

Short Description of how often you wish to meet with your student:

- bi-weekly meetings
- monthly meetings
- meetings only by request of the student
- other format (*please describe in the space below*)

Short description of what you expect from your student. Specify how you want to receive drafts, what bibliographic format you want, and anything involving the standard of relation you want to maintain. Be clear about your availability and your expectations. Clarity at the beginning of the relationship will improve interactions during the year.

I confirm that my student has provided me with a copy of the senior essay calendar of 2015–2016.

advisor's SIGNATURE / _____

What is Library Research?

Kate Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th edition (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Now that you have a general idea about the topic of your essay, you need to find resources. Ask yourself these questions to prepare yourself for the meeting you will have with the religious studies librarian

- What sources and materials do you *already* have? Which books have been helpful in formulating your topic? Make a list of the things you have and bring that list with you to the meeting—this will show the librarian how you’ve begun to think of the topic.
- What type of resources do you think you most need (books, anthropological data, cultural artifacts, primary sources, secondary sources, interviews, web-sites, videos)? Make a “shopping list” and bring it with you to the meeting.
- Go over the bibliographies of the newest books, articles, etc., that address your topic. Look for interesting authors and works. Try to find out more about their publications.

Use the fall semester to explore as much material as possible. Read and read and read. Every scholar will tell you that enormous reading and reviewing of the scholarship of others is essential the development of an informed perspective and a responsible argumentative voice.

Learning how to then cite and quote the material you’ve read is not only proper scholarly ethics, but is also a key way you convey what you’ve read and how you’ve interpreted what you’ve seen.

A Manual for Writers for Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations by Kate Turabian, available at the Yale Bookstore, provides the **only styles acceptable** for the senior essay in Religious Studies. (Please note that MLA or APA in-text documentation styles are not acceptable.)

**Department of Religious Studies
Yale University**

Library Research Colloquium
for the Senior Essay in Religious Studies

STUDENT name / _____

I attended a library colloquium on this date: _____

LIBRARIAN signature / _____

At our meeting, we discussed the following topics:

**This sheet must be handed to the DUS by the student
on or before the date specified in the Senior Essay Calendar.**

What is the Prospectus?

By now you should have distilled your thoughts and questions about your topic into a thesis statement. Your... prospectus should open with a short description of the topic and present your thesis statement. Your thesis statement is the argument you hope to make based on your source materials. It is, in effect, the 'message' you want to leave with your readers, the conclusion that will indicate the significance of what you have written. At this point in your work your thesis may be tentative, and it may change as you continue your research. That is fine. But providing at least a provisional thesis statement is an important part of the process of moving forward on your essay.

The three-page prospectus should offer a brief background on the topic and explain how your research will make a unique contribution to it. This part will quite likely become the introduction to your senior essay. Then discuss the major secondary literature that exists on the topic and describe the primary sources you will use to contribute an original addition to that literature. Later, this can become the core of your bibliographical essay.

Yale University History Department Senior Essay Handbook, p. 16

**Keep in mind that your prospectus revolves around your thesis-statement.
This is the central argument you are making.**

**ON THE TOP OF THE 4-PAGE PROSPECTUS,
WRITE A ONE SENTENCE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR TOPIC.**

Tips for Writing Your Thesis Statement

From the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_thesis.html

1. Determine what kind of paper you are writing:
 - An **analytical** paper breaks down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluates the issue or idea, and presents this breakdown and evaluation to the audience.
 - An **expository** (explanatory) paper explains something to the audience.
 - An **argumentative** paper makes a claim about a topic and justifies this claim with specific evidence. The claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. The goal of the argumentative paper is to convince the audience that the claim is true based on the evidence provided.
2. Your thesis statement should be *specific*—it should cover only what you will discuss in your paper and should be supported with specific evidence.
3. The thesis statement usually appears at the end of the first paragraph of a paper.
4. Your topic may change as you write, so you may need to revise your thesis statement to reflect exactly what you have discussed in the paper.

What is an Annotated Bibliography?

This assignment gives you a solid research basis for your project. By now you should know what major books and articles are essential for your work. There are two steps to producing an annotated bibliography.

1. Collect all the secondary sources on a single list. This is the bibliography part. Make sure to follow the conventions outlined in Kate Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
2. Make notes for each entry. You should give a short summary of the argument of the work and write one sentence or two assessing its usefulness for you. This is the annotation part.

The annotated bibliography should be approximately five SINGLE-SPACED pages long.

**ON THE TOP OF THIS ASSIGNMENT
WRITE A ONE SENTENCE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR TOPIC.**

For more information, see the handout
on annotated bibliographies
from Purdue University's writing center.
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Annotated Bibliographies

From the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_annotatedbib.html

Definition

A bibliography is a list of sources (books, journals, websites, periodicals, etc.) one has used for researching a topic. A bibliography usually just includes the bibliographic information (i.e., the author, title, publisher, etc.).

An annotation is a summary and/or evaluation. Therefore, an annotated bibliography includes a summary and/or evaluation of each of the sources. Depending on your project or the assignment, your annotations may do one or more of the following:

Summary

Some annotations merely summarize the source. What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say? The length of your annotations will determine how detailed your summary is.

For more help, see our handout on paraphrasing sources at
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/02/>

Assessment

After summarizing a source, it may be helpful to evaluate it. Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is it this source biased or objective? What is the goal of this source?

For more help, see our handouts on evaluating resources at
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/553/03/>

Reflection

Once you've summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask how it fits into your research. Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic?

Your annotated bibliography may include some of these, all of these, or even others. So it's important, if you're doing this for a class, to get specific guidelines from your instructor.

What is the Outline or 10-page draft?

At the end of the first semester you should be able to give an overview of your project – and in so doing you will learn where your work is strong and what you have overlooked.

You can choose between

1. A detailed **outline** of the essay
- or**
2. A ten-page **draft**

The **outline** is a detailed and annotated table of contents (see more below). It is important to think of the outline as a flowchart for your argument. What do you need to establish first? What sub-points do you need to make? Etc.

If you chose this option you need

- ✓ To give a paragraph-long summary of what you will argue or work on in each section.
- ✓ To set deadlines for each section. When will you finish the second chapter? When will you finish the third? etc. (This will give you a very good sense of how to allocate time in the spring semester.)

The **ten-page draft** is like the introduction to your senior essay. If you choose this option, you will have ten pages to answer three questions:

- (1) What is your topic?
- (2) Why is it important?
- (3) How do you plan to go about investigating and examining this topic?

Be sure to incorporate an assessment of the progress you have made. For example, you need to tell the reader why *your* treatment of the topic is important. Thus, you need to talk about the other works in the field (using your bibliography).

Some people lay out a linear progression of the argument beforehand to structure their work; others prefer to start writing and the argument will take shape in process. Choose the method that helps you best **LOOK AHEAD** and structure the final stretch of writing the entire senior essay.

**ON THE TOP OF THIS ASSIGNMENT
WRITE A 1- SENTENCE PRECIS OF YOUR TOPIC.**

Four Main Components for Effective Outlines

Adapted from the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/544/01/>

You should follow these four suggestions to create an effective outline. When creating a topic outline, follow these two rules for capitalization. For first-level heads, present the information using all upper-case letters, and for secondary and tertiary items, use upper and lower-case letters. The examples are taken from the Sample Outline handout.

I. **Parallelism** / How do I accomplish this?

Each heading and subheading should preserve parallel structure. If the first heading is a verb, the second heading should be a verb. *Example:*

- I. CHOOSE DESIRED COLLEGES
- II. PREPARE APPLICATION

(“Choose” and “Prepare” are both verbs. The present tense of the verb is usually the preferred form for an outline.)

2. **Coordination** / How do I accomplish this?

All the information contained in Heading 1 should have the same significance as the information contained in Heading 2. The same goes for the subheadings (which should be less significant than the headings). *Example:*

- I. VISIT AND EVALUATE COLLEGE CAMPUSES
- II. VISIT AND EVALUATE COLLEGE WEBSITES
 - A. Note important statistics
 - B. Look for interesting classes

(Campus and websites visits are equally significant. They are part of the main tasks you would need to do. Finding statistics and classes on college websites is part of the process involved in carrying out the main heading topics.)

3. **Subordination** / How do I accomplish this?

The information in the headings should be more general, while the information in the subheadings should be more specific. *Example:*

- I. DESCRIBE AN INFLUENTIAL PERSON IN YOUR LIFE
 - A. Favorite high school teacher
 - B. Grandparent

(A favorite teacher and grandparent are specific examples from the generalized category of influential people in your life.)

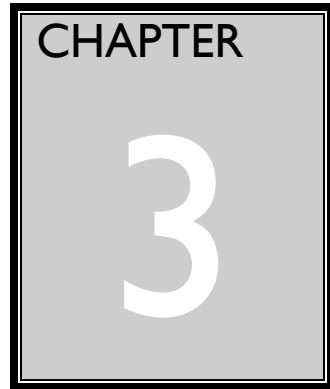
4. **Division** / How do I accomplish this?

Each heading should be divided into 2 or more parts. *Example:*

- I. COMPILE RÉSUMÉ
 - A. List relevant coursework
 - B. List work experience
 - C. List volunteer experience

(The heading “Compile Résumé” is divided into 3 parts.)

Technically, there is no limit to the number of subdivisions for your headings; however, if you seem to have a lot, it may be useful to see if some of the parts can be combined.



The Senior Essay in the Spring: Mile by Mile

It's a Marathon, not a 100 Meter Dash...

With the arrival of the spring semester, you are entering the most exciting phase of the senior essay process: you are actually beginning to see your essay take shape! At the same time, you are also entering the most daunting phase: now it is up to *you* (and no one else) to make it happen.

Many students react to this combination of high hopes and time pressure with procrastination, writers block, and/or... (insert any other academic dysfunction).

Here you need to be alerted to potential pitfalls. Students in the recent past who have received disappointing grades for their essay (e.g. a C or even a D) are the ones who have struggled in managing their time and the pressures related to writing a long essay.

You need to pause at the beginning of the spring term to remind yourself that you are in for a marathon – and to make choices accordingly. And a lot of the most important choices have to do with time management.

Some Words on Time Management

Everyone knows the finish line in this marathon – the due date for the first draft is shortly after spring break – but do you know how many actual workdays you have to finish your project?

How many days can you really work on your senior essay?

Let's assume that you are reading this manual at home over break and you think: "Oh, I have three months, from January to March. That's great! I have a full ninety days to work on this essay."

What will you do over spring break?

Well, think twice! How realistic is it to assume that you will spend every day (from Sunday to Saturday) working on your senior essay? What about other academic and work responsibilities, parties, unproductive "slumps," and days traveling to visit your ailing dog at home? So the first step is to make a *realistic assessment* of your time. How many working days can you dedicate to essay work, and how many hours per day can you work on your essay? Again, be realistic. You will not work 10 hours per day on your essay. If you do, your work won't be of high quality.

Even if you do well completing smaller papers in bursts of high productivity during "all-nighters," this strategy will not work for a big project such as the senior essay. By the beginning of the spring semester, you will have a structure for your essay. You have written your outline and your overview of the essay.

Now you need to sit down and decide how many days to allocate to each chapter of your essay. This strategy gives you a clear picture of how to proceed in your work.

Beginning to Write: A First Chapter

The most difficult part is . . . beginning to write. Start jotting ideas on paper, create a "senior essay blog," or do whatever it takes to begin writing. Most importantly, dedicate at least 15 minutes every day to writing sentences and paragraphs for your senior essay. Keeping a consistent pace is essential.

To facilitate this process, you are asked to hand in a first chapter (it does not need to be *the* first chapter) of your essay by the deadline specified in the calendar. Your advisor may not exempt you from this requirement.

Citation Anxiety?

As the end draws near, many students have sudden anxiety attacks about how to cite properly. Your citation methods are important, since your readers will make an effort to track down quotations and make sure that you used sources in a responsible manner. Methods of citation also reflect on the issue of authorial voice. Whose voice is actually speaking in your essay? Are you presenting your own ideas or are you stitching together generalized observations from other sources?

A common problem is determining how many references you will need to cite. Will you need to document every work that ever influenced you? To help allay your concerns on this question, here are some helpful rules about citation:

The **first rule** is that if you cite verbatim you definitely need a reference (see case A).

A) Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative states that "the universal maxim blah blah"¹

¹ Kant, *Groundworks*, 5.

The **second rule** is that if you cite summarily, then you also need a reference.

B) While Kant uses different formulations for the categorical imperative in the *Groundworks*, the general thrust of the argument is clear: the autonomous self is beholden to its function as universal lawgiver.²

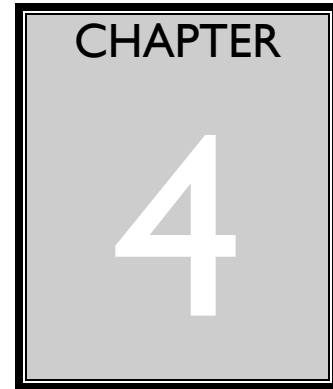
² For examples of these different formulations, see Kant, *Groundworks*, 14, 17, 32; for the general thrust of Kant's argument, see *Groundworks*, 1–5.

The **third and final rule** is that if something has influenced your thinking in the widest sense or if you are making a generalized claim, then there is no need to cite.

C) Kant's categorical imperative has remained very influential in contemporary ethics.

D) In the development of my thought, I am influenced by a Kantian framework.

(No citation needed in either case.) But, then again, why would you want to make such generalized (and potentially empty) claims?



Problems and Solutions

A Horrible Story about Data Loss

A former DUS of Religious Studies received this frantic email just three days before the final due date of the senior essay:

As it turns out, the unthinkable happened to me (thought I was immune, and immortal, I suppose...). My computer completely died this evening. I am pretty sure that I have backed up my senior essay within the last 48 hours, but it may be that this crash will set me back a good pace. I am hoping that I will be able to cover lost ground, but I'm writing to inquire about the possibility of a one-day extension on the essay.

Here is how that DUS replied to the student's request for an extension:

If your computer crashes and you don't have an UP-TO-DATE back-up on another medium (web-storage, cloud, CD, etc.), you failed to take the most simple safety precautions. (If you were "in the real world," and had an important presentation to give, do you think your boss would take "I didn't back it up" as a valid excuse?)

What do we learn from this anecdote? **BACK UP, BACK UP OFTEN, and BACK UP to MULTIPLE LOCATIONS!** (And, no, a floppy disk is not enough. Floppies go bad very easily). While we are at it, use the "Ctrl-S" shortcut regularly to save your work while you are writing. (Have you ever lost a perfect, crisply-written paragraph at 4 AM because your cat jumped onto the keyboard?).

By the way, the story above ended well. The poor student did recover her data. The computer "miraculously" booted up again. But if that begins to set your mind at rest, then please contemplate another email I received...

"A gray messenger bag, containing a laptop with the only copy of my senior essay, was lost on Tuesday during Spring Fling. . ."

BACK UP, BACK UP OFTEN, and BACK UP to MULTIPLE LOCATIONS!

Strategies for Getting Over Writer's Block

From the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/567/02/>

For more advice on getting started writing, see the Purdue OWL handout
“Symptoms and Cures for Writer’s Block”
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/567/1/>

Begin in the Middle / Start writing at whatever point you like. If you want to begin in the middle, fine. Leave the introduction or first section until later. The reader will never know that you wrote the paper “backwards.” Besides, some writers routinely save the introduction until later when they have a clearer idea of what the main idea will be.

Talk the Paper / Talking feels less artificial than writing to some people. Talk about what you want to write someone—your teacher, a friend, a roommate, or a tutor. Just pick someone who’s willing to give you fifteen to thirty minutes to talk about the topic and whose main aim is to help you start writing. Have the person take notes while you talk or tape your conversation. Talking will be helpful because you’ll probably be more natural and spontaneous in speech than in writing. Your listener can ask questions and guide you as you speak, and you’ll be more likely to relax and say something unpredictable than if that you were sitting and forcing yourself to write.

Tape the Paper / Talk into a recorder, imagining your audience sitting in front of you. Then, transcribe the recorded material. You’ll at least have some ideas written down to begin your work.

Change the Audience / Pretend that you’re writing to a child, to a person who sharply disagrees with you, or to someone who’s new to the subject—all of whom need you to explain your paper’s topic slowly and clearly, without presuming any insider vocabulary or historiography. Changing the audience can clarify your purpose and can also make you feel more comfortable and help you write more easily.

Play a Role / Pretend you are someone else writing the paper. For instance, if you have been asked to write about sexist advertising, assume you are the president of the National Organization of Women. Or, pretend you are the president of a major oil company asked to defend the high price of oil. Consider being someone in another time period, or someone with a wildly different perspective from your own. Pulling yourself out of your usual perspective can help you see things that are otherwise invisible or difficult to articulate, and your writing will be stronger for it.

Many of these ideas are from Peter Elbow’s *Writing with Power*[especially Ch. 8; 59–77] and Mack Skjei’s *Overcoming Writing Blocks*.

Plagiarism

Be organized and stay organized in your research. When taking notes, make clear distinctions between your own thoughts about the article or issue, the thoughts of the author you are reading, and the thoughts of the person your author is talking about.

The Yale College Rules and Regulations handbook has some helpful things to say about the issue of plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own. Thus most forms of cheating on examinations are plagiarism; but in ordinary academic parlance the word applies to papers rather than to examinations. Whereas all students know pretty well what they may or may not do on examinations, many are less sure concerning papers, and so it is conceivable that an honest student might plagiarize out of mere ignorance. It is therefore up to you to learn the standard practices of documentation...Above all you should realize that failure to acknowledge specific indebtedness to others is not simply a writing error but a form of theft - possibly unpremeditated, but not probably, and culpable in any case, since it is your responsibility to know and to indicate what is yours and what is not yours. The absence of a clear intent to deceive may mitigate an offense, but is certainly not likely to absolve it altogether. Read sources carefully and thoroughly. Yale College distributes it as a supplement to the Undergraduate Regulations, and you are as responsible for knowledge of its contents as you are for knowledge of the provisions of the Undergraduate Regulations.

Some further points:

1. Take clear notes in which you keep your own thoughts distinct from those of others. You do not want to submit inadvertently the words or ideas of others as your own.
2. Remember that you should acknowledge unpublished as well as published sources. This includes the work of other students and ideas that you may have derived from lectures and conversations.
3. An essay must stand on its own and not as a form of conversation with the instructor. In preparing a paper, it will help you to assume a larger audience than your instructor. Imagine everyone in your class, for example, reading your paper for this will give you a surer sense of what to document and what to take as common knowledge.
4. Mark and identify all quotations, give the source of translations, regularly acknowledge specific ideas, and give the source of facts not commonly known. If you are in doubt as to what may be "commonly known," that is a signal that you should document it, even at the risk of appearing overcautious or simplistic.

"Submission of an entire paper prepared by someone else is an especially egregious form of plagiarism, and is grounds for the imposition of a particularly serious penalty, even for expulsion from the University."

<http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/cheating-plagiarism-and-documentation>

Non-Sexist Language

From the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/05/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/6/>

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) suggests the following guidelines:

Generic Use / Although MAN in its original sense carried the dual meaning of adult human and adult male, its meaning has come to be so closely identified with adult male that the generic use of MAN and other words with masculine markers should be avoided.

examples

mankind
man's achievements
man-made
the common man
man the stockroom
nine man-hours

alternatives

humanity, people, human beings
human achievements
synthetic, manufactured, machine-made
the average person, ordinary people
staff the stockroom
nine staff-hours

Occupations / Avoid the use of MAN in occupational terms when persons holding the job could be either male or female.

examples

chairman

businessman

fireman

mailman

steward and stewardess

policeman and policewoman

Congressman

alternatives

coordinator (of a committee or department), moderator (of a meeting), presiding officer, head, chair

business executive

firefighter

mail carrier

flight attendant

police officer

congressional representative

Appropriate Pronoun Usage / Because English has no generic singular--or common-sex--pronoun, we have used HE, HIS, and HIM in such expressions as "the student needs HIS pencil." When we constantly personify "the judge," "the critic," "the executive," "the author," and so forth, as male by using the pronoun HE, we are subtly conditioning ourselves against the idea of a female judge, critic, executive, or author. There are several alternative approaches for ending the exclusion of women that results from the pervasive use of masculine pronouns.

a. Recast into the plural.

examples

Give each student his paper as soon as he is finished.

alternatives

Give students their papers as soon as they are finished.

b. Rerword to eliminate gender problems.

examples

The average student is worried about his grade.

alternatives

The average student is worried about grades.

c. Replace the masculine pronoun with ONE, YOU, or (sparingly) HE OR SHE, as appropriate.

examples

If the student was satisfied with his performance on the pretest, he took the post-test.

alternatives

A student who was satisfied with her or his performance on the pretest took the post-test.

d. Alternate male and female examples and expressions. (Be careful not to confuse the reader.)

examples

Let each student participate. Has he had a chance to talk? Could he feel left out?

alternatives

Let each student participate. Has she had a chance to talk? Could he feel left out?

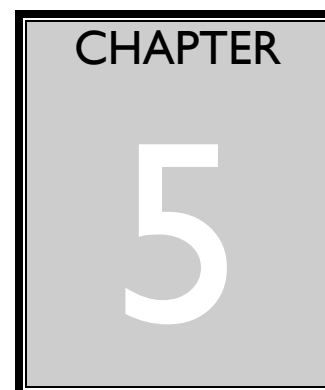
Indefinite Pronouns / Using the masculine pronouns to refer to an indefinite pronoun (everybody, everyone, anybody, and anyone) also has the effect of excluding women. In all but strictly formal uses, plural pronouns have become acceptable substitutes for the masculine singular.

examples

Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring his money tomorrow.

alternatives

Anyone who wants to go to the game should bring their money tomorrow.



Senior Essay Calendar

FALL 2016

Please note that your advisor may set additional deadline for your progress.

August 24 to August 30	Register for RLST 491a, The Senior Essay
Thursday September 15	Mandatory Meeting #1 (9:25 - 11:15)
September 5-19	Choose and meet with your designated advisor by September 19. Be sure to fill-out a Statement of Intent (page 11-12 of this manual) The advisor has a page to complete it, too.
Thursday September 22	Mandatory Meeting #2 (9:25 - 11:15) Statement of Intent DUE to the DUS.
September 22– October 6	Attend one mandatory Library Research Colloquium, run by Suzanne Estelle-Holmer, the Yale Librarian for Religious Studies. Schedule an individual research meeting with Ms. Estelle-Holmer. Complete the Library Research Colloquium Form (page 14).
Thursday October 6	Mandatory Meeting #3 (9:25 - 11:15) Library Research Colloquium Form DUE to the DUS.
Thursday October 13	Prospectus DUE to your advisor and DUS. Drop this off <i>before</i> you leave for the autumn break.
Thursday October 27	Mandatory Meeting #4 (9:25 - 11:15)
Thursday November 10	Annotated Bibliography DUE to your advisor and DUS.
Thursday November 17	Mandatory Meeting #5 (9:25 - 11:15)
Thursday December 1	10-page Draft or Detailed Outline DUE to your advisor and DUS.

SPRING 2017

January 11–17 Register for RLST 492b.

Tuesday,
January 31–
Tuesday,
March 7 We will meet weekly and students will give presentations on their senior essay topics to the DUS and their classmates during the Senior Essay meeting time (**Tuesdays 1:30 - 3:20**). Describe your project, identify the methods employed in your research to-date, and summarize your preliminary results and conclusions.

Tuesday
February 14 One Chapter of Essay **DUE** to your advisor and DUS.

Tuesday
March 28 First Draft of Essay **DUE** to your advisor and DUS.

Monday
April 17 **FINAL DEADLINE** for submission of completed **SENIOR ESSAY**. Three copies must be submitted by 5pm on this date: one to the advisor, one to the second reader, one to the DUS. (It is your responsibility to print and distribute the three copies of the essay to each of these readers.)

Department of Religious Studies
Senior Essay / Report to the Student

STUDENT / _____

ESSAY TITLE / _____

1. Evaluate the use of evidence in the essay. Consider primary and secondary sources.

2. Evaluate the formal quality of the essay, including its organization, style, and grammar. This would be an appropriate spot to mention any questions you had about syntax, citations, or rhetorical choices.

3. Evaluate the substance of the essay. Is the proposed subject adequately treated? Is the interpretation reasonable?

FINAL GRADE / _____

SIGNATURE OF ADVISER / _____

SIGNATURE OF READER / _____