

Social Research Dissertation Workshop

Dr Chao-Yo Cheng

Plan for today

- ▶ About Chao-yo
- ▶ Social research MSc/MRes dissertation: An overview
 - Timeline and key dates
 - Relevant Moodle pages
 - Ethnics review at Birkbeck
- ▶ How to navigate through the dissertation
 - Work with yourself
 - Work with your supervisor(s)
 - Work with your peers
- ▶ Question time!

About Chao-yo

- ▶ A **political scientist**.
- ▶ Educational background.
 - Undergraduate studies in Taiwan, with some time in Hong Kong and Ireland.
 - Postgraduate studies (MA and PhD) in the United States.
- ▶ Teaching and professional experiences.
 - Graduate teaching fellow at UCLA.
 - Shuimu postdoctoral fellow at Tsinghua (Beijing, China).
 - Fellow in international development and methodology at LSE.

About Chao-yo

- ▶ A wide range of topics in the **political economy of development and institutions**. For example:
 - Energy access and poverty in rural India;
 - Poverty alleviation and state building in peripheral China;
 - Regime change and ecological conservation in China and Southeast Asia;
 - Criminal politicians and their impact on local public goods provision in rural India.
- ▶ **Empirical pluralism**: Qualitative, quantitative, and computational.
 - Qualitative: Archival research, elite interviews, comparative case studies and process tracing.
 - Quantitative: Regression and causal inference.
 - Computational: Social network analysis and machine learning.

Dissertation timeline and key dates

- ▶ Step 1 (mid-January): Submit a dissertation plan/proposal by **17 January 2022**.
- ▶ Step 2 (February to early March): **Supervisor allocation**; the Department sends a confirmation email about your dissertation supervisor.
- ▶ Step 3 (March to June/early July): **Supervision in progress**; if necessary, submit **ethics review**.
- ▶ Step 4 (July to August/early September): **Supervision (usually) halts after 4 July 2022**; complete your dissertation.
- ▶ Step 5 (mid-September): Submit the dissertation by **15 September 2022**.
- ▶ Contingency plan: Deferring your dissertation.

Dissertation-related Moodle pages (2021_22)

- ▶ "Social Research Dissertation"
 - **General information:** Announcements, Q&A, and link to office hours appointments (Birkbeck login required)
 - **Sample dissertations**
 - **Dissertation submissions** (open soon)
- ▶ "Politics Postgraduate: General and Programme Guidance"
 - **Assessment & Feedback:** All guidance documents for the MSc/MRes dissertations.
- ▶ "Department of Politics"
 - **Autumn/Spring Workshop Week:** Review workshop materials.

Dissertation-related Moodle pages (2021_22)

SOCIAL RESEARCH DISSERTATION (2021_22)

Dashboard > My courses > Social Research Dissertation (2021_22)

Overall progress % 0

GENERAL INFORMATION

PROGRAMME INDUCTION (1 OCT 2021)

SAMPLE DISSERTATIONS

DISSERTATION PROPOSALS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Announcements

Book a 1:1 meeting with Chao-yo

Social Research dissertations follow the guidelines for Politics dissertations. These guidelines along with relevant documents can be viewed and downloaded on the Politics Postgraduate Moodle page -- see [here](#).

Social Research Dissertation Q&A

Dissertation-related Moodle pages (2021_22)

SOCIAL RESEARCH DISSERTATION (2021_22)

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GENERAL INFORMATION


PROGRAMME INDUCTION (1 OCT 2021)


SAMPLE DISSERTATIONS


DISSERTATION PROPOSALS


SAMPLE DISSERTATIONS


This is a collection of previous years' dissertations, to give you a sense of the breadth of topics and what is involved.

 An intersectional approach to understanding political participation and political engagement in Great Britain (Distinction grade)

 Ethical Consumer Decisions: A qualitative study of how consumers incorporate ethical considerations into purchase decisions (Distinction grade)

 Law, justice and 'rightlessness' – migrants' view of the UK legal system (Pass grade)

 Was there a shift in media narrative concerning out of work benefits, the imagined recipients and coverage of benefit fraud during the period after 'Jobseekers Allowance' was introduced? (Distinction grade)



Birkbeck
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Research ethics (with respect to human subjects)

- ▶ *Risks and benefits.* All risks (e.g., time costs, emotional responses, and physical damage) should be mitigated as much as possible.
- ▶ *Informed consent:* Participants must actively consent and be informed of the purpose of the research, the expected duration, what is involved, and their right to decline or withdraw.
- ▶ *Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity:* The researcher will take steps to ensure the anonymity of the subjects whenever possible.
- ▶ *Vulnerable groups:* Special care must be taken with vulnerable groups to ensure ethical treatment (e.g., children, prisoners, people with mental health issues).

Research ethics (with respect to data)



Berkeley Initiative for
Transparency in the Social Sciences

[Home](#)[About](#)[Evidence](#)[Education](#)[Ecosystem](#)[Resources](#)[MetaArxiv](#)

10th BITSS Annual Meeting

Feb. 10-11, *online*

Keynote: 2021 Nobel Laureate David Card

A conversation about credibility, transparency, and replicability in empirical research



Click to register to receive a Zoom link.

<https://www.bitss.org/>

Ethics review at Birkbeck

- ▶ **All research involving human participants must have ethical approval.**
- ▶ Students' projects need to be reviewed by the supervisor to decide if they involve "routine" or "non-routine" research, reviewed by the **Department** and **SSHP**, respectively.
- ▶ "Non-routine" research typically involves:
 - Participants' physical or mental well-being is put at risk;
 - Vulnerable populations are involved;
 - Permission of a gatekeeper is required to access participants;
 - Use of deception or lack of informed consent;
 - Predictable media interest or sensitivity;
 - Conflicts of interest.
- ▶ During the pandemic, no face-to-face research (this may change as we open up).

Ethics review at Birkbeck

Birkbeck, University of London > Schools > School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy > **Research Ethics**

RESEARCH ETHICS

All research that is carried out by Birkbeck staff and students that involves intervention or interaction with human participants, or the collection and/or study of data derived from living human participants, requires ethical approval. This is so no matter where the investigations are carried out.

Members of the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy are strongly advised to familiarise themselves with and observe the code of conduct and ethical principles laid down by their relevant professional body, e.g. [British Sociological Association](#), [Social Research Association](#), and [British Psychological Society](#).

PROPOSAL PROCEDURE	▼
POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF A PROPOSAL	▼
ROLE OF THE SSHP ETHICS COMMITTEE	▼
MEMBERSHIP OF THE SSHP ETHICS COMMITTEE	▼
STATEMENT REGARDING ANTIQUITIES	▼
GUIDANCE AND TRAINING MATERIALS	▼

<https://www.bbk.ac.uk/schools/social-sciences-history-philosophy/research-ethics>



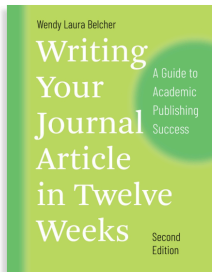
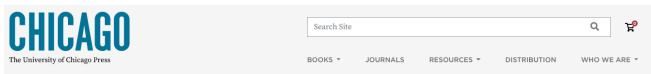
Work with yourself: Self-care is the key

- ▶ Emotional self-care checklist:
 - Get good sleep.
 - Nourish and move your body.
 - Connect with others.
 - Do something fun.
 - Give yourself credit.
 - Moderation between life and work.

Work with yourself: Self-care is the key

- ▶ Emotional self-care checklist:
 - Get good sleep.
 - Nourish and move your body.
 - Connect with others.
 - Do something fun.
 - Give yourself credit.
 - Moderation between life and work.
- ▶ Visit <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/counselling-service> for more information.

“Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks”



Save Cover Preview

BUY THIS BOOK

Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks, Second Edition

A Guide to Academic Publishing Success

Second Edition

Wendy Laura Belcher

“Wow. No one ever told me this!” Wendy Laura Belcher has heard this countless times throughout her years of teaching and advising academics on how to write journal articles. Scholars know they must publish, but few have been told how to do so. So Belcher made it her mission to demystify the writing process. The result was *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*, which takes this overwhelming task and breaks it into small, manageable steps. For the past decade, this guide has been the go-to source for those creating articles for peer-reviewed journals. It has enabled thousands to

overcome their anxieties and produce the publications that are essential to

<https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/writing-your-journal-article-in-twelve/>

Work with your supervisor(s)

► General information

- You should have received an official (from Rachel) and/or an informal (from me) notification of your dissertation supervisor.
- You should contact your supervisor immediately to discuss your next steps, including whether you need to submit the ethics review.
- Supervisor may not be available during the summer term.

► How to work with your supervisor(s): Every supervisor is different.

- Be open-minded: Have a conversation with your supervisors to get a sense of the expectations and the supervision process.
- Be respectable and constructive when you communicate with your supervisor(s).
- Be prepared and clear during the meeting.

► Read the Department's "**Guidelines for MSc and MRes Dissertations**" to learn more about the role of your supervisors.

Work with your peers: Writing groups

- ▶ Why writing groups?
 - Accountability and regular progress checks.
 - Social support and socialization.
- ▶ Purpose, size, frequency, field (or method), moderation (or coordination), format (online or in-person), and so on so forth – details matter.
- ▶ Different types of writing groups; hybrid is also possible after careful planning.
 - Accountability groups.
 - Peer review groups.
 - "Write-along" groups.
- ▶ For more discussion, watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuy33l4jgDg>.

Additional resources: Birkbeck Study Skills Hub

Birkbeck, University of London > Student services > **Study skills**

STUDY SKILLS

We offer online and face-to-face advice, guidance and support to help all Birkbeck students develop the study skills they need for academic success at university. This includes:

- Study skills resources, including interactive guides, videos and recordings of past workshops in the [Study Skills Moodle module](#).
- Live [study skills workshops](#) which are offered multiple times a week during term time. There are many different topics, they are always free and you can attend as many as you wish.
- Specialist, subject-based help via our [Learning Development Tutors and resources](#).
- Access to personalised writing feedback and online tutoring via Studiosity in [My Birkbeck](#).

CONTACT US

If you would like further information or advice about study skills, please contact the [Student Advice Service](#) or [raise a query on Birkbeck's 'Ask' system](#).

If you would like further information or advice about subject-specific study skills or library services, please [contact our dedicated subject-specific tutors](#).

QUICK LINKS

- [Study skills workshops](#)
- [Birkbeck Study Skills \(Moodle module\)](#)
- [Learning development tutors and resources](#)

<https://www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/learning-development>

Additional resources: LSE Writing 4 Research



Writing For Research

Home Lists

Feb 7

The growth of knowledge institutions and academia

Part 2 of 'The Foundations of Academic Organization' blog series Academic knowledge institutions developed piecemeal over centuries, yet each of seven pre-modern phases have left us with 'legacy' practices that are still...

Academia 15 min read



Feb 5

Understanding Academia and University Organization


An introduction to 'The Foundations of Academic Organization' blog series Patrick Dunleavy Perhaps the most depressing maxim of the normally upbeat philosopher Daniel Dennett is: 'A scholar is just a library's way of...



<https://medium.com/@Write4Research>

Additional resources: UCLA Graduate Writing Center

UCLA Graduate Writing Center

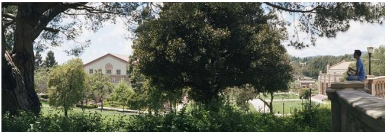
Search... 

GRADUATE STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER

Graduate Writing Center

[View 5-minute video intro to the GWC.](#)

All appointments, workshops, and programs are being conducted remotely due to COVID-19.



Workshops and Thesis Support Programs

The Graduate Writing Center offers a variety of [workshops and programs](#) throughout the year. During the summer, we offer various [dissertation "boot camps"](#) for graduate students working on dissertation proposals and dissertations. For master's thesis writers, we offer a master's thesis mentoring program. See our web page on [thesis support](#) for more information.

WRITING APPOINTMENTS

WORKSHOPS

THESIS WRITING SUPPORT

RESOURCES AND LINKS

LOCATION

OUR PHILOSOPHY

OUR POLICIES

OUR CONSULTANTS

INFO FOR DEPARTMENTS

ABOUT US

<https://gwc.gsrc.ucla.edu/>

Contact points

- ▶ Your dissertation supervisor.
- ▶ Program director: Dr Chao-yo Cheng (c.cheng@bbk.ac.uk).
- ▶ Course administrator: Ms Rachel Llewellyn (r.llewellyn@bbk.ac.uk).

Thank you!