

## FINAL PROJECT

### Astro 597 – Spring 2018 Writing Workshop

#### 1: PLEASE READ THE ATTACHED EXCERPTS FROM “WRITING SCIENCE” BY JOSHUA SCHIMEL

These are particularly helpful for working on editing proposals, where you have to develop crisp, effective text with strict page limits

#### 2: EDIT YOUR OPENING PARAGRAPH FOR A 1-PAGE PROPOSAL

Based on your reading of the attached handouts, and the additional information presented in class, take another stab at tightening up your intro paragraph for the 1 page proposal. At the end, you'll want to have a single paragraph that goes from “interesting & important”, to “but”, to “I have a plan to fix it”. Be ruthless about eliminating any word or phrase that does not need to be there. Go back over your lecture notes for every bit of advice about language choices. Remove words I hate. Make sure subject and verb make sense (i.e., galaxies don't explore things). Don't use “this” as a subject of a sentence. Check the list you made about your “habits to avoid”. Evaluate sentences for clarity (i.e., are you choosing a complicated way to convey a simple idea?). In short, try to make this the most polished paragraph you've written this entire quarter.

#### 3: EDIT YOUR OPENING PAGE FOR A 3 TO 10-PAGE PROPOSAL

Using the same input as above, with perhaps additional reading of the literature to further shape and strengthen your motivation, edit your opening page from last week. Your aim should be a ~3 paragraph, <1 page intro with roughly 1 paragraph that frames “interesting and important”, 1 that frames a problem/question in need of resolution (the “but”), and 1 that introduces your proposed solution. Revise your structure and arguments first, then work on revising the language. During the revision, aim to reduce the length by at least 10%, which will impose crispness by eliminating extraneous “filler” words and phrases.

#### 4: TRACKING YOUR TIME (TO DO AFTER CLASS STARTS NEXT QUARTER!)

Like any academic, all of us are facing complicated workloads with many competing demands. Learning to juggle these is a lifetime struggle, as we are continually faced with new roles and changing responsibilities. We often are frustrated by feeling like we're not making the progress we should, or by feeling like we're doing too much, or by feeling that we're doing the wrong things. Likewise, we often don't give ourselves credit for the things we *are* doing and instead focus only on the areas where we feel like we fell short.

Given that understanding the issue is the first step towards figuring out solutions that work, I'd like you to keep a "time diary" for a few days. The goal is to figure out what you're actually spending your time on, so that you can evaluate what's working for you and what might work better with some small changes.

So, pick ~3 days (in advance) during which you keep a journal of what you're spending your time on in 30 minute intervals (i.e., set a repeating alarm, and then jot down what you were doing during those 30 minutes: "15 minutes googling questions on Stack Overflow. 10 minutes discussing sushi restaurants over Slack. 5 minutes spacing out"). There are also about a zillion time tracking apps, many that are both free and have 4.5 stars. Don't try to change anything about what you're doing during those days, because you want to capture an accurate snapshot of what's going on during "typical" days. This exercise will also be most helpful the more honest you are with yourself.

After you're done, do a bit of analysis to figure out how much time you're spending in various categories (e.g., "homework", "TA duties (includes student emails)", "reading the literature", "research (code, plotting, writing, building stuff, communicating with collaborators, learning new techniques)", "bonding with humans you like", "dorking around on the internet", "personal care (food, sleep, exercise, therapy)", "running my side business as a record promoter", etc), extrapolated to a typical work week. *Don't share any of this with me* – this analysis is solely for you to take a 30,000 ft view of what's going on. Remember: the goal is not for you to feel bad about yourself!!!!

Based on your analysis, decide if there was anything that surprised you, and/or if you notice things that might be out of balance for you. In other words, use this exercise for self-reflection and for identifying areas where you could seek out mentoring and/or information that could help you be more satisfied with what you're doing. I am happy to talk over strategies if you want to make changes.