

## ASSIGNMENT # 7

### Astro 597 – Spring 2018 Writing Workshop: DUE IN 2 WEEKS

#### 1: TRACKING PROGRESS

Please continue to note how many words you wrote on each of 4 different days each week. Write me a short sentence or two about how it's been going, what's been working for you, what changes in your writing process you're experimenting with? etc — basically anything where a bit of feedback, self-reflection, and/or accountability could be useful. For this week's #3, I anticipate your needing to do more reading than usual, possibly at the expense of writing; feel free to comment on your progress in reading as well. Remember that just reading the introduction, skimming the figures, and digesting the high points of the discussion counts as “reading” as well.

#### 2: PLEASE READ THE ATTACHED EXCERPTS FROM “WRITING SCIENCE” BY JOSHUA SCHIMEL, AND RE-FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH STEPHEN HEARD’S CHAPTER ON “FINDING YOUR STORY”

#### 3: WHAT’S YOUR STORY?

Develop *two* possible “stories” for your writing project. For each, write down a ~3 sentence description of Heard’s three stages: (1) Define the topic; (2) Define a niche; (3) Occupy that niche. Based upon this breakdown, decide which is the stronger approach. Which has the most appeal to the largest community (i.e., is one more exciting)? Which framing makes your work the most obvious approach to solving the problem you’ve identified? Do not hesitate to do additional background reading to better understand the scientific landscape before you position yourself within it (i.e., this brainstorming make take a fair bit of work on your part, and it’s not unreasonable to treat it like a tiny general exam topic). Also think about whether your story contains an effective “challenge” within the Schimel framework.

#### 4: WRITE AN OPENING PARAGRAPH OF A PAPER BASED ON #3

After deciding on your winning story framework and re-reading Chapters 5 & 6 (“The Opening” & “The Funnel”) from “Writing Science”, please write an opening paragraph for your paper. Use the same skills you’ve been practicing all quarter (rough draft to get ideas down, then revisit the paragraph over several days to edit it into something that better frames the story you’re trying to tell). You may want to try a few different options to see what works better – do *not* compulsively delete these attempts, as you may decide to go back to them! As you work on editing, return to the Chapters 5 & 6 handouts to look at the possible issues to correct.

## AT THE START OF WEEK 2...

### 5: GET INPUT ON #3 AND #4

During next week's class w/ Jim Davenport, make plans to exchange your favored "story" and your opening paragraph draft with a classmate or outside "peer" reader. Discuss whether they found the "story" compelling and brainstorm ideas to improve the reader's response. Discuss what they thought the paper was going to be about from the opening paragraph. Revise accordingly during the following week. Turn in both your "pre-discussion" and "post-discussion" versions.

### 6: START THINKING ABOUT AN OPENING PARAGRAPH FOR A PROPOSAL BASED ON #3

When writing a proposal, you have tight space constraints and must grab the reviewer's interest quickly. In a future assignment, you will be asked to write an opening paragraph for a hypothetical proposal for the work that you're currently carrying out (i.e., assume you traveled back in time to get funding for this project). Compared to your work for #4, you will need to make sure the opening is compelling for a non-expert and that you get through to the "conflict/challenge" quickly. You don't need to actually produce anything for this this week, but I did want you to get a head start on thinking about this. Rather than time traveling, you can also choose to plan how you would craft a story and opening paragraph for a real proposal that you're planning on submitting later this year.