Yale University
Department of English

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Senior Essay Handbook
2026-2027

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Staff Liaison: Jane Bordiere

Subject Librarian for English: Carla Baricz

Key Dates

Proposals due: early registration the semester prior

FALL:
September 30 (Wednesday of Week 4)
First piece of writing (5-10 pages) and annotated list of at least two relevant secondary sources due for Senior Essay; or, general annotated bibliography

October 19 (Monday of Week 7)
Extended piece of writing (10-12 pages) and statement about your essay's engagement with one or more secondary sources due for Senior Essay

November 6, 12:00pm
Spring term independent study course proposals due, including Senior Essay and Writing Concentration Projects

November 18 (Wednesday of Week 11)
Full draft of the Senior Essay due

December 11
Completed fall term Senior Essay due

SPRING:
February 17 (Wednesday of Week 4)
First piece of writing (5-10 pages) and annotated list of at least two relevant secondary sources due for Senior Essay; or, general annotated bibliography

March 8 (Monday of Week 7)
Extended piece of writing (10-12 pages) and statement about your essay's engagement with one or more secondary sources due for Senior Essay

April 7 (Wednesday of Week 11)
Full draft of the Senior Essay due

April 23 (Friday before last day of classes)
Completed spring term Senior Essay due

Note: all deadlines, but especially the final one, are firm. We must get essays to readers in time for grade submission and prize consideration. If conditions arise that merit a Dean's Extension, be in touch as soon as possible with your advisor and the senior essay director.

Two-Semester projects: follow all deadlines in the second semester of your project. With your advisor and the Senior Essay Director, discuss appropriate opportunities for submitting writing in the first semester. The page count will be naturally higher but there is no fixed requirement.

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Welcome

The Senior Essay in English offers you the unique opportunity to pursue an extended and passionate engagement with sources, methods, and theories you define yourself. It means close dialogue with a faculty member but also a broader intellectual community. It differs from the senior seminar above all in the need for continuous self-direction, though our communal workshop will help sustain your energy and focus throughout the semester.

While our expectations are high, we do not expect you to know how to do independent research from day one. The senior essay director, teaching fellow, Yale librarians including English subject specialist, and of course your faculty advisor, will all assist you in learning (and adapting) the conventions of literary criticism. As the semester proceeds, please never hesitate to reach out to staff, faculty, and your peers. The department is thrilled you have chosen this capstone experience and cannot wait to see what you discover.

Ben Glaser
Associate Professor of English
Senior Essay Director (2021–2022)

The Proposal

A great research proposal carves out an area of deep personal interest within the discipline. This entails input from your advisor and a modest initial survey of existing criticism. The best proposals have a sense of scope but also an understanding that not all paths can be taken. They can be quite speculative!

The proposal often expands on work from seminar—ideas and works you couldn't get to in shorter writing. Include that narrative of discovery and investment. Be frank about what you haven't been able to engage with yet, as most people do not do research in advance.

Your advisor will read and provide feedback on your proposal before agreeing to advise the project. The senior essay committee will then read your proposal and share brief feedback with you and your advisor. The committee may request revisions.

Proposals are due at the early registration deadline. Here's the form, including instructions for submitting.

We have some samples of successful past proposals. See Bella Back's for a project with a good deal of advance research, and Vanessa Chung's for one built on previous seminar work.

Contact Jane Bordiere if you would like to view them.

The Advisor

While most essayists meet their advisor through coursework, you should feel comfortable reaching out to specialists in your area of focus. Do this well in advance of the deadline to confirm availability. It can be intimidating to cold call faculty. Your academic advisor, the DUS, or better yet the senior essay director (Nicole Sheriko 2026-2027) can help you find an advisor.

Here's a searchable list of faculty interests: https://english.yale.edu/faculty-staff

Once you have an advisor, be in **regular contact** even between meetings. Discuss expectations and share the workshop syllabus and key dates. A quick progress update via email keeps everyone on the same page (and accountable!).

Advance Research

There is no requirement or expectation that you do advance reading other than what is needed for the proposal. Because the semester goes fast, however, your advisor may encourage you to get a jump on long works or key secondary materials. This is easier for Fall projects, but possible over winter break as well.

Consider applying for undergraduate research funds to facilitate advance work requiring travel. Your residential college may have other funding sources. Observe all deadlines carefully!

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Library & Bibliography

Not all essayists arrive at their senior project with a clear understanding of the library and database resources they will need. No worry. The workshop, your advisor, and the library staff will get you on the right page. Observe that there is a library requirement for all seniors; you will fulfill this no later than the third week of the semester by setting up a meeting with the relevant subject specialist (for English, usually Carla Baricz, whom you can always just email).

Bibliography Management

The number and range of sources should be determined by you and your advisor. At some point around week 10-11 you will need to resist the urge to keep looking for that one key bit of criticism and focus on revisions. Even experienced scholars discover too late resources they wish they had known about!

Keep track of your sources as you find them. One mark of an excellent senior essay is accuracy and diligence in citation. There are many bibliographical management tools, but Zotero is one of the easiest (and free). A browser plug-in will grab info for you from the library catalogue or databases, and a MS Word plug-in will autoformat footnotes and your works cited.

Here is a quick 5 minute intro to the program from Northwestern Libraries (there are many other introductory videos floating around YouTube).

We offer a full range of library workshops on using Zotero (and RefWorks).

Your Works Cited must contain all sources cited in the essay. This is not just for academic integrity: it is a resource to readers, who will often study your bibliography to get a sense of the field you are in conversation with. You may choose to divide the bibliography between Primary and Secondary Sources, or include a Manuscripts / Archives section.

Citation Style

You may use MLA or Chicago style, as preferred by you and your advisor. Please use footnotes rather than endnotes. See **formatting** for complete guidelines.

Writing Milestones

The First Five Pages

The first pages, due quite early, often feel liberating. Building page count will make the full draft feel within reach. Begin where you feel comfortable:

- A close reading of key passages, poems, scenes, or other texts
- A critical survey bringing forward the state of the field as you encounter it
- Historical or biographical background
- Description of archival / manuscript findings
- Very drafty intro (not usually recommended, but some like to start at the beginning 🤷)

In addition to your five-page draft of writing, at this first benchmark deadline, we ask that you create a short list of at least two secondary sources, with brief annotations about their potential relevance and usefulness for your essay. You may draw on sources you identified in your Proposal for the Senior Essay, if you like.

You will meet with your advisor and the workshop teaching fellow in week 5 for feedback and brainstorming.

Toward the Draft: Weeks 5-7

You may find it helpful to switch gears after finishing and discussing your first pages. Resist the urge to burrow in and tinker now. Weeks 5-7 may find you expanding to a new text, shifting to engage with critics, or doing the grunt work of outlining historical context. As indicated under "Key Dates" (p. 3), you will be submitting an expanded piece of writing, including or alongside a statement about your project's engagement with a secondary source, at the end of Week 7.

Keep the momentum going in these middle weeks of the term—you might use ENGL 4100's writing retreats to dedicate 2-hour blocks of time to writing in good company. Try to explain your argument to friends and workshop peers (this is hard). Carve out time to write each/most days, and tell your advisor and senior essay peers how you'd like to be held accountable.

Writing Milestones

Outlining

Once you have 10-15 pages you might sketch out an outline. A 30-page essay may fall naturally into **subsections**—let these, and their titles, do some of the work of organization for you.

The Full Draft

Some drafts are shorter (25 pp) than the final product. Some are longer (35+ pp) and may need to be cut back. The key to this stage is receiving feedback from your advisor and the senior essay workshop. You can tell readers what sort of response is most productive!

Revision

Move swiftly after receiving reader comments. If you need to add a section on a useful primary work or engage a new critical perspective, take that on without delay. Sentence level work and citations can probably wait. See Fred Strebeigh's advice on "On Revising a Rough Draft" at the end of this handbook.

Format & Structure of the Essay

The essay must have a **title page** (title, your name, residential college, advisor's name, and date), **body text** (with footnotes if appropriate), and **bibliography**.

Length

There is no minimum length. Typically, finished single semester senior essays range from 30-40 pages. Two semester essays tend to be 40-50 pages but can be significantly longer. Your advisor may set a minimum or maximum length.

Audience & Style

Write for an audience of professional literary scholars who have a general knowledge of your chosen field but will lack specific expertise in your topic. For instance, an essay on Mina Loy's poetry might assume familiarity with experimental modern poetry and the general turmoil of the first World War, but not specific poems, biographical details, socio-political concerns, or theoretical lenses. If you aren't sure what belongs or should be made explicit, ask!

Many students have brought their personal voice into the essay. There is no rule about this, so it should be discussed in advance with your advisor.

Electronic Copies

Paper copies are no longer required. Submit your essay as a pdf; advisors may prefer .docx copies as well.

Layout

Double-spaced, left justified, 1-inch margins, page numbers at the bottom. Times New Roman, but if you find another font more accessible, use it.

Citations & Footnotes

You may use Chicago or MLA Style for in-text citations. Ask your advisor if you are unsure which is best suited. Use footnotes for citation and, **very minimally**, for explanations and digressions you could not include in the main text.

Readers' Reports

Your essay will be read carefully by two readers: your advisor, and a second faculty member with expertise in your topic. The second reader is selected with input from your advisor. You may certainly discuss ideal readers with your advisor, but we don't recommend trying to write "for" any one faculty member. See "audience" in **Format and Structure**.

Each reader will respond with a written report, usually between one and three pages in length. The two readers will consult with each other and determine a grade. Although you will have completed your project by this point, and may have no further plans for developing it, looking at your reports with your advisor has huge intellectual value. Most published literary criticism goes through such a process, often resulting in a request to "revise and resubmit." There's no "resubmit" here, but you may plan to edit and excerpt the essay for graduate school applications or publication.

Prizes

The Advisor or faculty reader may nominate senior essays for English Department prizes. These are determined by faculty committees and announced during Commencement week.

Presentations

Essayists will have the opportunity to present their work to the Yale community (and friends and family!) during a roughly 15-minute talk, including Q&A. This is **optional** but also wonderful. It is a chance to condense your research, share your motivations and discoveries, and practice your public speaking skills. The occasion is not so formal as an academic talk. There will be an opportunity to give a mock presentation just to your peers just after you submit your thesis.

On Revising a Rough Draft

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In the essay excerpted here, Fred Strebeigh, a widely-published and award-winning writer and legendary writing instructor at Yale, shares perspectives and practical techniques for revising a lengthy piece of writing.

Strebeigh's teaching excellence has been recognized with both the Richard H. Broadhead Teaching Prize for Teaching Excellence by Non-Ladder Faculty and the William Clyde DeVane Award for teaching at Yale. His effective mentorship of student writers appears in their record of success in the Atlantic Monthly Student Writing Competition: between 1997 and 2010, almost a fifth of all prizes in this national contest and more than a fifth of non-fiction writing prizes were awarded to essays written for Strebeigh's non-fiction writing courses at Yale.

...I will assume, as I proceed, that you have already finished some sort of first draft (though I will try to make this worthwhile also to a writer who has not). Once you have your first draft, you will know it by the sense of liberation it brings. You will think, perhaps: I have 50 pages! I could hand this in! I will graduate from college!

I intend this essay to help you hold that sense of liberation. Once you have that draft, paradoxically, your next challenge must be to get some distance on it-to get perspective.

To help make that possible, I have organized this essay by questions that I would ask.

What is your structure?

Ask yourself: what is the structure of this senior essay? You now have one, whether you used an outline or not. Have you written, perhaps, some 40 pages describing someone else's actions or thoughts-then interspersed them with, say, five pages of your own comments?

Was this your plan? Should it change? Asked another way, have you yet made the essay your own? Or is it still shaped by another's thought?

What do your subheads tell you?

Test each subhead against the small essay beneath it. Does the subhead fit what you typed? Or does it fit only what you thought you planned to write? If you see a disparity between subhead and essay, one or the other must change, sooner or later. But don't rush to make this change: you are re-outlining (and, for that matter, you are revising) in order to discover what direction holds the most potential.

Have you re-outlined?

To analyze the structure of your paper, I want to urge a very useful tactic: re-outline your essay. Outlining may be of little use at the outset of a project, except to very experienced writers. But re-outlining is invaluable for all of us, because it allows us to cross-examine what we have typed and ask if it fits our goals.

Let me explain what I mean by "re-outlining."

First, go through the draft in front of you and begin to divide it-and begin to think of it, if you haven't already, as a series of smaller essays: perhaps two little 2-pagers, then three 8-pagers, and so on. Atop each of those small essays, write in a subhead (perhaps, for example: "The Colonists at Jamestown: Were They Lunatics?"). Once you have settled on your ten or so subheads, they will become the ten or so headings of your re-outline.

Next, add two bits of information that old-fashioned outlines (full of Roman numerals) foolishly omit: page lengths and transitions. This process of re-outlining prepares you to ask a few more questions.

What do your page lengths tell you?
By adding page lengths on your outline, you emphasize not just the sequence of your arguments but also the relative space devoted to them. Let me use page lengths to explain what I mean when I talk about cross-examining your draft. Perhaps you've written an essay in which the sequence is logical: the 19th century follows the 18th century. But your re-outline may show that the 19th century received only 10 pages after the 18th got 40. (You can imagine this happening.)

You got writing well on the 18th. You churned and churned. The maximum page length and the deadline loomed. Finally, overnight, you whipped off a 10-page 19th century. Your re-outline shows the obvious: you've created a 19th-century postscript. Is that your goal? (The answer is as likely yes as no; the point is to ask the question and then make your goal clear in your essay.)

What do your transitions tell you?
Between each heading in your outline (and thus, each section of your essay), write in your transitions-probably as only a sentence or two.

Then cross-examine them, also. If your transitions sound implausible, you have a clue that your organization may be unworkable.

What does your structure tell you?
Finally, cross-examine your entire structure. Ask if it seems appropriate to your purpose. Ask, for example, if it makes crucial comparisons easy, rather than difficult. Ask if it places emphasis on your own work, rather than the work of others. Spend time looking at your structure, as revealed by your re-outline, and considering how that structure fits (or alters) your goals.

Need more rigorous review of your argument and structure? (re-outlining: the intensive version)
It may be that after some work tweaking page lengths and transitions you are happy with the overall structure that your new outline proposes and happy with the changes you've made to several of sections of your paper, but you could still think that some of the sections seem weak.

This is a good occasion to take re-outlining one step further to assess the clarity and organization of your argument in any particular section.

For this level of re-outlining, write a sentence that captures the point of each paragraph in a particular section. From this list of sentences, you will be able to see whether you move from point to point in a coherent way, or whether there are gaps in your argument that you need to fill or repetitions to eliminate.

Just creating the list of points can do a lot to suggest ways of clarifying your argument and structure.

For example, you may find that the best sentence capturing your point comes at the end of the paragraph. (Write down this sentence and make a note to see whether you want to move it to the front of the paragraph.) Or you may discover that nothing already written does the trick, but that you can now articulate the point this paragraph is meant to demonstrate. (Write down this new sentence and go on to the next paragraph.) You might also find that the paragraph buries its point in the middle (where a point sentence could be confused with supporting information) or that it actually makes two distinct and important points, each one worthy of its own paragraph. In each case, write the sentence or sentences that best capture the point of each paragraph.

Once you have made your list of point sentences for the target section of your paper, check for gaps, repetitions, and overall order. (Does this section start by presenting the overall topic or question of the section and does it build in a systematic way to your most important point?) Often this paragraph-by-paragraph form of re-outlining will suggest new key points that you want to make and where you want to make them. Make any changes you want in the overall structure on this list of point sentences. Now you have a new outline by which to revise this section.

Note on the position of point sentences in paragraphs:

1. Place point sentences in the first two or three sentences of most body paragraphs. Then offer support.

2. Place point sentences at the end of introductory or concluding paragraphs, whether for a whole essay or a section.

3. Place point sentences at the end of inductive body paragraphs (paragraphs that take the reader through a narrative or body of evidence in order to draw a conclusion). Beware of overusing this placement. It requires the reader to follow along with no clear sense of where the argument is going. This is a common structure for early draft paragraphs and shows the writer discovering his or her point while drafting the paragraph. But most often it will help the reader to move the point to the front of the exposition.

4. Beware of burying key points in the middle of paragraphs.

Does your introduction lead towards (but not reach) your conclusion?

Also, when you look at your organization, ask what you think of the introduction and conclusion. You might best think of the introduction as set-up or lead-in. It cannot, if your essay has any complexity at all, present your whole thought in miniature. (Some people are still writing, to an extent, the introduction I was taught in 9th grade: 1) tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em, 2) tell 'em, and 3) tell 'em what you told 'em. That's fine only if you've got 9th-grade ideas.)

What your introduction might do is lead the reader in by presenting the problem that you will consider. That way, you allow his or her reading to remain exciting, to become a process of discovery. Let me give a brief example. It comes from an essay in the *American Historical Review*, "The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-18," by Edmund Morgan.

It takes a new approach to an old question: why did the colonists at Jamestown "neglect ... the critical business of growing food to stay alive"? Morgan gives a brief tour of the conventional answer, and then, as he ends his introduction, goes on to say that the conventional answer probably fits the facts insofar as they can be known. But it does not quite explain them. ... **Why** did men spend their time bowling in the streets when their lives depended on work? **Were** they lunatics, preferring to play games rather than clear and plow and plant the crops that could have kept them alive?

Notice that these are direct questions (I have added boldface for emphasis). Often, a direct question offers the most efficient means to pose the problem your essay will address.

Now an introduction could simply end with such questions. It happens that Morgan doesn't end there, so I want to go one step further with him. To his questions, he gives a few partial answers, offered by other historians. He then dismisses those answers:

"These explanations are surely all valid....But they do not reach to a dimension of the problem that contemporaries [contemporaries of the Colonists, that is, the historians' other sources] would have overlooked because they would have taken it for granted."

Having made it clear that problems remain to be solved, Morgan is off on the search, suggesting that we may discover among the ideas current in late 16th- and early 17th-century England some clues to the probable state of mind of the first Virginians, clues even to the tangled web of motives that made later Virginians masters of slaves.

Notice there has been no formal thesis, no wrap-up. Just significant questions, a central problem, a drama, and an invitation to discovery. Morgan, that is, has written an introduction that pulls his reader towards his conclusion-but does not try to present his thought in miniature.

Do you maintain control?

The question of organization leads to the question of control: Are you clearly the speaker throughout, or do others push you aside? The most common form of such pushing is the arrival of others' words unintroduced.

Imagine this from the viewpoint of the reader. Your reader has been listening to you, as if you were speaking from a stage. Then, suddenly in your essay, the words of someone else appear unintroduced, as if someone had just shoved you to the corner of the stage from which you were speaking. The reader doesn't know what to make of such an invasion. Don't let that happen: avoid such invasions by introducing your speakers, and in such a way that the reader knows if they are hostile or friendly witnesses, trustworthy or treacherous guides.

Do you lead your reader through your evidence?

In referring to texts, or quoting from them, ask yourself: do you give the reader all that he or she needs to know? That is, do you give the context? You cannot assume, for example, that the reader recalls everything that you refer to--only you are immersed in what you are writing about.

And, a point related to giving the context: do you really tell the reader what the text suggests?

Do you tell what it means to the development of your argument? Putting the text in the right place is not enough. The text does not speak for itself; you must speak for it. I can't emphasize this too much. A few related points of emphasis:

1. Try to follow this pattern for each piece of evidence you introduce:

Prepare the reader for what you are quoting; explain who said it, perhaps give a sense of the context, of time or place.
Then quote.
Then draw from that quote what comments you have to make.

2. Beware possible disproportion in size between what you have to quote and what you have to say about it. Don't quote 18 lines of some journal or poem in order to make the comment that "life was hard." In fact consider this rule of thumb: the proper proportion of what you quote to what you say should be about 1 to 2.

3. If you find that there is such a disproportion, look for ways to be MORE AGGRESSIVE in the way you use the text or evidence. I suggest two main ways to raise your aggressiveness:

Chop the text block down into relevant fragments. Omit large sections of it. Embrace those fragments that remain within your argument and analysis.
Look for pieces of the text that you should have commented on- perhaps pieces that you supposed you already had commented on- and go after them in your comments.

What is the drama in your essay?
Finally, and as one component of writing for a wide audience, ask yourself: What is the central drama in this essay?

What is significant? Have I made clear what is new, what is mine, what is important?

I will always recall a senior-essay writer a few years ago who did utterly path-breaking research in California archives on what might be called an architectural-historical fraud--a venal misrepresentation of architectural history.

This student, having discovered the fraud, then wrote a superb depiction of the truth. (Her argument ran roughly as follows: Much of the architectural style of 20th-century California originated not out of emulation of early Spanish colonial structures in America--as had been alleged--by a group of architects who helped create that style, but rather out of a pastiche that those architects assembled from buildings they admired in southern Europe.) She wrote this depiction so convincingly that it sounded like unimpeachably established truth-hardly like iconoclastic revelation. Most conspicuously, she omitted the necessary page or two that should have showed the reader that everyone who had ever published on her subject had an idea different from hers.

Her reader found the essay vast but unimpressive. Only later in conversation, did the reader learn that this essay exposed historical fraud and past historians' gullibility.

"Why," he said, "why didn't she SAY SO?"

Don't get caught in that trap. There's drama to your essays. Ask yourself: What is the drama here? Don't let your reader miss it. Put another way, don't lose track, as you bring a close to your writing, of the dramatic questions and issues that originally got you typing.

Past Essays

The department keeps a digital library of exemplary past essays to share with current Essayists. These are sorted by the advisor's name, which will help you explore within areas of interest. Please do not circulate any of this work. It is accessible only to Yale English majors.

Advice from Past Essayists

On choosing a topic:

The most important thing to do when choosing a topic is to choose one. Your initial topic almost certainly won't be your final one, at least not exactly. But, in my experience, it's impossible to do the in-depth investigation required to develop a robust topic without following some specific trail. So, without the pressure of finality, think about what draws you to your text(s), draft up a topic, and let it guide your research. And when you finally arrive at that textual feature or gap in the scholarship that really excites you, don't be afraid to leave out some of the work that got you there— you have less space than you think.

Logan River, Franklin Pierce 2021

On using the personal voice:

I loved the senior essay because it's an opportunity to really think about and cultivate your distinctive scholarly voice. You might experiment with the first-person pronoun, jokes, hybrid creative-critical writing, etc...all moves that you wouldn't typically make in a conventional seminar paper. In practical terms, I think this also means writing and doing research while keeping in mind your personal agenda for undertaking this project. For example, as you engage with the critical literature on your topic, it can be helpful to take some running notes of your first impressions and reactions, so that you keep the sense of your particular intervention in view.

Eve Houghton, Davenport 2017

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On (good?) writing habits:

Good advice on writing regularly is to do just that: to write regularly (x pages a week!), until you've written a first draft of your thesis (amazing!), at least a week in advance of the first-draft deadline (so you have proper time to fiddle with commas, etc., and to regret the whole thing). Of course, I did not write my thesis by writing regularly; and I knew, upon embarking on my thesis journey, that I would not finish it by writing regularly—much as I envied and continue to envy some writers' seemingly well-paced processes. So my best (non-)advice to any thesis-writer would be to know yourself—know how things have gone down for you, essay-wise, in the past—and try to take strange comfort in this knowledge: you can stress and stress and stress for the entire semester about writing/not writing like other people write or tell you to write (*x pages a week*!); or you can accept that, for example (in my case), an extensive marinating / assembling / testing period is essential to your "process," and you need to be almost literally quaking in fear before a deadline to get any "real" writing done. One way or another, you will get it, the writing, done! (And then you will spend about a lifetime editing the writing, aka re-writing the writing, and that's not a matter of maintaining good writing habits so much as a matter of obsession, pride, and/or your impending graduation.)

If this is annoying advice since it's not at all actionable—or if knowing yourself means knowing that you really will *not* get the writing done unless you seriously change your life/writing habits *now*—then my simple rule would be: write for an hour or two every morning, or whenever you are best able to stomach the idea of writing. (While choosing your classes for the semester, maybe keep in mind which hours you must keep empty and holy.) I suggest an hour or two because that's too much time to spend dilly-dallying over a single sentence (unless…), but not so much writing time that the prospect is unbearable. And maybe once you've written for an hour or two, you'll have no choice but to keep going…. I know this is an obvious way of going about things—but I hear it works :-).

Vanessa Chung, Silliman, 2020

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On finding and meeting with advisors (and other faculty):

Having an advisor is one of the best parts about writing a senior thesis—how meaningful it can feel to have someone whom you respect read and give feedback on your writing! When it comes to choosing an advisor, it's important that your advisor knows something about your topic. But I think just as important, if not more important, is that personal connection you have with your advisor. You want someone who will be able to offer you advice, encourage you, connect you to other professors/scholars in the field when useful, and support your writing process overall! Don't be shy — even if you haven't worked closely with a professor, send an email to set up a meeting and chat about your thesis ideas. Most professors will be really eager to listen and be helpful, even if they don't end up serving as your formal advisor.

When it comes to advisor meetings, first things first: logistics! It's very useful to have regular meetings with your main thesis advisor. I'd say once a week or every other week — even if the meetings are short, or if you use a meeting here and there just to catch up and not even substantively discuss the thesis — having regularly scheduled meetings will help keep you accountable. It will also help keep you interested! Sometimes enthusiasm from your advisor can be great inspiration for digging into the text again.

In addition to meeting with your advisor, you should also try to set up a few meetings with other faculty whose work may align with your thesis topic. Again, most professors will be eager to hear from you and be helpful to your project! I found it useful to connect with certain professors while working on certain parts of the project. For instance, for a chapter on X topic, you may want to set up a meeting with a professor whose work touches on similar themes, and ask if they'd be willing to talk through a passage from the text with you or even read a few pages of your writing/analysis. Using the thesis as a reason to meet with other professors whose work interests you can be a really fun and rewarding part of the process!

Janis Jin, Hopper 2020

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On Staying Organized (or not):

If you are feeling perpetually unorganized, realize that it is not because of an inherent flaw in and of you. Rather, it is reflective of the conditions of a relentless work culture that prioritizes object (the commodity) over subject (you). "Staying organized" is a messy journey that is different for everyone, occurring on an everyday basis within and beyond the lifespan of an undergraduate thesis. Organization is when you wake up, what TikToks you send to your friends, how much coffee you do (not) drink, where you go exercise, and why you decide to prioritize yourself to leave the work behind and go party with your friends somewhere.

This entry could have prescriptively indexed some pragmatic steps and tools: inputting all your citations into Zotero, creating a rigid daily writing schedule, time blocking every hour on your planner, naming your documents properly, etc. Of course, do all of these things if you wish, but only if it makes sense for you, your brain, and your health. But there is no official guidebook nor endpoint to organization. It is an ongoing reckoning with how you move through everyday life, and viewing it as a process helps you generate *habits* rather than temporary stopgaps that you can continue building as you finish your English thesis, graduate, and move onto the next exciting unknown. Congratulations!

Minh Vu, Silliman 2020
(now a PhD candidate in WGSS and American Studies at Yale)

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