A question to a PhD student: “How is the writing going?” And her reply: “Oh, it should move along quite well, once I get through beating the life out of my material”. Does this sound familiar? The first think that strikes many PhD students who have completed their fieldwork and prepare to sit down and start writing up is the strong divergence between the “lively” experiences of fieldwork and the “deadening” process of writing them down afterwards. Writing a thesis, a dissertation, or even an article is challenging even if rewarding at the end. Sustaining an argument and maintaining good writing over long piece of work can be overwhelming. Analyzing and finding the right way to integrate diverse material (from various sources, ethnographic and archival material) take not a small effort. How can we prepare for the intense emotions that writing tends to trigger – such as anxiety, loss of self-confidence, and anger – to name a few?

As a space for reflection, critical reading, writing and feedback this course will aim to provide you with a structure to smooth the process of writing. We will focus on several key components of successful writing, starting from habits that support productivity in writing, writing and life balance; to the structure of your material, to more content-oriented subjects, such as various dissertation styles and genres of ethnographic expression. Guest speakers will introduce you to the particularities of writing for different anthropological subfields, while select readings will aim at introducing you to the writing styles and habits of productive scholars, ethnographers and writers.

We will use different accounts on ethnographic writing and ‘good examples’ of current ethnographies/work in anthropology, which you choose to use as your “model” writing. We will read these with an understanding of how anthropologists authorize and authenticate their textual accounts though style, structure, form, rhetorical strategies, narrative conventions and voice. We will think and explore the poetics and politics of cultural representation more generally, within anthropology as a discipline and beyond.

The main purpose of the class remains, however, writing, providing students with the opportunity to respond to other students work and present theirs, as a means to sharpening their writing and verbal skills. The instructor’s role is to merely facilitate a creative space to write. We will be setting up also a webpage to share our experience with other UF students.

We will determine what to do each week depending on our needs.

The course will be loosely using for the organization of our meetings and discussion “Writing an Article in 12 weeks” by Wendy Laura Belcher.
In the company of critics: ethnography and anthropology today

Issue 28.4, November 2013 Cultural Anthropology's November issue features a series of articles reflecting on the publics created, engaged, and imagined through ethnographic writing. The series includes pieces by João Biehl, Michal Osterweil, Didier Fassin, and Vincent Debaene.


Ethnographic fieldwork and writing


Each week we read one chapter from:

“Writing your Journal Article in 12 weeks” by Laura Belcher

“Alive in the Writing” by Kirin Narayan

“Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes” by Robert Emerson
Depending on student interests, we also select readings from:

**How do we write about violence?**


Suggested


**Contemporary interventions**


**What is life?**


**A life of writing?**


**Tackling politics**


**Writing economics**


Thinking Justice


