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Dear Seniors,

Welcome to your last year as concentrators in Comparative Literature. We hope that it is an exciting and fulfilling one for you.

One of the central elements of your final year in our concentration is the writing of the senior thesis. The material contained in this Handbook is intended to facilitate the thesis writing process. It includes a thesis calendar that lists all relevant thesis-related dates, as well as guidelines that address practical issues of thesis presentation and evaluation. There is also important information on writing the thesis proposal along with sample thesis proposals and two helpful documents: “How to Write a Good Research Proposal” and “Twenty Tips for Writing the Senior Thesis.” Please read all of the material carefully. You will find it useful and reassuring.

The early days of the semester are inevitably full and somewhat confusing, so the prospect of the senior thesis can seem daunting. Remember that we are all here to assist you in any way possible. Your tutor is an invaluable resource, and you should schedule a meeting as early as possible in the first week of the semester, and on a weekly basis thereafter.

Your faculty mentor can also be a terrific source of information and support, and we encourage you to meet as often as your schedules allow throughout the year. At a minimum, we require four meetings between you and your mentor: The first should take place in early to mid-September and should ideally bring together you, your tutor, and your mentor; a second meeting with your mentor should take place before your thesis proposal is due. You should next meet with your mentor before the close of the first semester to discuss the thesis chapter you submit in late November; and your final meeting should take place right before you hand in the full thesis. **You are responsible for scheduling these meetings. Your tutor can assist you, as can I, if necessary. Please give your mentor enough time and advance notice to accommodate your meeting request.**

Needless to say, you should not hesitate to check in with me about any concerns or ideas you might have about the senior thesis, or, for that matter, any aspect of the upcoming year. I look forward to meeting with each of you individually in the course of the year to review your program of study and to discuss your literary experience. In the meantime, my very best wishes for a happy and productive year.

Yours,

Sandra Naddaff
Director of Undergraduate Studies, Comparative Literature
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>FALL 2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>Fall Term Begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-21</td>
<td>Meet with Mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Course Registration Deadline</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>Draft of Thesis Proposal due to Tutor and Mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Final Thesis Proposal due to Department by 2pm</td>
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<td>Nov 25</td>
<td>1st Chapter of Thesis due by 2pm</td>
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<td>Nov 27-Dec 1</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 3-19</td>
<td>Meet with Mentor to discuss 1st Thesis Chapter</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Last day of Fall Term Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-9</td>
<td>Fall Reading Period</td>
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<td>10-19</td>
<td>Fall Exam Period</td>
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<td>Dec 20-Jan 26</td>
<td>Winter Recess/Winter Break</td>
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<td>January 31</td>
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<td>Meet with Mentor to discuss remaining thesis work</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Full Thesis Draft due to Tutor</td>
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<td>March 13</td>
<td>Thesis due to Department by 2pm + Reception</td>
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<td>14-22</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>Mar 25 - May 1</td>
<td>Orals Preparation</td>
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<td>April 9</td>
<td>Senior Thesis Panel at 7pm, Barker Thompson Room</td>
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<td>30-May 2</td>
<td>Sr. Oral Exams</td>
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<td>7-16</td>
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<td>28</td>
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SENIOR THESIS GUIDELINES
2019-2020

The following guidelines address some of the basic questions regarding the more practical dimensions of the senior thesis project. In general, however, we recommend that you consult the most recent edition of either the Modern Language Association’s Style Manual or the University of Chicago’s *A Manual of Style* for full information regarding the mechanical aspects of the thesis.

**THESIS PROPOSAL:** A final description of the thesis project should be submitted to the undergraduate Comp Lit office on October 8th by 2:00 pm. The proposal should consist of a full description of the project and include an annotated bibliography. It should be drawn up in full consultation with the thesis advisor and the faculty mentor. It will then be reviewed by a sub-committee that is headed by your senior tutor and includes your faculty mentor and one member of the Tutorial Board. Your senior tutor will provide you with their feedback both orally and in written form. For more information on the thesis proposal process as well as sample thesis proposals, please consult the memoranda included in the Senior Thesis Handbook.

**THESIS DUE DATE:** For June graduates, the thesis is due by 2:00 pm on Friday, March 13th. **THIS IS A FIRM DEADLINE. A late thesis will not be accepted.** Extensions will be considered only in the case of exceptional circumstances, such as prolonged illness or family emergency, upon application to the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

**LENGTH:** The thesis should be no less than 11,250 words and no more than 18,750 words (~45-75 pages). This does not include footnotes, endnotes, bibliography, appendices, or other critical apparatus. Any student who anticipates exceeding this limit must petition the DUS at least two weeks in advance of the due date for an exception. Please note that a reader may penalize a thesis that is over the limit, even if an exception has been granted, if the excessive length is deemed unnecessary.

**HONOR CODE AFFIRMATION:** Students must append an acknowledgement of the Harvard College Honor Code to the page following the thesis title page. The statement should read: “I affirm my awareness of the standards of the Harvard College Honor Code.”

**TRANSLATION THESIS:** Specific information on the translation thesis is included below.

**ORIGINAL CREATIVE MATERIAL:** Specific information on incorporating original creative material is included below.

**QUOTATIONS:** Quotations of four lines or less should be surrounded by quotation marks and incorporated into the text. Longer quotations should be set off from the text, indented, and single-spaced, and should not be
set off in quotation marks.
All direct quotations from a foreign language, whether a single word, a short phrase or a longer excerpt, should be given in the original and accompanied by a translation. We generally recommend that a student include translations of brief passages (single words or short phrases) in the body of the text, while translations of longer passages should generally be included in the footnotes/endnotes. In any case, a student should be consistent in their translation practices. Translations may either be from a published source or may be the student's own. Non-Romanized alphabets may be transliterated for quotation purposes when necessary.

FOOTNOTES/ENDNOTES: Either footnotes or endnotes may be used. Consult either the Chicago Manual of Style or the MLA Style Manual for proper formatting.
In general, notes should contain supplementary textual commentary/information or reference information. For further remarks regarding note logic and format, consult the sources above.

APPENDICES: Any longer supplementary material that is considered useful for understanding the thesis but is not part of the actual analysis or exposition may be included in an appendix. Such material may include an original text under consideration if not readily available, illustrations or similar visual material, original creative work that supplements the analysis at hand, etc. Material included in the appendix is not included in the final word count of the thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: A list of works cited and works consulted should be appended to the Senior Thesis. Again, refer to the above sources for the proper bibliographical format.

TITLE PAGE: See Section V for an example of the proper format of the thesis title page.

FINAL COPY: A clean final presentation of the thesis is very important, and a student should not under-estimate the time necessary to prepare the final copy. The thesis should be error-free; all accent marks should be included in quotations in foreign languages; and both footnotes/endnotes and bibliography should be complete and correct.

Each page of the thesis should have a one-and-a-half-inch left-hand margin in order to prevent the binder from blocking any of the text. There is no specified right-hand margin limit. All pages should be numbered, and each thesis should include a table of contents.

Students should submit two copies of the thesis on acid-free, acid-neutral paper in a black spring binder. An additional digital copy should emailed by the official due date to Isaure Mignotte (mignotte@fas.harvard.edu).

Students in Joint Concentrations should submit one copy of the thesis to Comp Lit and the other copy to their other concentration.
Joint concentrators should follow the deadlines established by the primary concentration for all matters pertaining to the senior thesis.

**THESIS EVALUATIONS:** Each thesis will be evaluated by two readers, at least one of whom will be a member of the faculty. In cases where two widely divergent readings are submitted, a third reader will be asked to evaluate the thesis as well. All evaluations will be signed and students will be encouraged to meet with their readers to discuss the comments. Any thesis that receives a grade of MAGNA or above will be sent to the University Archives. The final thesis grade is an average of the two (or exceptionally three) thesis rankings. This grade will count for 30% of the student’s overall degree recommendation in concentration.
THE TRANSLATION THESIS

The undergraduate Comp Lit program allows students to undertake a translation as their senior thesis project. In general, a translation thesis is comprised of a translation of a text that may or may not have been translated previously, as well as a significant critical commentary on the work in the form of a translator’s preface/critical commentary and notes on the text. Students who wish to undertake a translation thesis should consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies before launching the thesis work.

The following guidelines provide valuable information on the form and content of a translation thesis:

**FORMAT:**

One clear copy of the original text must be provided along with the two copies of the thesis. For other formatting indications, refer to the general thesis guidelines.

**LENGTH OF TRANSLATED TEXT:**

The translation itself should be between 15,000 and 22,500 words, or about 60-90 double-spaced pages. Texts that fit this format well include novellas, plays, collections of short stories or poems, and some critical essays. A student who wishes to translate from a longer work (such as a novel) should choose a representative excerpt or a collection of excerpts that functions well as a standalone text.

**TRANSLATOR’S PREFACE:**

The translator’s preface/critical commentary is an essential component of the translation thesis. It should be no less than 5,000 and no more than 7,500 words, or about 20-30 double-spaced pages. The preface should:

- Introduce the text to a general academic readership and explain its significance. Relevant information about the author and the composition or reception of the text may be provided. If English translations of the text already exist, the preface should situate the new translation in relation to existing ones and explain what the new translation seeks to achieve.

- Detail the translation challenges posed by the text. Using well-chosen examples, the stylistic particularities and semantic richness of the original text should be highlighted, demonstrating an informed understanding of the text in the original language.

- Describe and justify the translation strategies chosen in order to best render the original text. It may be useful to refer to other translations used as models (or counter-models), or to relevant texts on translation theory.
FOOTNOTES/ENDNOTES: Footnotes or endnotes should highlight within the translation places where a difficulty presented itself (such as word play, semantic ambiguities, or terms with no English equivalent), and explain how that difficulty was handled. In the case of a recurring difficulty, a note at the first occurrence is sufficient. A translation should not be overloaded with notes: in some cases, it may be advisable to limit notes to representative or significant instances. Important or recurrent difficulties can be addressed at greater length in the translator's preface.

Notes can also be used to provide information about cultural or historical background relevant to an understanding of specific elements the text.

THESIS EVALUATIONS: Translation theses will be evaluated by two readers, at least one of whom will have a knowledge of the original language. In addition to the accuracy and readability of the translation, evaluators will devote particular attention to the quality of the critical apparatus (preface and notes).
INCORPORATING CREATIVE MATERIAL INTO THE SENIOR THESIS

The undergraduate Comp Lit program supports the inclusion of original creative material into a critical thesis, although we do not accept stand-alone creative projects such as a collection of poems, a dramatic production, an installation, or a musical composition as a complete senior thesis.

Some past examples of how creative material has been incorporated into a senior thesis in Comp Lit are:

- The conclusion to a thesis on the graphic novel *Persepolis* that was written in the style and format of a graphic novel.
- A live musical performance and recording of various compositions based on the figure of Mignon in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in a thesis that analyzes both the literary and the musical representations of the character.
- The inclusion of a video documenting a musical performance in a thesis on performance in both verbal and musical media.
- An original non-fiction personal essay on cheerleading camp in a thesis on the creative non-fiction writing of David Foster Wallace.
- An installation that uses video and sculpture to meditate on how individuals enter virtual space. The critical component of this thesis (a joint project for Comp Lit and VES) examines the theoretical premises of this topic.

Each of these examples offers a different way of including the creative material into the thesis: as a chapter in the thesis itself, as an appendix, or as extra-documentary material. You should discuss carefully how you plan to use your creative material with your thesis advisor and with the Director of Undergraduate Studies well in advance of submitting your thesis in order to avoid any unanticipated complications. All creative material should add value to the thesis itself and should be undertaken thoughtfully and carefully.

**FORMAT:**

If the creative work is non-verbal in nature, two copies of the material must be included with the thesis submission. If the work involves a performance or an exhibition, the student should inform the department of the dates and location well in advance so that the readers can attend.

**LENGTH OF CREATIVE MATERIAL:**

If the creative material is part of the thesis itself, it should be included as part of the thesis word count. Material that is included in an appendix or is included in another medium is considered outside of the word count tally.
THESIS EVALUATIONS: The thesis readers will consider all creative material as an integral part of the senior thesis as a whole. The final evaluation of the thesis will consider the creative material on its own terms as well as the way it contributes to the overall argument and analysis of the topic at hand. Every effort will be made to find at least one reader who is knowledgeable about the relevant medium or art form.
WRITING:

THE URBAN CALLIGRAPHY OF NEW YORK CITY

by

Stephanie Tung

Presented to the
Undergraduate Comparative Literature Concentration
in the Department of Comparative Literature
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Honors

Harvard College
Cambridge, Massachusetts

March 13, 2020
THE SENIOR THESIS PROPOSAL

Fall 2019

Writing the senior thesis proposal is the first and perhaps the most important step in formulating your senior thesis project. The proposal should define carefully the parameters of your field of exploration and inquiry and should consist of three parts: 1) a tentative thesis title; 2) a prose description of approximately 800-1000 words outlining your proposed topic; and 3) an annotated bibliography listing at least five works that are relative to your topic. The proposal is due on Tuesday, October 8th.

READ AND REFLECT: It can be difficult at the outset to decide the focus of your thesis work, so take plenty of time in the early days to think about what you are most interested in. It's often useful to start by reflecting on past projects and papers. What texts have you found most provocative over the past three years? Which courses have served as your intellectual touchstones? This kind of reflection can be helped enormously by reading widely in both primary and secondary literature as you are trying to formulate your topic. Re-read works you already know well; read the books that you've been meaning to read for years but haven't, if they tie in to your field of interest. Look back at critical and theoretical texts that have opened up new fields of inquiry for you, paying special attention to the introductory chapters and the way the problem is formulated. Finally, talk at length to your tutor or any other member of the Faculty Committee or Tutorial Board about your interests and ideas. Use them to help you formulate your thoughts, define an area of study, and determine interesting texts to consider for your project.

ASK A QUESTION: One of the most productive ways to formulate a thesis project is to ask a question and then attempt to answer it, e.g.: What does it mean to write in a new or revived or “minor” language? What makes some texts/aesthetic objects/media seemingly incomprehensible? How do we define authorship and how is that definition altered by new media? How do we define a refugee narrative and what is the relationship of these narratives to current governmental policies on immigration? Tease out the various implications and ramifications of the question. Try it out on different texts. Don't feel that you need to know the answer to the question, or even have a working hypothesis, at the outset of the project. But make sure that you find the question interesting, and that it is rich enough and provocative enough to sustain you through seven months of reading, thinking, and writing.

BE SPECIFIC: Your proposal should specify which works you intend to examine in your thesis. There is no set or recommended limit to the number of works to analyze. Successful theses in the past have concentrated on one work alone; others on several works from different genres and traditions. Similarly, there is no one kind of text to investigate. Some theses have focused primarily on theoretical texts, others on primary works of fiction or poetry; still others on works drawn from different media. The important thing to remember here is that you should read closely whatever work(s) you choose to investigate and analyze. Engage your works carefully as a means of answering the questions you have asked.

You should also outline the structure of your thesis in your proposal: How many chapters do you anticipate? What will each chapter address? Do you anticipate an appendix or other textual material that is not a part of the thesis itself (e.g., the original text of a work you are translating)? Will your thesis contain external material (e.g., a video, a recording, a website)? This structure will change as your project develops, but it is very helpful to think early on about the shape of your work.
CREATIVE COMPONENTS IN THE CRITICAL THESIS: See the section entitled “Creative Material” in The Senior Thesis Handbook for information on incorporating creative material into the senior thesis.


BIBLIOGRAPHY: In addition to specifying those texts to be examined in the body of your proposal, you should append an annotated bibliography of at least five critical or theoretical works that pertain to your proposed topic. You should have read these works before submitting your proposal, and in addition to giving the conventional bibliographic information, you should write three or four lines outlining the subject matter of the book, making its relation to your thesis topic clear. Keep in mind that your final thesis project will include a lengthier bibliography indicating works cited and consulted in the course of your research.

MENTORS: The goal of the mentoring program is two-fold: to facilitate more contact and communication between students and faculty; and to provide seniors with, if possible, an expert in their field of study with whom to consult as they develop their thesis project.

We have discovered that there is no prescribed formula to follow in facilitating the connection between student and faculty member, but we do have a few requirements in place to make the relationship as productive as possible. You should meet with your mentor twice before you submit your proposal on October 8th, once with your tutor, if possible for a general conversation, and a second time for an individual discussion about your thesis proposal. A third meeting in November to discuss your first-semester chapter submission is required; and finally you must also arrange for a mid-year conversation in February to review pre-submission progress. In return, your mentor will serve as a member of the committee that reviews your specific thesis proposal, and will read and comment on the first thesis chapter you must submit on Monday, November 25th, as well as on the second one, due February 3rd. We urge you, however, to take full advantage of your mentor and to meet with them as often as you can.

It is your responsibility to choose and initiate contact with your mentor. You should contact your mentor as soon as possible to set up an initial meeting to discuss your thesis plans. You should do this even if you feel that you have nothing particular to discuss at this point. This state can often lead to the most productive conversations. The Director of Undergraduate Studies is available to discuss any questions and concerns you may have. Please give your mentor enough advance notice when you request a meeting to accommodate his/her schedule.

PROPOSAL PRESENTATION: Your proposal needs to include the Thesis Proposal Cover page shown below. Students should email their entire proposal in a single Word file to the Undergraduate Office by the specified deadline. Your tutor must also send a separate acknowledgment to indicate approval to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator. The proposal itself and the annotated bibliography should be included with this form.

PROPOSAL FEEDBACK: A small sub-committee, headed by your senior tutor and including your faculty mentor and one member of the Tutorial Board, will review the individual proposal for content, argumentation, bibliography, etc. and will offer ideas for further development as necessary. Your tutor will either provide you with their feedback directly or will arrange a meeting that includes the student and the sub-committee. Occasionally a student will be asked to rewrite the proposal and resubmit it.
Please use this form as the cover page for your proposal and save it all in one document. Please limit your proposed senior thesis topic description to 800-1000 words and include an annotated bibliography. Consult the handout entitled “The Senior Thesis Proposal” for further information.

Email your entire proposal in a single Word file to Isaure Mignotte at (mignotte@fas.harvard.edu) by the specified deadline. Your tutor must also send a separate acknowledgment to indicate approval to Isaure Mignotte.
THESIS

PROPOSAL SAMPLES
In retrospect, I have lived a tame and happy existence, in picturesque northeastern Massachusetts, where my paternal family has lived for centuries. However, I have grown up on a hearty diet of riveting stories from my mother’s family, which consists of feminist iconoclasts and Puerto Rican immigrants. While one side is secure and comfortable the other is adventurous and even mischievous. I like to think of myself as much the same. While “Lincoln” obviously comes from my New England side, “Mateo” is my mother’s maiden name. In fact, the Mateo family consisted originally of itinerant ranchers in southern Puerto Rico, and my grandfather, now nearing his 97th birthday, tells stories of his upbringing, weathering hurricanes, raising cattle, and fending off bandits. I was brought up listening to Caribbean music, sometimes eating Puerto Rican food, and most of all knowing that somewhere in me were characteristics of the huge, festive, garrulous Mateo family I’ve heard so much about but have barely met.

My thesis will be an ambitious musical retelling of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as a 19th century colonial narrative in Puerto Rico, accompanied by a critical essay of twenty to thirty pages. I am planning to use the Translation Thesis guidelines for the form of my thesis, except that instead of a “translated text” I will produce a musical adaptation. Still, my critical essay will roughly take the form of the translator’s preface and will explain the workings of my musical and position the piece in relation to previous musical adaptations of *The Tempest*. I will illuminate exactly how my vision of Shakespeare’s play is communicated in the music, and how I form a literary and comparative argument through my reshaping of the original text. Fortunately, *The Tempest*, like other Shakespeare plays, expands beyond itself and implicates philosophical, theatrical, musical, and even anthropological ideas. The playwright takes the chance to open up conversations around colonialism and utopian societies (through Gonzalo’s famous speech in which he echoes Montaigne’s essays about indigenous peoples) as well as about the very nature of human existence: as Prospero says, “We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little / Is rounded with a sleep” (IV.1.156-158).

Having dealt extensively with issues of intercultural musical exchange (most recently when I worked with the Silkroad Ensemble this summer), I am eager to delve into such “exchange” within *The Tempest*. To do so, I must hearken to the musical history of Puerto Rico, which was inhabited originally by the Taíno people but colonized by the Spanish in the 16th century and again by the United States in the last years of the 19th century in the wake of the Spanish American war. I will choose this later date because I feel that I have a greater capacity to access the history of the later period as well as the music that might have been played then (the Mateos were also already settled down on their ranch by then). On the most fundamental level, I plan to have Ariel and Caliban sing a different kind of music than everyone else in the play. Because they are native to the island, they will perform using a Latin-Caribbean musical
idiom, whereas the colonizers (everyone originally from Milan, though, in my adaptation, from the United States), will embody a more traditional musical theater aesthetic. I will engage critically with the cultural responses to and repercussions of colonization both in *The Tempest* and in colonial and postcolonial writings. Importantly, Prospero wields much of his power thanks to the music of the enslaved Ariel, which has the ability to control people and put them to sleep.

Since *The Tempest* is a narrative that deals clearly with themes of colonialism (Prospero enslaves two creatures indigenous to the island, whom he sees as inferior), it is not revolutionary to set it somewhere on a Caribbean island. It’s not clear where exactly Shakespeare might have intended to place the erroneously-dubbed “uninhabited island,” whether in Bermuda or in the Mediterranean, but as playwrights, writers, and critics have started to view the text through a postcolonialist lens, they have grounded it in particular localities. Aimé Césaire famously rewrote the play in *Une Tempête* and set it in Haiti; the Cuban poet Roberto Fernández Retamar restaged it in Cuba; the list goes on. In fact, Caliban’s name seems to derive from “cannibal” or more indirectly from “Carib,” the name of a tribe inhabiting parts of South America and the root of both “Caribbean” and “cannibal.”

I will adapt Shakespeare’s language to create a libretto for my musical, generally keeping the richness of the text (in the form of word choice, metaphors, and other literary devices) while modernizing some of the vocabulary and syntax. This is to prevent the creation of a confusing score that dissonantly superimposes archaic English on popular musical theater music. I will look at previous adaptations of Shakespeare plays, with a particular focus on Bernstein and Sondheim’s *West Side Story*, which is essential for several reasons: its inclusion of the Latin musical idiom as well as its restaging of a text both geographically and temporally distant. While some may see concerns of verisimilitude in the fact that everyone is speaking and singing in English in the musical, firstly I believe this could be a creative and critical tool to have the two enslaved beings using the language of the oppressor (saying more about the oppression itself than about Caliban and Ariel), and secondly there are much larger problems of verisimilitude in the very magic of the plot. Therefore, the wizardry in *The Tempest* will allow room for disbelief to be suspended around more minor issues. The very nature of musical theater, in which the unreal presence of music grants the creator the ability to realize an artistic interpretation, will allow me to position and pair characters and situations in ways that reflect an interpretive framework. For example, pairing Miranda’s discovery of Ferdinand with Caliban’s of Stephano (i.e. giving them the same melody or the same song) will show that “love” in *The Tempest* is akin to worship, and stems not only from emotional adoration but also from servitude and isolation.

Under the tutelage of Thomas Wisniewski as well as of Professor Chaya Czernowin in the Music department, I will create the score of this musical, likely comprising at least ten songs and running for an hour to an hour and a half. If I have enough time, I will try to subtly adapt the script to fit between my songs. I will probably compose for violin, cello, drums, guitar, horns, keyboards, percussion, reeds, and trumpet, and present it as a conductor or piano-vocal score. I would love at least to have excerpts of the
musical performed, if not a full staging. I have talked to a director on campus, however, who has expressed his interest in being involved in a staging. The final product will constitute the score, my adapted libretto, as well as the “composer’s preface” mentioned earlier.

**PRIMARY SOURCES**

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête*

As mentioned above, I will learn a lot from Césaire’s postcolonial lens and the racial and cultural implications of characters such as Caliban and Ariel.

Leonard Bernstein & Stephen Sondheim, *West Side Story*

As evoked above, my study of this musical will be an essential part of my preparation for creating my work. In fact, there is one instance of uncanny intertextuality between my proposed thesis and *West Side Story*: in the famous song “America,” Rosalia sings: “Puerto Rico, / You lovely island…/ Island of tropical breezes…”; and Anita sarcastically replies: “Puerto Rico, / You ugly island, / Island of tropical diseases…”. Their emphasis—superficial though it may be—that the island is both idyllic and foul reflects exactly a scene in *The Tempest* in which Adrian and Gonzalo are lauding the beauty of the island and Antonio and Sebastian are deriding its filth (II.1.47-56).

Hector Berlioz, *Roméo et Juliette*

—, *Béatrice et Bénédict*

Lin-Manuel Miranda, *In The Heights*

Cole Porter, *Kiss Me Kate*

**SECONDARY SOURCES**

Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare*

Albright’s book illuminates the corpus of Shakespeare-based musical works and shows how composers over the years have used rules of music theory to recreate emotions and plot-lines reflected in Shakespeare plays.

Daniel Albright, *Music Speaks*

This book is vital to my project from the perspective of the interweaving of music and words, and the degree to which music can function as a language.

Robin Moore, *Music in the Hispanic Caribbean*

This book will give me more academic underpinnings for my understanding of music in Puerto Rico and how it functioned and functions as a cultural agent, particularly with regard to colonialism.
Tentative Thesis Title: Trump Country and America’s Refugee Capital: Creating a Community through Everyday Acts of Welcome

There are 65.6 million “forcibly-displaced people” in the world, 22.5 million of which are documented as refugees. Though 86% of refugees are hosted by developing countries, the United States is “the top resettlement country in the world,” and it has taken in over 3 million refugees since 1975.¹ There is a long history of refugee relocation to the United States; it is a history primarily based on changing political circumstances that determine who qualifies for resettlement. The Trump Administration made one of the most sudden and extreme changes to refugee policy in recent years, following campaign rhetoric that was hostile toward refugees. The administration reduced the number of refugees admitted to the country to 50,000, from 110,000 under the Obama Administration, and the number could drop further still. The original version of the executive order pertaining to immigrants and refugees ended refugee resettlement for 120 days and banned individuals from seven countries. Despite this change, many refugees continue to make a home in communities across the United States, including Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Lancaster County is a rural community, historically rooted in the Anabaptist faith, that has voted conservatively since 1964; however, last year BBC dubbed it “America’s Refugee Capital” for taking in 20 times more refugees per capita than anywhere else in the country.² These seemingly contradictory characteristics create an interesting case study of rural America’s private and public opinions concerning immigration. Why is a community that voted for Donald Trump in 2016, and has a history of conservative ideology, also one of the most vibrant communities of refugee resettlement in the United States? Over the last two months I conducted over 15 interviews in Lancaster that will serve as both my primary literature and the qualitative data with which I will write my thesis. How are people in rural America responding to the resettlement of refugees in their community? And what explains the seeming divergence between public will and the will of political representatives in the community?

Last fall, in Vienna, Austria, I volunteered at a house for young Middle Eastern refugees. I was struck by the disparity between the narratives of the young men and the image of them presented by the American media. I conducted interviews with the young men and wrote my junior paper on the topic, in which I explored the importance of understanding individual narratives. Upon returning home to Pennsylvania, I discovered that my hometown, Lancaster, had been named “America’s Refugee Capital.” Though a reasonably engaged community member, I was unaware of a critical part of my community, ignorant of a population hidden in plain sight. Lancaster County is squarely in the Rust Belt, in the

¹ "Resettlement in the United States." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR.

reputedly conservative region between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The way the county voted in the 2016 presidential election indicates that it would support the unwelcoming immigration policy and rhetoric of the Trump Administration. However, the refugees resettling in the area and the overwhelming support for them indicate otherwise. It suggests a tension between the political will and public will of the community.

This thesis seeks to intervene into the communal space between government and the individual. It will be oriented around narratives from the Lancaster community, seeking to show how people are responding in their everyday lives. The interviews are conducted with people who are based in Lancaster and are involved in some capacity with refugee resettlement and integration. I spoke with the main refugee aid organizations in the area, all faith-based to varying degrees. I talked to the President and Vice President of the Somali Community Organization, both refugees themselves who are working toward further integration in Lancaster. I interviewed the director of a community school that is both a fully-functioning middle school and a refugee center, and spoke with a “public pastor” who organized a vigil to support refugees during a protest against refugee-resettlement. I also examined a local Mennonite church that has grown from less than 40 members to over 200, and 75% of the members are Burmese refugees. I will use these interviews to create a public dialogue on the page, a constellation of voices grounded in the stories of refugees who have been resettled in Lancaster.

Situated at a cross-section of the comparative literature and government fields, I will use my background in comparative literature to read these interviews as individual and shared narratives that express the real-life implications of international and national policy decisions on refugee resettlement. And I will use my government background to interpret the implications of refugee policy on international, national, and local levels. In addition to interviews, primary sources include local newspaper articles and statistical data that describes the conservative make-up of the county. I will also use participant observations from my interactions with various community actors while conducting fieldwork in Lancaster. I will depend on literary and political theory to build on theories of community-building and refugee resettlement, engaging with authors like Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Raymond Williams, and Hannah Arendt. I will also use developments in the field of narratology, including the work of James Phelan and Mieke Bal, to read the interviews as narratives, often defined by religion. By bringing together interviews, theory, media, and policy, I hope to demonstrate how narratives express the space between government and the individual.

The first chapter of the thesis will be titled “Refugees and the Building of a Community.” It will engage with theory about communities, drawing on concepts like Raymond Williams’s *structure of feeling* and works like Hannah Arendt’s *We Refugees*. It will explore theoretical concepts about community building, refugees, and individual vs. state powers. I will draw on these theories to delve into the communal space that exists between the government and the individual, where policy has real-world effects. I will then transition into an interim section that will establish how interviews can be read as
literature. Here I will touch on the voices of refugees who were resettled in Lancaster, which will show the county through the lens of people who experienced resettlement first-hand. This section will be grounded in the voices of refugees and will provide a transition into Lancaster as a case study.

The second chapter of the thesis will be titled “Lancaster; Home of the Refugee Crisis.” It will demonstrate how Lancaster has experienced the effects of the global crisis on a local level and nonetheless been a historically welcoming place. This section will use methods of narratology to read community voices as literature. This approach will reveal Lancaster as a place of hidden tensions between the liberal city and conservative suburbs and between party affiliations and personal beliefs. I expect these narratives to draw on religious threads that have tied Lancaster together as a community for centuries, from William Penn’s founding of Pennsylvania as a religious refugee haven to present day. This chapter will examine the responses and everyday acts of welcome in the community – a community that recently opened an exhibit called, “Here there is Welcome: 300 Years of Refugees in Lancaster County.” I will use the travel ban as a turning point, a change in policy that revealed tensions in the community and will show how the community has responded to this shift.

More than anything, this thesis will attempt to orient itself around the narratives of refugees themselves. In a crisis that breaks and bends the boundaries of community, stories may be the only thing people have left to share with each other. Narratives transcend the limits of nations and communities, and persist despite differences in religion, nationality, and physical appearance. Government policy may determine the plotline, setting, and even characters featured in the stories of people who are involved in the refugee crisis, but true integration and community building is carried out in the communal space between government and the individual. The stories of people who welcome refugees into their communities can be weaved together into ways that offer valuable insight into how to strengthen the fabric of new, diverse, communities.

**Primary Sources**

Interview with Andy Mashas of Eastern Mennonite Missions.

Interview with Stephanie Gromek of Church World Service.

Interview with Christine Baer of Church World Service.

Interview with Bilal Tememi, Iraqi Refugee.

Phone Interview with Aseel Abaas, Iraqi Refugee.

Phone Interview with Angie Earl of Eastern Mennonite Missions.
Phone Interview with Don Sensenig, Vietnamese Translator.

Phone Interview with Josh McManness, IU13 Community School Coordinator.

Phone Interview with Kevin Ressler, Public Pastor and Community Organizer.

Phone Interview with Mustafa Nuur, Somali Refugee.

Phone Interview with Nita Landis, Coordinator of Muslim-Christian Friend Group.

Phone Interview with Rhoda Charles, Congregation Member at Habecker Mennonite Church.

Phone Interview with Sami Muya, Somali Refugee.

**Secondary Sources**


Agamben here discusses the *homo sacer* as a sacred being, one who is both outside of and completely impressed under society. It also intimately relates the *homo sacer* and Sovereign, which has proved useful in understanding the relationship between minor and major narratives in the refugee crisis.


Arendt speaks from her experience as one who has been classified as a refugee, providing insight into the external perception of refugees through an internal commentary. She also discusses the crisis of nationality that affected Jews as refugees, while they were in fact stateless individuals. Arendt comments on how identity shifted – or remained static– for Jewish refugees.


Butler discusses the U.S. response as one of fear and censorship that promote racist ideals in American society and culture. She considers the racist norms of who has a voice in America, and how that also affects who is worthy of being mourned by American society. The media has the power to dehumanize particularly Muslim and Arab lives. This piece will be useful in discussing the racist response of U.S. society following 9/11 toward Muslim communities, especially in relation to the travel ban.

This text will inform the thesis on the ethics of hospitality. It will help to define what hospitality is, involving a discussion of borders and conditional vs. unconditional hospitality. Derrida also discusses relationships of power between the host and foreigner, which will help me discuss the nuanced relationships of refugees, aid organizations, and community members.


This article analyzes the role of the faith community for refugee resettlement in the United States. It focuses on the motivations of individuals, communities, and organizations, all of which are groups represented in this thesis. It also discusses the role these organizations play in refugee resettlement and in advocating for refugee rights in the U.S. government. This piece give background information into how faith-based organizations have historically functioned.
Temporal Travels: The Intertext in Marcel Proust and Milorad Pavić

Bernard de Chartres once said that we stand on the shoulders of giants, peering ahead, hoping to see further than our predecessors. His vision, built on a linear model of time, seemed promising for those who spied in it ascendant progress. Yet the same image posited a descent from giant to pygmy, a personal and cultural waning toward death. In this double bind, we can see modernity’s terrible burden: a legacy where one could feel crushed by industrial, commodified time, by the weight of the past, the struggle to innovate, the inevitable approach to an apocalyptic end. Instead of gazing forward, many artists began to look back—on memories, on histories and literatures—hoping to escape the endgame or find some solace in what came before.

In my junior paper I proposed a new approach to studying these burdens of time and cultural history through one such way of looking back: intertextuality. An intertext, I argued, is not simply a structural and relational device, but is embedded with a specific time representation and temporal color available to the writer who practices it: a specific relationship to one’s textual predecessors. My thesis takes that theoretical framing as its starting point, but expands from my earlier Anglophone, modernist examination of Virginia Woolf. Now, I propose to move comparatively between French and Serbian literatures, across modernist and postmodernist paradigms.

Woolf, I argued, confronted the burdens of cultural past and linear time by interweaving Shakespearean intertext so radically that her characters are fully fused with their literary predecessors. Now I turn to two authors whose work mediates the local and the global, the East and the West, the earnest and ironic, to confront those same burdens. I wonder, first, how Woolf’s quasi-utopian outcome manifested differently across the Channel in the oneiric architecture of Marcel Proust. I am curious, too, as to its transposition into postmodern irony, meta-fiction, and non-closure, specifically in the work of Serbian author Milorad Pavić. How do the burdens of time, and the writers’ solutions, develop across these varied cultural contexts?

The essay will be divided in three chapters:

1) A comparative analysis of the intertext as representation of time in modernism versus postmodernism. My previous work built on Matei Călinescu’s delineation of two modern temporalities and fused his framework with the schools of Julia Kristeva and Erich Auerbach. In addition to the cultural theorists and post-structuralists previously examined, I will incorporate George Poulet’s foundational work on human time as well as phenomenological and philosophical approaches to time from Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger—whose theories both reveal and structure the (post)modern relationship to the past. Global/Anglophone postmodern theory by Brian McHale, Linda Hutcheon, and Ihab Hassan
will be localized to the specificity of the Eastern European context with the use of Hungarian, Romanian, and Serbian theorists.

2) A modernist case study on Marcel Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu. The novel’s central conflict, by many accounts, is the narrator’s confrontation with mortality and irreversible time. Yet, when the plot is fully played out in this circular, closed novel, that narrator seems to ultimately write himself into redemption. How does intertextuality mediate and complicate the Proustian development of this modern internality? I will look at Proust’s use of French writers like the post-Romantic Gérard de Nerval and the Realist Gustave Flaubert, as well as his creative engagement with Antoine Galland’s Les mille et une nuits, a global tale turned local through translation. How does this engagement with both the local and ‘the Orient’ offer a different modernist relationship to cultural history than Woolf’s?

3) A postmodernist case study on Milorad Pavić lexicon novel The Dictionary of Khazars. The novel is based on the historical account of the Khazar people’s conversion to Judaism, but it multiplies that singular narrative into three accounts that cannot be unified into a single time scale or cultural history. Filled with ruminations on non-linear time models and a litany of editors/transcribers/corruptors of each presumed source text, it constantly evades closure. I will examine how Pavić develops a collage of real, fictional, and even anachronistic intertexts from the Bible to Yehuda ha-Levi’s work to Pavić’s own crypto-Serbian poetry. Just as Proust sought in the East an oneiric escape from modern industrial developments, Pavić looks to the West for a postmodern aesthetics that flees local political totalitarianism. How does his work deny the modernist dream of reconciling with the cultural past, while at the same time displaying a nostalgia for that project? How does The Dictionary of Khazars challenge Anglophone assumptions about a single uniform postmodernism replicated throughout the globe? This chapter will be informed by my work this summer with Pavić’s manuscripts and with academics at the University of Belgrade.

Taken together, these chapters will track the intertext as representation of time far beyond Woolf’s London streets. My thesis, I hope, will offer theoretical tools for the practice of world literature, while staying true to local specificity in France and Serbia. The result will be neither prescriptive nor relativistic, but rather will trace the global burdens of Chartres’ modern giants as they have manifested from the Nebuchadnezzar to Scheherazade, from Combray to the Khazar salt sea.
Selected Bibliography


A fundamental theoretical work that frames modernity as developing between two temporalities: measurable, linear time as a bourgeois commodity and a writer’s or artist’s non-linear time that fights back the former. Călinescu delineates that modernity into five faces: modernism, avantgarde, decadence, kitsch, postmodernism. His work is the foundation on which I build my own theories of the burdens of time and cultural history, as accessed through the use of the intertext.


Heidegger’s canonical study of the relationship between existence and various temporalities offers a philosophical complement to Călinescu’s cultural perspective. In particular, his delineation of authentic and inauthentic temporalities—the first which unites future, past, and present, the second which separates them and prioritizes the present—can find an analog in different uses of the intertext. One use of the intertext as it reaches across times may be to shift one from inauthentic to authentic temporality, and being.


Poulet’s work investigates the problem of isolated present moments that, bereft of a God-given telos, teeter on a meaningless void. If Heidegger offers an ontological schema of how temporalities can be linked or separated, Poulet presents the efforts of various writers to perform that linking process. He reads Proust, for instance, as recovering a temporal continuity and a sense of stable self through the acts of memory and writing—but Poulet’s framework and critical style can be brought to bear more widely on the construction of personal and cultural histories.


As one of the earlier theorizers of postmodernism, Hassan’s work will operate as a cornerstone of the theoretical chapter. He makes several key delineations. One is between chronological and typological assessments of postmodernism: the first pegs it to a specific time period and group of authors, while the second links it to devices and forms that could appear centuries before. Another is the combination of continuity and discontinuity in postmodernism: a phenomenon that both breaks with modernism while always looking back and defining itself in terms of what came before. Another is between postmodernity as a social and historical phenomenon that arises in post-industrial late capitalism versus postmodernism as an aesthetic movement. This distinction is particularly important to contextualizing Pavić, as Eastern European postmodernism developed without those materialist postmodern social conditions—and therefore elides many canonical characteristics of postmodernism such as engagement with pop culture and kitsch.


Like Hassan, Hutcheon, will be a central theorizer of postmodernism in my first chapter. In particular, I will situate The Dictionary of the Khazars within her discussion of historiographic metafiction: works that posit historical reality, while foregrounding the biased and narrativized ways that reality arrives to later generations. By her account, history becomes itself an enormous intertext, constantly revised by the present’s retrospective gaze. Her work discusses the postmodern nostalgia for a grounding referent, the use of paratext, anachronistic/parodic intertextualities, and the de-totalized role played by the author figure. Like Hassan, Hutcheon’s Anglophone-centric work, though, will need to be translated to the local specifics of Eastern European postmodernism. In many ways, Pavić eludes her universals.
Additional Secondary Sources on Marcel Proust and Milorad Pavić


“The personal is political,” wrote Carol Hanisch in 1969, in an essay reflecting on the conflicts between feminist theory and personal reproductive choices. And although her words were written more than a century after the first modern Hebrew literary works began to penetrate the Pale of Settlement, the collapsing of personal and political choices encapsulates the historical, linguistic and national debates surrounding the development of a modern Jewish literature. In this time of upheaval, the linguistic was political, a struggle for the hearts and minds of Jewish readership between Hebrew, Yiddish and a plethora of local languages in the Pale of Settlement. In the period between 1828 and 1921, the end of the Russian Revolution, Hebrew was transformed from a language of liturgy and exegesis into a viable medium for sophisticated modern prose, poetry and journalism. In my senior thesis, I hope to explore and translate critical and theoretical works by Micah Yosef Berdichevsky (1865-1921), one of the foremost—and most radical—writers in this literary revolution, in an effort to inform English-language readers about this unprecedented linguistic, literary and ideological phenomenon.

I plan to translate three early-twentieth-century Hebrew works by Micah Yosef Berdichevsky: *Lemahut Hashira* (Towards The Essence of Poetry), *Al Ha-Perek* (On the Chapter), and *Inyanei Lashon* (Matters of Language). Each work is a thematic collection of smaller essays that allow Berdichevsky to express himself in his preferred form—the short and often cryptic reflection. These essays, on the border between literary theory and literary criticism, express Berdichevsky's views on issues pertaining to the philosophy of literature: the specific role of Hebrew literature in a modern world; the role of the artist in historical memory; and the role of poetic creation in man's relations with the divine, among other topics. Cumulatively, the essays provide a fascinating insight into the self-conception of an author writing amid the revival of his language of choice. The essays reflect the perspective of a man trained in the classical German philosophical tradition in Berlin and Bern, and, at the same time, the expressions of an artist writing in a half-formed and continually evolving language, with a minute and disputed readership. As these essays have never been translated into English, my work will allow a new set of readers to access a series of questions evoked by Berdichevsky's thought: What does it mean to write in a new, or revived, language? What is the role of national art, and the artist in a developing
nation? Was the development of Hebrew into a spoken tongue historically inevitable—or historically necessary? These, among other questions, are ones I plan to answer in my translator's preface.

Choosing Berdichevsky as an author offers a unique perspective on the ideological and aesthetic motivations behind the Hebrew literary revolution. Well acquainted with a variety of European languages and their literatures, and the Jewish religious sphere, Berdichevsky embodied the Europeanism that defined the resurgence of Hebrew letters. Berdichevsky was even dubbed 'The Hebrew Nietzsche'-- a name that not only revealed the deep influence of Nietzsche on Berdichevsky's writing but also pointed to the depth of the German writer's influence on Hebrew ideologues of the time, and the emergent Zionist movement. In my preface, I will explore the influence of Nietzsche's aesthetics and ideas of nationality on Berdichevsky's writings, in addition to outlining the challenges of translating these works.

Translating modern Hebrew literature from the turn of the twentieth century presents a unique set of translation difficulties and rewards. Like most of his Hebrew-writing peers, Berdichevsky was reared in a religious home and comprehensively educated in the Jewish textual tradition, including the Old Testament, Mishnah, Talmud, and centuries of exegesis.

Thus, both the author and his audience were steeped in a rich and highly intertextual Hebrew tradition. Hebrew writing of the period, though bereft of a spoken dialect, drew on linguistic strata ranging from Genesis to the Medieval Hebrew poetry of Spain. The resultant texts are host to a complex network of allusions, from the Pentateuch and Prophets to Talmudic tractates both minor and major; they contain Aramaic phrases taken directly from the Talmud, Greek influenced Hebrew vocabulary from the Mishnah, and a plethora of words newly invented by the authors of a language perpetually adapting to the needs of modern realist prose. In my translation, I hope to highlight the complex subtexts engendered by allusion, taking advantage of the many pan-Biblical and pan-Talmudic reference works that render this effort possible in a modern age. I plan to reflect my research in a significant number of footnotes and, if necessary, explanatory appendices.
Annotated Bibliography

This compendium of Modern Hebrew literary works, with a highly informative preface by Robert Alter, will allow me to view Berdichevsky's works in the literary context in which he wrote them. Authors include Uri Nissan Gnessin, the pioneer of stream-of-consciousness writing in Hebrew; Hayyim-Nahman Bialik, the national poet of Israel; and Shaul Tschernichovsky, who brought sonnets, ballads, epics and other classical literary forms into the Hebrew language for the first time.

In this book, Robert Alter outlines the stages in the Hebrew-language literary revolution, tracking the developments in Modern Hebrew prose style over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This will allow me to pinpoint the unique features of Berdichevsky's style in historical context, and chronicle the remarkable evolution of Hebrew prose in the absence of spoken dialect.

The primary source text I will be working from, this 1921 collection includes the contents of Berdichevsky's collection of essays 'Ba-sadeh Ha-sefer,' (In the Fields of The Book): 'Al HaPerek' (On the Chapter'), 'Le-Mahut Ha-Shirah' (Towards the Essence of Poetry), and 'Inyanei Lashon' (Matters of Language). The essays express Berdichevsky's ideas and attitudes towards the role of the artist, what constitutes literature, and the specific roles of Hebrew literature and language in the modern literary sphere.

This text, edited by Berdichevsky's foremost biographer, gathers testimony from relatives, coworkers, friends and followers in a book of essays and excerpts that paint a remarkable portrait of the life of the author. Texts include the testimony of former yeshiva classmates, prominent historian Simon Dubnow, fellow Hebrew poets and feuilletonists, and the author's wife, Rachel.

This text chronicles the development of Hebrew and Yiddish literatures within a series of historical events Harshav dubs the “Modern Jewish Revolution,” ranging across continents, empires and languages. The book provides an important theoretical context for the development of these literatures, meshing literary theory and historical perspective.

In one of his earliest works, Nietzsche explores his philosophy of aesthetics and outlines his notions on the nature of art. In exploring texts by Berdichevsky and Nietzsche in tandem I hope to examine Nietzsche's influence on Berdichevsky's aesthetic philosophy directly.

In this aphoristic work, Nietzsche advances the idea of eternal recurrence and the notion that “God is dead,” and begins to develop a number of his theses on power. Both the form and the content of this book are important for study of Berdichevsky, as Berdichevsky adopted the aphoristic form in many of his short (and somewhat cryptic) essays.

Golomb, Jacob. Nietzsche and Zion. New York: Cornell University Press, 2004. This work seeks to explore the influence of Nietzschean thought on Hebrew writers and ideologues in the early twentieth century, and the consequences of this for the ideology of Zionism. Among other prominent writers of the
period, such as Martin Buber and Theodor Herzl, Golomb devotes multiple chapter to Berdichevsky's relationship to Nietzsche as visible in his work and correspondence. In particular, Golomb explores the Nietzschean influence on a central debate between Berdichevsky and the scholar, writer and editor Ahad Ha'am, on the fundamental nature of Hebrew writing.

A collection of scholarly articles about various aspects of Berdichevsky's life and work, Mekhkarim U-Teudot includes an essay about Nietzsche's influence on Berdichevsky and the Zionist movement; an essay about the role of historical study in Berdichevsky's works; and a collection of one hundred letters culled from Berdichevsky's correspondence in the years 1890-1900, a period in which he wrote and formulated many of the works I am translating.

In this essay, Marcus Moseley delineates the complex, ambiguous, and often vilified role of memory and historic consciousness in Berdichevsky's work. The essay traces influences of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on Berdichevsky's views of memory and consciousness; the relation of Berdichevsky's autobiographic work to his notions of memory; and the role of memory in art as evidenced by his literary criticism, including essays I will be translating.
How to Write a Good Research Proposal
Dennis Y. Tenen
Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature
Columbia University

Many research proposals I read begin with a set of propositions or a thesis. But don’t you find it strange to offer conclusions before the actual work of collecting, organizing, and synthesizing the material? To my mind, it is more reasonable to think about the proposal as a plan for research—a document that poses questions, rather than answering them. If that makes sense to you, I suggest your proposal contain a concise treatment of the following (in any order):

- What has prompted your interest in the topic?
  The purpose of the first paragraph is to ease your audience into the field of your research. A small case-study, a quotation, or an anecdote can be used to create a reader-friendly "point-of-departure," which introduces the reader to the range of questions that motivate your work.

- What kinds of questions will you be asking?
  What is your problematic? What philosophical, literary, social, ideological, or historical problems will your work engage? What kinds of questions do not interest you? What categories of thought and critical assumptions involved?

- How do your questions fit into a broader intellectual tradition?
  What is the tradition of answering these types of questions? Where do you expect to continue or break with the tradition?

- How will you answer your questions?

- Where will you look for your answers?
  Create a sense of your archive. What kind of materials will you be looking for (literary, legal, scientific)? What period? What language? What medium? What genre? Where is it? How will you get to it and when? This could be as simple as "Ulysses, by James Joyce," the graphic novel collection at Butler Library, or as complicated as "Comparative traditions of Medieval Slavonic hagiography." What are the biases implicit in your archive or dataset? What kind of things are included or excluded?

- What kind of answers do you anticipate?
  What do you expect this material to tell you? What form do you expect your thesis to take? How might you structure your writing? What possible problems (theoretical, practical, or otherwise) could stand in the way of your analysis?

- A plan of action
  Identify any gaps you have. Describe work completed (if any). Come up with a reasonable timeline. Suggest per-week, per-month, per-semester goals and milestones.
1. Begin with something unresolved, some question about which you are truly curious. In a course she once taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Carol Gilligan talked about the imperative to orient your inquiry toward “a real question,” which she defines as a question to which you don’t already know the answer and to which it matters to you to know the answer.

Although it is important to "begin" your focused exploration with a governing question and to make that question clear early on in your thesis, you need not – in fact, probably cannot – begin the entire research and writing process with a question. It takes a lot of work – reading, talking with people, thinking, freewriting – to generate and focus your governing question.

Your question derives from your noticing something counterintuitive or surprising or confusing. You make observations that appear to be in tension with one another and to point to some apparent contradiction, mystery, conflict, surprise, discrepancy, problem, oversight, or puzzle – something that makes you stop and say, “Huh. What’s the story here?” We could call these observations competing observations in that both are compelling yet neither prevails over or negates the other. These might be observations you make about an organism or ecosystem, about a character in a piece of literature, about two (or more) approaches to understanding and addressing some problem, about two (or more) interpretations or arguments, etc.

Your job is to formulate a question(s) that derives from these competing observations. For instance, you might think, “In looking at the perpetuation of poverty… or at how epigenetic phenomena lead to heritable traits … or at how we understand what leads to the development of empathy in people … we have tended to focus on x. And yet evidence (or experience) indicates that y might also play an important role. How can we better understand the role of y?” Or, “We used to talk about this issue in terms of the metaphor of x, but over time, the metaphor has shifted. What is the metaphor implicitly or explicitly in use now? How do we understand that shift? What are the implications of that shift?”

2. Let questions guide your inquiry and the structure of your piece. Make clear to yourself and your readers the unresolved question that you set out to resolve. This is your governing question, the question that governs your inquiry and ultimately guides and governs the structure of your piece. Show your readers what leads you to pose your question in the first place, what competing observations gave rise to the question.

Keep your eye on your governing question. You might want to put that question somewhere where you will see it every time you sit down to work – e.g., on a note you attach to your computer, on your bulletin board, or on the wall in front of your workspace. This will serve as your lighthouse, your beacon on the horizon that helps guide you home. You need not be bound to the original form of this question. You might need to revise it or supersede it several times as you move along. When it changes, your destination changes, and you will take a different tack or chart a different course. Make note of how your governing question evolves. The narrative of your inquiry is itself an interesting story.

Identify your subordinate questions subordinate questions subordinate questions subordinate questions. Just as the thesis as a whole is a response to a governing question, each chapter, each section, and each
paragraph of the thesis is a response to a subordinate question – subordinate in the sense of being in the service of the governing question. Subordinate questions are the questions you will need to address or resolve on the way to addressing your governing question.

Make clear to yourself and your readers the subordinate questions to which each chapter is a response. When you are having difficulty developing an idea or structuring your piece, make a question outline question, i.e., an outline in the form of questions. Write out the questions to which each paragraph is a response; questions tend to beget more questions and to form a natural pecking order (order of priority) and nesting order (like Russian dolls, smaller ones being nested within larger ones).

3. Freewrite. In brief stints of time, write without censoring yourself at all. Freewrite to loosen your mind (analogous to stretching before running) and to let yourself follow the playful, associative, non-linear logic of your mind. Often, we don't follow that associative logic very far because we dismiss it early on as entirely illogical and useless. While it is true that in our final product ideas need to be in the form of linear logic so that others can follow our thinking, we need to draw upon our associative logic associative logic associative logic associative logic in the creative process creative process creative process creative process. Associative logic is the logic of dreams. It is also the logic at work when our mind makes a creative connection or leap, often seemingly out of the blue. This typically happens just before we fall asleep or just as we wake up, while we’re in the shower, while we’re driving, while we’re walking, or when we’re having a generative, free-flowing conversation that lead us seemingly – yet not entirely – far afield from where we started. When our mind is free enough to follow its wanderings and associations far enough, they often lead to something creative and useful. Freewriting – without stopping and without thinking about whether what we are saying is elegant or grammatical or concise or logical – promotes the generation of ideas and of creative connections between ideas. Think of freewriting as soil, not seed. Soil is the muck that nurtures a germinating idea rather than the perfect seeds that become the actual sentences and paragraphs of the final product. ((For more thoughts about freewriting, creativity, and associative logic, see Writing without Teachers, by Peter Elbow, and the handout “Writing Things Down Before Writing Things Up,” written by Sheila M. Reindl and available at the Bureau of Study Counsel of Harvard University and at bsc.harvard.edu.)

4. Do focused, or prompted, freewriting. Sometimes freewriting works better with a focus and/or a running start. Consider using the following sentence stems as prompts for your freewriting. Complete the sentence and continue writing from there.

1. When I started this project, the thing that really interested me was . . .
2. The questions I find myself thinking about these days are questions like . . .
3. What I really want to know is . . .
4. I want to figure out how . . .
5. I have a hunch that . . .
6. I am confused by . . .
7. I feel angered or annoyed by . . .
8. What stands out to me about all the stuff I've been reading is this idea that . . .
9. What I've been reading makes me wonder . . .
10. Dialogue between me and the experts (this exercise comes from writing teacher Eileen Farrell):
   This author/professor/theorist/expert says . . . And/but I say . . .
   He or she also says . . . And/but I say . . .
11. If I had to put my project/paper so far into the form of a single question, it would be . . .

12. The observations I make that lead me to pose that question are . . .

13. What makes my question hard to reckon with or difficult to resolve is that . . .

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14. One way in which I could attempt to reckon with that difficulty of how to resolve my question is . . .

15. If things were as neat and tidy as I'd like them to be, I would be able to make the argument that . . .

16. One way in which things aren't so neat and tidy is that . . .

17. One way in which I might address that messiness is . . .

18. I'm stuck. I'm stuck because I can't figure out . . .

19. I can see that my method of approaching my question has some real problems, or at least challenges, including . . .

20. One way I could possibly address that methodological/approach/design issue is . . .

21. I realize I need to define some terms. If I were to try to define the term ________, what occurs to me is that . . .

22. [A letter to a friend or to your reader] Dear ____, I'm trying to write this paragraph/section/chapter about _________. And do you know what? . . .

23. Let me state what I think I know so far, even if it seems obvious or self-evident (in the belief that sometimes it’s actually easy to overlook the obvious and that sometimes the seemingly obvious deserves another look):

24. Of all these seemingly obvious, self-evident things, the one that keeps catching my attention is . . .

25. If I think of “theory” as simply another word for “explanation,” I would say that one of the explanations that people have offered for the thing I'm researching is that . . .

26. But that theory or explanation doesn’t seem to account for . . .

27. If I could say what I really want to say, . . .

28. If I could approach this project in the way I really want to, . . .

29. If I could write about the question that really interests me, . . .

30. What I wish I could convey to my audience is . . .

5. **Work in fifteen minute to twenty minute stretches.** We tend to approach big jobs by thinking we need big amounts of time. We say to ourselves, “I need to write this paper. It's 1 o’clock now. I'm free until dinner at 6 o’clock. That's five hours. I should get a lot done.” But in fact, we barely make a dent. We brush our teeth, do our laundry, check our email, pay a few bills, straighten our room, make a list of errands, hang out with our friends, go on Facebook. But we spend very little time on task (the task of writing). That's because few of us can work for five solid hours on one thing, especially something as difficult and anxiety-provoking as writing.

Especially if you are having difficulty getting started or staying with writing, try to work for very small stretches of time. Most of us can do anything for fifteen to twenty minutes. Work for fifteen to twenty,
break for five to ten is not a bad guideline. You might be surprised at how much you can get done in fifteen to twenty focused minutes. It is much better to work for fifteen to twenty minutes and get something done, however small, than to keep thinking for five hours that you should be working and be so daunted that you get nothing done and then feel discouraged, demoralized, and guilty.

6. **Employ S-O-S strategy**: specific, observable steps. (* ** *The notion of specific, observable steps is drawn from Jane Burk and Lenore Yuen, authors of Procrastination: Why You Do It, What to Do About It. The “S-O-S strategy” is a term I coined.) Think in terms of specific, fifteen- to twenty-minute tasks that you can picture yourself doing and completing. "I am going to take fifteen to twenty minutes to write down a list of questions that my thesis will need to address"; "I am going to take an inventory of all the things I can say, all the things I wish I could say but don't know if I have the evidence to support, and all of the hunches I have"; "I am going to skim this article to see if its methods section is relevant to how I’m approaching my research"; and "I am going to write a memo to myself about what makes my question a hard one to answer" are examples of such tasks. "I'm going to work on my thesis for five hours between lunch and dinner" and "I'm going to work on my literature review this weekend" are examples of plans that are neither specific nor observable: with such a vague intention or general goal, there is nothing specific you can picture yourself starting, doing, and finishing.

7. **Take the “So/And Even So Approach”**. Whenever you find yourself saying "I have only fifteen minutes, so I can't do anything productive," try saying, "I have only fifteen minutes, and... I could jot a few notes about what questions I might address in this paper/skim the beginning and end of this chapter to identify the question the writer's addressing/make a list of some of the challenges or criticism someone might make of my project/brainstorm how I might address those challenges or criticisms."

The “So/And Even So” Approach can also work when you are feeling tired, sad, lonely, scared, discouraged, overwhelmed. It is my version of an approach that comes from a friend who used to coach beginning adult runners. He told them they didn't need to run every scheduled running day but that on those days they just needed to suit up – put on their running clothes and running shoes. If they said to themselves, "I'm tired/busy/sad/lonely, so I can't run today," he asked them to say, "I'm tired/busy/sad/lonely, and even so, I could suit up." The runners found that once they were all suited up, they felt that they were already on their way, and taking a run was not as daunting a prospect. Similarly, if you put yourself in a position to do your work and take even a small step in that direction, you might find that you can, and even want, to keep on going.

When you find yourself saying things such as "I'm sleepy, so I can't work on this"; "I haven't called my best friend in a week, so I can't work on this"; "I have rehearsal in half an hour, so I can't work on this"; "I really want to see a movie, so I can't work on this"; "I'm scared I'm going to fail, so I can't work on this," try replacing the "so" with "and even so": "and even so, I could work for fifteen minutes on tracing the line of thinking that leads me to pose my questions"; "and even so, I could brainstorm for fifteen minutes about questions I might want to address in my paper"; "and even so, I could skim this chapter to see if I can get the governing question that the writer sets out to address"; "and even so, I could read for fifteen minutes to see how this author defines this tricky term"; “and even so, I could write about my fear and how I might proceed in the face of it.” (Writing can be a way of keeping yourself company in your fear, discovering what that fear is about, letting the fear be there without letting it stop you. When you can have your fear rather than be your fear, you are not overwhelmed by it.)

8. **Keep track of your ideas and thoughts as they develop.** Just as you need to save often when you're working on a computer, you need to save often (in your brain) when you're reading and studying. The way to save your thoughts is to jot them down. Otherwise your ideas might get deleted, especially if you have a power surge (get caught up in another idea) or a crash (fall asleep). (Interestingly, the Macintosh Users' Guide of my old PowerBook 160 made this save-frequently analogy in the other direction. A section called "Save Your Work," read, "Since work that exists only in memory is lost when you shut
down the computer, you need to save your work so you can come back to it later. If you don't save your work, it disappears — like thoughts that are lost unless you write them down.

Write notes to yourself. Write notes to yourself. Write notes to yourself. Write notes to yourself. One way of saving often is to keep a thesis journal or memos folder journal or memos folder journal or memos folder journal or memos folder journal or memos folder journal or memos folder journal on your computer. Use your thesis journal or memos folder for freewriting (prompted or unprompted) (see tips #4 and #5 above). Also use your journal or folder to write your notes in the form of brief memos to yourself about your latest response to, or further questions further questions further questions further questions about, or musings on a particular question. Keep a memo document open whenever you are writing at your computer (no matter what you're working on). This open --window approach window approach window approach window approach allows you to catch those fleeting thoughts that fly through your mind in the middle of whatever else you’re doing.

Create two thesis journals or folders: one on your computer (i.e., a folder for memos – see above) as well as one for hand-written entries (i.e., a notebook, big envelope, manila folder, or big piece of paper on the wall) to record thesis thoughts that come to you in moments when you're not at the computer. Great ideas often come at unexpected times. You might end up jotting some of your best ideas on dinner napkins, the backs of old envelopes, scraps of paper, and receipts. Just make sure you have one place or "bin" where you keep them all together. Some people keep one such bin for the introduction, another for the conclusion, one for each chapter, and one miscellaneous file for what writing teacher Larry Weinstein calls "gems without a setting." (For more on gems without a setting, see “Worksheets for Senior Thesis Writers (and other writers, too),” written by Sheila M. Reindl and available at the Bureau of Study Counsel of Harvard University and at bsc.harvard.edu.)

Believe that some notes are better than no notes. As you read or listen, jot down even brief notes jot down even brief notes jot down even brief notes jot down even brief notes about what is standing out to you, puzzling you, or bothering you. These need not be extensive or grammatically correct or stylistically elegant notes. They can be just a couple of words — enough to help you register and recall an idea. Their purpose is two-fold: to help you do something active with the material to make it your own and to leave you with enough of a record of your reading and thinking that you can recall it later.

**9. Keep track of others’ ideas.** In your notes (and in the final product), make clear which words and ideas and lines of reasoning are yours and which need to be attributed to someone else. When you are noting someone else’s words or thinking, write down the information you will need to accurately cite the source of the material in the future or to return to it again down the road. Keep that information firmly attached to the material even as you go through different drafts.

Remember that, as Abigail Lipson and Sheila Reindl point out in “The Responsible Plagiarist: Understanding Students Who Misuse Sources,” acknowledging others’ work is about being responsible not only to academic rules but to a set of relationships: “As scholars, we have a responsibility to our sources (to acknowledge our indebtedness to them), to our readers (to let them know what our sources were and how they informed us), and to ourselves (to declare our own contributions). Proper documentation traces a family tree of intellectual kinship, in which we place our own ideas and text in context” (p. 12). They observe that attributing and citing others’ work is part of our responsibility as members of the community of the mind.

**10. Let your reader in on your reasoning, your thinking, your understanding.** Let your reader know what you want him or her to take away from or learn from a chapter and from your thesis as a whole. Don't just present data. Show your reader how you want him or her to make sense of the data, what you want him or her to see as meaningful about all that data. Show your reader the inferences you make, the things you see as you read between the lines. Think of your thesis as a museum: you are the museum guide giving your audience a guided tour. Don’t just let them wander around, trying to make whatever sense they might of what’s in there. Point their attention to what you’d like them to see and to the
connections you’d like them to make between things. Help them to see and understand what you have come to see and understand.

Use chapter titles and subheads as important signposts for your reader and as ways of challenging yourself to clarify and summarize your thoughts and the connections between your thoughts. To name is to know.

Make sure your reader can tell which ideas, which words, and which lines of reasoning are yours and which are someone else’s. Both by attribution within the text and by formal citation, let your reader know where you are making your own contribution and where (and how) you are drawing upon the contributions of others. Different disciplines have different conventions about attribution and citation. If you have questions about how to handle issues of attribution and citation, consult with your adviser or others in your field; find a manual that speaks to the conventions of your field; and look to model writings in your field in the form of professional publications, dissertations, and honors-level senior theses.

11. Make a point. Many senior thesis writers tend to rely on summarizing, describing, narrating, and categorizing and never get around to making a point. While an elegant and clarifying summary, or a careful and sensitive description, or a well-chosen and illustrative narrative, or a new and intriguing categorization might be a contribution to your field, chances are you will be expected to develop some sort of argument or point, that is, to use your summary, description, narrative, or categorization in the service of an analytic response to some unresolved question or problem. If you find yourself relying on summaries, descriptions, narratives, and categorization, ask yourself, "What larger question is this in the service of?"

Show the subtleties of your thinking. Many students rely on variations of "and" to connect their ideas: "and", "in addition"; "also"; "next"; "another example"; "later"; "plus"; "besides"; "yet another thing." It is as though they knit one very long piece with a basic knit-one-purl-one stitch and then decide after it is long enough that they will cast off, add a few tassels or a bit of fringe, and call it a scarf. That is fine when we are just learning to knit or to write, but to construct complex garments and arguments, we need to make more complex connections between things.

Don't say "and" when you mean to form a more precise connection: "even though"; "seems like, but"; "is insignificant unless we consider"; "is based on the problematic assumption that"; "does not adequately address the question of"; "goes even farther and demonstrates that"" "despite its problems is nonetheless useful for"; "but this definition differs in one critical respect"; "addresses that question but does not address the matter of." An analogy or metaphor can also help you clarify a connection between ideas.

12. Reckon with the complexity of your question. You don't necessarily need to resolve your question completely. Sometimes it is enough to talk clearly about how and why things remain complex rather than to clear up the complexity.

13. Let readers of your draft know the questions you have about the draft. While you might sometimes want to give your adviser and friends carte blanche to respond to whatever strikes them in your drafts, sometimes specifying some of the questions you have helps you feel less vulnerable to getting feedback. As a rule, it’s helpful to you and your readers to append a memo to a draft. You can take the first shots at your work so that you keep your dignity, saying, in effect, “I know this draft has its problems.” And you help your readers by guiding their attention to what is most important to you. You can ask people to tell you what they see as your governing question, or to name three things they learned in reading your chapter, or to tell you what they liked most and what they had the most trouble with, or to tell you where your argument is weakest and where it is strongest, how the tone works in a particular place, etc.

14. Overview and read other senior theses. Read senior theses from previous years. Ask your senior thesis adviser if your department keeps some senior theses available for students’ use. Check with the
library to find out whether and where senior theses from all departments are kept. (At Harvard, the Harvard University Archives (in Pusey Library in Harvard Yard) houses theses that have received a grade of magna cum laude or higher; Lamont Library keeps on Level 1 the most recent two years of theses which were awarded the Hoopes prize.) While it might be useful to read a thesis that is similar to yours in content area or topic, it can be especially helpful to read one that is similar in method or approach (e.g., a thesis that relies upon interview data, or quantitative data, or government documents, or ethnographic data, or a portrait of a community).

15. Accept that anxiety and anxiety-management are part of the writing process. Upon the completion of his doctorate, a former graduate student commented that 80% of the time and energy involved in writing a dissertation goes to anxiety management. You can't wait until you are not afraid or not anxious to begin writing. You need to find ways to write even when you are feeling anxious. Writing in your thesis journal about your fear or anxiety can be a way of keeping yourself company in your fear, discovering what your fear is about, letting the fear be there without letting it stop you from doing what you need to do. Consider using the freewriting prompt, “I fear that….” And then try, “I want to find a way to go forward in the face of that fear. One first step I could take is to ….” You might also try, “I am stuck. I am stuck because….” In addition to writing about your fear or stuckness, working in fifteen- to twenty- minute stretches, taking frequent breaks, getting regular exercise, meditating, using the S-O-S strategy, using the “So/And Even So” Approach, and talking with people are all ways of managing your anxiety.

16. Take frequent breaks. To sustain your focus and concentration, you need to pace yourself. Pacing requires timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks – timely and attuned breaks. You can avoid the potential for dangerously long breaks if you: a) develop a repertoire of refreshing activities; b) repertoire of refreshing activities and experiment with breaks of different sizes; c) develop a sensitivity to when you need a break and to what kind and what length of break you need at any given point. Your repertoire of breaks might include talking with a friend, meditating, dancing in your room to a favorite song, reading your email, making a phone call, getting something to eat or drink, taking a walk, taking a brief nap (notice how long of a nap is "just right" for you), reading a novel or a newspaper, doing the dishes, getting fresh air, doing some artwork, starting a letter to a friend, getting exercise, or running an errand. When you take a break, ask yourself what exactly you need right now. you take a break, ask yourself what exactly you need right now. you take a break, ask yourself what exactly you need right now. you take a break, ask yourself what exactly you need right now. Do you need a change of activity (e.g., to do something physical rather than something sedentary or to work on an art project rather than a problem set)? Do you need a change of environment (e.g., to get some fresh air or to work in a friend's room)? A change of perspective (e.g., to talk with a friend or to watch a movie)? Sleep? Company? Nourishment? Distraction? The taste of chocolate? Entertainment? Notice which sorts and sizes of breaks are most responsive to particular needs. Sometimes only a long break will do. But frequent, brief breaks can be surprisingly restorative.

If you take an unattuned break – a break that is not attuned to what you need at that moment – the break will not hit the spot. If what would restore you is a breath of fresh air, no amount of watching television will hit that spot. If what you need is to distract yourself with a television show, no amount of chocolate will hit that spot. If what you need is the taste and richness of good chocolate, no amount of running will hit the spot. If you what you need is a run, no amount of talking with a friend will hit that spot. If what you need is the company of a friend, no amount of fresh air will hit that spot.
17. **Attend to your senses.** The enterprise of studying and writing can sometimes be one of the most depriving experiences known to humankind. It’s sensorially depriving – we are not seeing something that’s visually interesting, smelling something wonderful, tasting something delicious, feeling a soothing or stimulating touch, or hearing beautiful sound. Studying is socially depriving: we are typically alone. And it is kinesthetically depriving: we are just sitting. We’re effectively in a deprivation chamber.

Try to attend to your senses not only when you take a break but when you create a context for studying. Sit where you can see something appealing. Make a cup of hot, fragrant tea or hot chocolate to smell and taste. Wrap yourself in something warm and cozy. If you can study with music playing, listen to music that will hit the spot in this moment of studying. Study with a study buddy, simply keeping each other company in the process. And get up and move from time to time.

18. **Think of your work in terms of a relationship, a process of continually connecting** and re-ly connecting and re-ly connecting and re--connecting, connecting, connecting. Things get out of perspective when they fall out of relationship: we cannot tell how big or small things are unless we see them in relation to something else. To keep your work in perspective, or to bring your thesis back to scale once you’ve lost perspective, try to stay in relationship with, i.e., connected with:

- **your curiosity and your caring** (also known as your interest, your passion, your desire to understand or to know) – by remembering what drew you to
- **your question in the first place** – by freewriting, being playful with ideas (see tips #4 and #5 above).
- **Your coaches (i.e., teachers), colleagues (i.e., fellow students), and loyal fans (i.e., friends)**
- **your coaches (i.e., teachers), colleagues (i.e., fellow students), and loyal fans** by talking with them about your ideas and about your experience of trying to write.

You might find the following three metaphors of connecting and reconnecting helpful:

- **Engaging, disengaging, and reengaging gears.** Imagine your mind and your project as two gears. To turn, they need to engage, to mesh. Questions are the cogs of the gears, the means by which your mind engages with your project. You prepare to write (or read) by remembering the questions your piece is addressing (or discovering the questions an author is addressing) and by generating questions of your own. Meshing the cogs on one gear (the questions of the piece you are writing or reading) with the cogs on another gear (the questions on your mind) engages the gears and sets them in motion. Whenever your mind disengages (i.e., you lose your concentration) use these sets of questions to help you reengage.


- **Practicing Zen Mindfulness.** Practicing Zen Mindfulness (an approach to everything in life, including one’s writing, reading and studying). A Zen approach to life involves mindfulness (vs. mindlessness); being present (vs. being absent); and cultivating an abiding awareness of your relation to all you do and encounter in your life.
When your attention wanders, as it inevitably will, just notice that it has, and bring it back to your task. Don't judge yourself or your behavior – berating yourself by saying, for instance, "There I go again being such a poor writer (or reader). I never keep my focus. I have such a short attention span. I bet I have the poorest concentration of anyone. I can't believe I am so distractible. I must be doing something wrong. Everyone else in this class (or this library, or the world) knows how to keep their focus. I'm just not a good reader. . . ." Such judgments waste your precious time and energy. When you lose your concentration, just notice what you are doing, and then bring your attention back to your focus.

19. Negotiate with yourself. When you seem to be sabotaging your own efforts to do what you intend, listen for internal voices that express your competing needs, desires, and fears competing needs, desires, and fears competing needs, desires, and fears. Part of you might be saying, "Me, I really do want to do well on this project. I want to get down to work." But another part might be saying, "Me, I'm going to make sure I get some time to hang out with friends no matter what." And yet another part might be saying, "Me, I'm afraid I'm really not competent to do this project. I'm afraid that if I work on it now, I'll just discover that I really don't know what I'm doing or that I can't do as good a job as I want to."

At times like this, it is as if our behavior is being guided by an internal committee whose members each have a vested interest in their own particular preferred activity. The committee as a whole has trouble either accomplishing a task or enjoying itself wholeheartedly because its members keep quibbling over which activity should have priority. Worktime tends to be compromised by the desire to rest or play, and playtime tends to be contaminated by guilt and anxiety over not working.

To work and play with less internal conflict, you need to form alliances among various parts of yourself – for example, among the part of you that aspires to do your best; the part that values other things in life besides achievement; and the part that is afraid of failure, compulsive working, loneliness, or other potential risks of engaging with your work. To form such an alliance requires that all of the separate, uncooperative, "me/I" voices join to create a generative "we/let's" voice (e.g., "Okay, we have several different things that matter to us. Let's figure out how can we get going on this project and also help manage our fear about not being good enough and also guarantee that we can have time to play"). In creating a "we/let's" voice, you bring together all of your energies in the effort to live a a life that feels whole and true to the complexity of who you are. life that feels whole and true to the complexity of who you are. life that feels whole and true to the complexity of who you are. life that feels whole and true to the complexity of who you are.

20. Let yourself be surprised. Let yourself be surprised in the process of writing your thesis. True learning involves a transformation of sorts, and we all know how disorienting transformations can be.

Source and Resources


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