

Research and Academic Writing (Online)

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Prof. Aaron Koh

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Course Description

This course develops students' academic writing and research literacy in education through a workshop-based format. It combines short, focused lectures with guided writing activities, peer feedback, and iterative drafting. Students will generate and refine an education-focused research topic, learn how to search for and evaluate scholarly literature, and synthesize sources into a coherent literature review. Across the course, students progressively build the key components of a capstone thesis proposal, strengthening their ability to construct an academic argument, write with clarity and coherence, and use citation practices appropriately. The course also introduces the responsible and transparent use of AI tools to support academic reading and writing while maintaining academic integrity.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Develop and refine a clearly scoped research topic in education, and articulate a focused purpose and set of guiding questions for a capstone thesis proposal.
- Locate, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly literature to produce a well-organized literature review that identifies key debates and establishes a rationale for the proposed study.
- Write a coherent capstone thesis proposal using appropriate academic conventions, including structure, argumentation, academic style, and accurate citation practices.
- Use AI tools responsibly and transparently to support academic reading and writing, while demonstrating critical judgement and adherence to academic integrity.


Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings and Preparation for Class
1	23 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Course Orientation ▪ The Academic Discourse Community 	<p><i>To read before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ivanic, R., & Simpson, J. (1992). Who's who in academic writing? In N. Fairclough (Ed.), <i>Critical Language Awareness</i> (pp.141-173). Longman: Longman <p><i>Reading Prompts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pick out one or two things the writers said that made you see something in a new way. Try to explain why this was a new insight for you. ▪ Pick out one or two points or comments made in the reading that you are dubious about (i.e. that you are not sure you agree with). Why do those points trouble you?

2	2 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The writing process 	<p><i>To read before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clark, R., & Ivancic, R. (1991). Consciousness-raising about the writing process. In C. James & P. Garrett (Eds.), <i>Language awareness in the classroom</i> (pp. 168-185). London: Longman <p><i>Reading Prompts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Before reading this article, how do you write, and what is your process of writing like? ▪ After reading this article, how has your view change and why?
3	9 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical reading 	<p><i>To read before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Part 4: Active reading: developing a relationship with texts and their authors, In Fairbairn, G. J., & S. A. Fairbairn (2001). <i>Reading at University: A Guide for Students</i> (pp.64-84). Maidenhead: Open University Press. <p><i>Prepare to discuss the Fairbairn & Fairbairn (2001) reading in class. Please prepare to discuss the following questions: (You should come prepared with your opinions, and be reading to elaborate on your opinions with specific examples from the text.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which parts of the reading did you agree with? ▪ Which parts did you not agree with? ▪ What is one-take way from the reading? ▪ They describe many experiences students go through. Are these

			<p>familiar experiences to you or have they got it all wrong?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What did you think of the style that Fairbairn & Fairbairn use? Did you like it? Why or why not? ▪ How did you feel that they treated you as a reader? How did they come across? Would you like to come across as they do? ▪ How do you decide which sources to use in an academic assignment? ▪ Give that the book was written some time ago. What suggestions do you have for improving Fairbairn & Fairbairn's text? ▪ Did any questions arise while you were reading this reading?
4	16 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Choosing a research topic 	<p><i>To read before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chapter 2: Selecting a Research Topic in Bui, Y. N. (2019). <i>How to Write a Master's Thesis</i>. Sage. ✚ Workshop Activity 1: Deconstruction of journal article abstracts (Sample Abstracts will be uploaded on e-Course) ✚ Workshop Activity 2: The Four Questions Framework

5	23 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literature Review I 	<p><i>To read two chapters before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reading 1: Chapter 3 Using Literature to Research Your Problem in Bui, Y. N. (2019). <i>How to Write a Master's Thesis</i>. Sage. ▪ Reading 2: Chapter 1 (pp.1-26) in Thomas, G. (2025). <i>How to do your Literature Review</i>. Sage. <p>✚ Workshop Crafting Research Questions (and using AI to assist)</p>
6	30 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literature Review II: Sourcing & Writing 	<p><i>To read before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chapter 6 Structuring a narrative review (pp.119-132) in Thomas, G. (2025). <i>How to do your Literature Review</i>. Sage <p>✚ Workshop 1: Using search engines and AI to gather relevant literature for your thesis.</p> <p>✚ Workshop 2: Deconstructing the literature review section of a journal article to learn how to write-up a literature review</p>
7	6 Apr	Holiday [Reading Week]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To read Chapter 4 Conducting Ethical Research in Bui, Y. N. (2019). <i>How to Write a Master's Thesis</i>, and participate in Forum discussion on e-Course.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attempt an On-line Quiz base on the topic
8	13 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Writing your thesis rhetorically 	<p><i>To read before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chapter 1 Taking the Rhetorical Approach (pp.1-18) in Fletcher, J. (2021). <i>Writing Rhetorically: Fostering Responsive Thinkers and Communicators</i>. Routledge. <p><i>Reading prompts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What does it mean by writing rhetorically? ▪ How do you write rhetorically? <p> Workshop Activity: Deconstructing a journal article with a view to learn how to write rhetorically.</p>
9	20 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Writing the Methodology Chapter 	<p>To read two articles before class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chapter 7 How to write Chapter 3, Methods in Bui, Y. N (2019). <i>How to Write a Master's Thesis</i>. Sage. ▪ Matthews, C. R. (2025). Approaching, contacting, and grasping: An annotated methodology, <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i>, pp.1-13.

10	27 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative Data Analysis 	<p><i>If you are going to use qualitative method for your thesis, the following articles will introduce you to ways of analyzing qualitative data:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creswell, J. W. (2021). Chapter 18 Coding Text Data (pp.158-172), In <i>30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher</i>. Sage. ▪ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. <i>Qualitative Research in Psychology</i>, 3(2), 77-101. ▪ Trundle, C., & Phillips, T. (2025). Ethnographic document analysis: A guide to dwelling with documents. <i>Qualitative Research</i>, 1-13. ▪ Friedman, C., Owen, A., & VanPuymbrouch, L. (2024). Should ChatGPT help with my research? A caution against artificial intelligence in qualitative analysis? <i>Qualitative Research</i>, 1-27.
11	4 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How to write the results/findings chapter 	<p><i>To read the following chapter before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chapter 8 How to Write Chapter Four, Results & Findings in Bui, Y. N. (2019). <i>How to Write a Master's Thesis</i>. Sage. 📌 Workshop on deconstruction of a journal article and thesis focusing on writing the findings section/chapter.

12	11 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to write the discussion chapter 	<p><i>To read the following chapter before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 9 How to Write Chapter Five, Discussion in Bui, Y. N. (2019). <i>How to Write a Master's Thesis</i>. Sage. <p>✚ Workshop on deconstruction of a journal article and thesis focusing on writing the discussion chapter.</p>
13	18 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing the concluding chapter and abstract of thesis 	<p><i>To read the following chapter before class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 11 Writing the abstract and acknowledgements sections in Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2020). <i>Thesis and Dissertation Writing in a Second Language</i>. Routledge. <p>✚ Workshop: Deconstruction of thesis abstract.</p>
14	25 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual Literature Review Presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15-min per presentation
15	1 Jun	Consolidation, Consultation and Closure	
16	8 Jun	Research Proposal Writing Week	

Assessments:

- (1) **Participation in class discussion and e-Course Forum (20%):** Thoughtful responses and evidence of having read prescribed readings for each week will be generously rewarded with a good participation mark.
- (2) **Online Quiz Week 7 (10%):** 10 Multiple Choice Questions on Research Ethics.
- (3) **Individual Literature Review Oral Presentation (20%):** Each student is to give an individual literature review oral presentation on his/her thesis topic. Your literature review must have at least 15-20 journal articles. You are given 15 minutes to present.
- (4) **Thesis Research Proposal (50%):**

You are expected to submit a research proposal for your thesis. Organize your research proposal into the following sub-headings:

I. Introduction

- Context/Background of the Study
- Purpose of the Study
- The Research Questions
- Significance of the Study
- Contributions of the Study
- Philosophical Assumptions or Worldview and Theory

II. Literature Review and Identifying Research gap (You must have at least 15-20 journal articles)

III. Methodology

- Qualitative Design or Quantitative Design (e.g. case study, regressive analysis etc.)
- Role of the Researcher
- Data Collection Procedures

- Proposed Narrative Structure for Findings
- Strategies for Validation
- Anticipated Ethical Issues
- Limitations of Methodology

IV. Conclusion (providing implications from your research, limitations and suggestions to future studies).

Submit your final research paper for grading on e-Course on **15 Jun 2026 (Monday) 2359**. Format of final paper: MS Word Format in the APA (American Psychological Association) Manual Style, A4-size (Margin: 2.54cm on all sides), Times New Roman (Font size: 12 point), double spaced.

Please state clearly on the cover of your paper:

- (1) the course code & title of this course
- (2) the title of thesis research proposal
- (3) your name and student number.

Please upload your assignment on e-Course, but before uploading **ensure that you have done a plagiarism check using Turn-it-in**. *It is advisable to keep a copy of your final paper for your own record. **You are to declare whether you have used ChatGPT or any AI tools on the declaration sheet and explain how you have utilized these tools on the front page of your research proposal.**

*****Grades for late submission will be deducted: one sub-grade per three days, one grade per week; lateness of submission up to TWO weeks will NOT be marked.***

Online Resources:

- ✚ Pat Thomson, Patter (high-quality advice on thesis writing, supervision realities, and turning thesis work into publishable writing).
<https://patthomson.net/>
- ✚ The Thesis Whisperer (practical posts on thesis writing, productivity, academic writing, and the emotional chaos of doing a doctorate).
<https://thesiswhisperer.com/>
- ✚ UNSW Academic Skills, Literature review guide and proposal support (structure options, evaluation, turning reading into argument)
<https://www.unsw.edu.au/student/managing-your-studies/academic-skills-support/toolkit/honours-postgraduate/literature-review>
- ✚ Purdue OWL, Thesis and Dissertation (planning, outlining, templates, staying on track)
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/graduate_writing/thesis_and_dissertation/index.html
- ✚ UNC Writing Center, Dissertation strategies (writing habits, momentum, managing the long project).
<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/>
- ✚ University of Manchester Academic Phrasebank (phrases organised by thesis sections and communicative functions).
<https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/introducing-work/>

Recommended Texts:

General

Creswell, John W. & Creswell, David, J. (2023). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sixth Edition.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Qualitative methods

Rossman, Gretchen B. and Rallis, Sharon F. (2003). *Learning in the Field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Quantitative methods

Brown, James Dean. (1988). *Understanding research in second language learning: A teacher's guide to statistics and research design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hatch, Evelyn and Anne Lazaraton. (1991). *The Research Manual: Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Larson-Hall, Jenifer. (2016). *A guide to doing statistics in second language research using SPSS and R*. Second Edition. Routledge.

Writing

Thomson, Pat (2023). *Refining Your Academic Writing: Strategies for Reading, Revising and Writing*. Routledge

Feak, Christine B. and John M. Swales. (2009). *Telling a research story: Writing a literature review, Volume 2 of the revised and expanded edition of English in today's research world: A writing guide*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press
(<http://www.press.umich.edu/script/press/elt/compsite/ETRW>).

Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak. (2000). *English in today's research world: A writing guide*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak. (2009). *Abstracts and the writing of abstracts, Volume 1 of the revised and expanded edition of English in today's research world: A writing guide*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press
(<http://www.press.umich.edu/script/press/elt/compsite/ETRW>).

Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak. (2004). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills*. Second Edition. Ann Arbor,

MI: The University of Michigan Press.

TESOL International Association. *Qualitative Research: Case Study Guidelines*. Retrieved from

<https://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/journals/tesol-quarterly/tesol-quarterly-research-guidelines/qualitative-research-case-study-guidelines>

Grading rubric:

Grade	Mark	Description
A+	96-100	Outstanding: The level of research, thinking, and communication are outstanding.
A	91-95	Very good: The level of research, thinking, and communication are superior. Well done!
A-	86-90	Good: The level of research, thinking, and communication are very good.
B+	81-85	Satisfactory: The level of research, thinking, and communication are satisfactory.
B	76-80	Acceptable but average at best: The level of research, thinking, and communication are acceptable.
B-	71-75	Acceptable but definitely below average: The level of research, thinking, and communication are barely acceptable.
C or below	70 or below	Not acceptable: The work is not appropriate for this class.