

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

SOCI 5904
WINTER 2026
The practice & craft of writing

Instructor: Alexis Shotwell

Office Hours: by appointment through <https://calendly.com/alexis-shotwell>, or email me if the times listed there don't work for you.

Email: alexis.shotwell@carleton.ca

Time: Mondays, 11:35-2:25

Brightspace course page link: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/367688>

Pre-requisites & Precluded Courses: Graduate standing

Method of Delivery: In person

I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. -- Audre Lorde

First, forget inspiration. Habit is more dependable. Habit will sustain you whether you're inspired or not. Habit will help you finish and polish your stories. Inspiration won't. Habit is persistence in practice. -- Octavia Butler

How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing. A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor with both hands at sections of time. A schedule is a mock-up of reason and order—willed, faked, and so brought into being; it is a peace and a haven set into the wreck of time; it is a lifeboat on which you find yourself, decades later, still living. -- Annie Dillard

Course Description and Objectives:

This course offers theoretical and practical resources for writing with ease at the upper graduate level. It will cover tools for drafting, revision, elements of style, time and guilt management, and inspiration and liveliness as key parts of academic writing.

Students who complete this course will leave with: a better sense of what opens up their writing process and what shuts it down; tools for reflection and iterative revision of their own evolving writing practices; a personalized toolkit of exercises for writing play, editing practice, warm-ups; tested methods to get over fear of sharing work; and practice offering kind and helpful feedback on drafts to others. Students interested in building their own reflective practice for supporting and teaching peers and undergraduate students will, in addition, leave with experiences setting up and leading writing support groups.

Reading(s)/Textbook(s):

Joli Jensen, *Write No Matter What: Advice for Academics* University of Chicago Press, 2017, 978-0226461700 (~\$24)

Lynda Barry, *What it is*, Drawn & Quarterly Press, 2024, 978-1770467378 (~\$24)