

Preface

The goal of this book is to provide graduate students with the support that they need to thrive as academic writers. If you are a graduate student interested in deepening your capacity as an academic writer, this book is for you. While academic writing is challenging for everyone—and often grueling for graduate students—it is also an indispensable aspect of academic life. I want graduate students to have the resources to learn to write enjoyably, effectively, and productively while understanding that their ongoing writing challenges are shared and natural. Throughout, my stance is one of respect for graduate students and enthusiasm for the enterprise of academic writing. I believe that it is possible to thrive as a graduate writer, and I hope this book will convince you of that. This book is designed to be read straight through and then to be kept as a reference for concrete strategies and motivation. The text has been kept deliberately short; you are busy, and I want you to be able to start improving your writing life without a prohibitive investment of time.

Every writing teacher relies heavily on the phrase “it depends.” The answer to your writing questions will depend on your field of study, on the larger purpose of your text, on your political commitments, on your intended audience, on your preferred style, on decisions made elsewhere in your text. Writing is always contextual and thus rarely susceptible to definitive pronouncements. However, reading a book on writing that did nothing but gesture toward its own impossibility would try your patience. Instead of continually allowing for the possibility of multiple approaches, I am offering one particular approach to academic writing. I have attempted to express this approach with clarity and vigor; my hope is that you will easily be able to see whether my approach is well suited to your needs. In writing advice—as in all things—there is no such thing as a view from nowhere. This book offers my views, those of a monolingual Canadian, a PhD in philosophy, a

former editor, a teacher of graduate writing. All those elements of my biography give me insight into writing; they also inevitably obscure some aspects of writing. My goal is not to provide you with iron-clad rules but rather to express a vision of writing that will inspire enthusiasm and experimentation.

My intended audience for this book is North American graduate students, both multilingual writers and writers working in English as their primary language. For most aspects of this book, the needs of these two groups are indistinguishable; when those needs potentially diverge, I will indicate that. This audience could include students from all disciplines because my topics—principles of academic writing, strategies for effective writing, and habits of productive writing—have resonance across disciplinary writing differences. Graduate writers in English-speaking contexts outside of North America might also find much of the content helpful, but the significant geographic variation in graduate education is meaningful; my expertise is rooted in my experience of graduate education in Canada and the United States.

This book offers both broad principles and concrete strategies; as such, it should be helpful to graduate writers who are looking for an introduction to the enterprise of academic writing or those who are looking for specific ways to improve their writing or their writing habits. The text is particularly geared toward those who are developing as research writers, both master's and doctoral students. Given this focus on research writing, this book may also be of interest to early career researchers looking for a way to develop their writing practice.

Those whose work involves supporting graduate writers may also find this book valuable. If you are a graduate supervisor, you might be able to enrich the support you provide by engaging with my treatment of the graduate writing experience. If you provide graduate writing support through an institutional writing center, you might be interested in the writing and revision strategies explored throughout this book. If you teach graduate writing in a classroom, this book could act as a textbook or provide support for your pedagogical development. My inspiration throughout comes from my own teaching of graduate writing courses; while every instructor will organize their curriculum differently, the topics covered in this book are all crucial for developing graduate writers. At the end of the book, you will find a guide to using this book within a graduate writing course.

While this book was written as a self-study book for graduate writers, one of its central themes is the hazards of writing alone. You can certainly read it on your own, but you may instead wish to read it with other graduate writers. To facilitate that endeavor, at the end of the book you will find

a guide to using this book within a graduate writing group. Using the ideas in this book to tackle the challenges of graduate writing can be enhanced by sharing that process with others who are doing the same.

Whatever brings you to this book, I hope you find within its pages a new way to think about the all-important act of communicating your work to the world through writing.