

Approaches to Writing

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[some entirely subjective thesis writing basics from Lucy]

1) Foreground your your case, your topic, your practice, your story

How can you SHOW a reader as much as TELL a reader what it is you are doing?

CF the Arnold Berleant text: It is always nice to have as rich and thick a description of/a window to your view on the world, before you begin your process.

CF Michael Taussig: Sketches may help!

2) A Thesis : Your Topic/Case) + Your Perspective on the Topic = An Argument

Your perspective on your topic is something that will develop along the way. It may develop through attempts to respond to one or a series of **Research Questions**

A good way that you develop an argument, guide your process and end up having something interesting to say in your thesis is by asking working questions of your topic.

What question/series of questions are you asking of your case your topic and/or of your practice?

Example of research questions

students on the art and ecology course may find these topics familiar:)

Q: How might readings of tracks in the snow reveal the political inclusions and exclusions of urban Helsinki life?

Q: How might a microscopic analysis of Helsinki sand reveal interspecies traces of empire?

Q: How might an understanding of the lives of sea algae as beings and as metaphor, propose methods of decolonial resistance?

Q: How can drawings dance and dances write?

Q: What are some of the relationships between smell and memory, how do such processes work neurologically and in the body?

How might smell be a shared way of working through loss in an artistic practice?

What might writing smell like?

3) Researching, formulating and presenting a *FIELD* in which you situate your work:

Who is already doing the kind of work you are interested in? Who is responding to similar kinds of questions to your own, in theory /practice?

It is highly likely in a transdisciplinary programme like ViCCA that you are drawing on many disciplines in order to define your own very particular **field**

What are your references like?

Your references are your companions on your thesis journey. How are you paying tribute to them?

4) Your Method: Your specific research approach(es).

How are you seeking to answer your research question?

What specific approaches are you using?

What kinds of partners and examples, disciplines and practices might help you develop your method?

5) The writing process (more on this throughout the week!)

Often in the process of writing, after mind-mapping, free writing sketching, long walks and a lot of procrastination, you find a series of questions and you begin your first draft from there.

However, your first or second written draft often leads (often somewhere near the conclusion) to other ideas, which you realize, are perhaps more relevant than the ones you were asking to start with. This is completely normal but may mean you need to rewrite your thesis again with these new questions and ideas at the beginning of a new draft. Do give yourself time for this process!

A way to check if your writing is relevant is to check with each section.

- i. Is my writing really responding to my question and my main argument?
- ii. If not, do I eliminate this part of the writing or do I change the question and do a re-write?
- iii. Anything that doesn't respond to your question or your argument in the final draft might need to be saved for another project entirely

Some FAQ's.

Or primers for conversations we may or may not have tomorrow afternoon, hopefully in person.
About the writing samples you have brought with you. Or about your thesis process.. Or about anything else writing related
How do I engage and then describe my topic/case?

What kinds of questions am I asking in my writing?

Is my practice my method or my topic or both?

What might the differences be between writing and research *about*, *with* and *through* practice?

Is the research/practice divide even very useful?

What is my *field*?

What are my references and how do I pay tribute to them?

How might the *form* my thesis takes better reflect and enable my main concerns, questions and practices?