

Laima Vincė Sruoginis, Assistant Professor of English
University of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine, USA
University website: <https://usm.maine.edu/eng/laima-sruoginis-0>
Paskaita ir kūrybinės dirbtuvės „Kūrybinis rašymas akademinėje aplinkoje“
LMTA Klaipėdos fakultetas

Seminaro planas:

- 1. Introduction:** I briefly introduce myself and invite each student to introduce herself or himself. The focus of the introduction is on learning names, giving the doctoral student the opportunity to briefly introduce their doctoral project.
Learning goals: Building rapport/Getting to know the students.
- 2. The “Elevator Exercise”:** In this exercise I ask students to visualize a scene in which they step into an elevator on the top floor of a high-rise building. An influential publisher steps into the elevator together with them. In the time in which the elevator moves from the top floor to the bottom floor – approximately ten minutes – the student must impress the publisher by describing the object of their research clearly, succinctly, in a condensed manner that is no longer than two sentences. The object is to impress the publisher enough as to be invited to another meeting. The students are given ten minutes to craft their research objectives. I go around the room and ask each student to read their research objects. However, I take on the role of the publisher. I may either immediately schedule a further meeting or fine tune the student’s objective to achieve the learning goals of this exercise.
Learning goals: The students practice expressing their “object of the research” succinctly and in a manner that is both informative and intriguing at the same time. They learn how to accept criticism and adjust their writing goals.
- 3. Writing as Breath:** I talk about how writing is connected to our breath. I cite linguistic and neuroscientific research that explains how on evolutionary terms writing is a form of expression practiced much later than verbal expression. For this reason, while a native speaker may make many stylistic and grammatical errors while writing, they will rarely make such a mistake while speaking. I talk about the “story method” and the ways in which speech and writing are connected. Then, I explain several methods of moving between the spoken word and writing to edit and proofread academic and creative writing. I discuss how badly managed early experiences with teachers or professors can sometimes lead to trauma around writing, leaving the student feeling “frozen” when called upon to express his or her research or ideas through writing.
Learning goals: Students broaden their perspective on writing as a process that invokes the unconscious mind and are given the opportunity to work through and possibly even verbally share traumatic moments they have internalized around the process of writing.
- 4. Freewriting exercise: 20 minutes:** I explain the principles of freewriting. Then, I invite the doctoral students to remember that moment when they first felt excited about their doctoral project and took that step to commit themselves to working on the project. What was it about the project that was exciting to them? What was the relevance? How did they

come upon their idea and then develop it? Then, students engage in twenty minutes of freewriting on this topic by hand on sheets of paper provided. Students are told that they should not worry about grammar, mechanics, or stylistics. They are told that they will not be required to share their writing but will be given the opportunity to share and discuss after the freewriting session. This pact between teacher and student releases the students from self-censorship and gives them the freedom to delve into their unconscious mind.

Learning goals: Students learn and practice a writing skill that they may further develop on their own while working on their dissertations. Also, students produce writing that they may then further work with as they write their dissertations.

- 5. Sharing and Discussion:** Students are invited to either verbally share the experience of their freewriting session or to read excerpts from their writing. The process of sharing leads to discussion about their projects and the relevance of their research and problems that they have encountered writing their dissertations.

Learning goals: The students are given agency to share their writing, their thoughts, their insights. They are given permission to “own” their material.

- 6. Questions:** Students are invited to ask questions about writing, research, my work, or to further share their insights and thoughts.

Learning goals: This portion of the seminar gives students the opportunity to ask questions, air concerns, engage with me as writer and as a university professor.