**MASTER'S THESIS/PROJECT WRITING WORKSHOP SERIES**

- Beginning September 2016, Carson Medley, Thesis Editor and Advisor for the Office of Graduate Studies, will present a series of extensive writing workshops for M.A. candidates (or any students interested in improving their academic writing skills) who plan on writing a master’s thesis or project. The workshops, however, are open to all graduate students regardless of their culminating activity. There will be 16 workshops stretching from September 2016 to April 2017.
- The workshop series will address specific components of the master’s thesis and projects as well as general writing and organizational strategies. Ultimately, the workshops will cover all aspects of academic writing and research and benefit all students regardless of discipline. The workshop series has been designed and organized in a way that will guide students in a linear path to the April 21, 2017 deadline of their culminating activity. The workshop dates are also available on our website: http://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/
- The presentations will also be available on our website for all those students who cannot attend.

**9/14/2016 SSC 150 3-4**

**Workshop 1: “Paragraph Island”** will break down the inner workings of the paragraph. We will go old-school and revisit syntax and discuss the role of punctuation—chiefly, the comma, the semicolon, and the colon. Also, we will discuss the SEE paragraph. We will also explore the art of “Revision for Concision,” and illustrate ways to edit and put a nice shine on each paragraph.

**9/21/16 SSC 150 3-4**

**Workshop 2: “Writing for the GRE”** will cover all aspects of the Analytical and Argumentative Writing portion of the GRE. We will learn how to write for this particular audience, discuss the scoring guide, look at prompts, benchmarks, and comments. Finally, you will be given writing tips designed for the specific and arduous task of writing for a standardized test.

**9/28/16 SSC 150 3-4**

**Workshop 3: “The Hero’s Journey—How to Write a Statement of Purpose”** will teach students the art of writing an essay for graduate school admission, a letter of intent that will make him or her stand out from all the other applicants.
Workshop 4: “What Is a Thesis/Project?” will introduce the student to the culminating activity of their graduate education, the thesis or project, which has terrified students for years. This workshop will discuss the differences between the Thesis and Project, and help students decide which option is best for their personal interests. This workshop will also go into the history of, and reasoning behind, the thesis—to answer a research question—as well as providing a breakdown of the thesis/project into all its parts:

- Chapter One: The Problem
- Chapter Two: The Literature Review
- Chapter Three: The Methodology
- Chapter Four: Presentation and Analysis of the Data
- Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Workshop 5: “I Have this Great Idea” will discuss the critical point of coming up with the idea to turn into a thesis. We will talk about where researchable ideas come from, and how to turn the potential idea into a thesis. We will spend a lot of time exploring theses and projects on the Chico Digital Repository. We will also discuss how to write a research proposal.

Workshop 6: “My Only Problem Is That I Don’t Have a Problem at All” will teach the student how to find the problem, the issue—the conflict—in his or her thesis. The research problem applies to a special and specific kind of problem that is unlike any other problems—this problem is an explanatory device presented in carefully written concise and showing, not telling, sentences, that are about finding out how to fix this universal, not personal, problem. We will strategize ways to detach yourself from the problem, on the surface, and conceal how it relates to your personal or social values. Possible solutions to the problem will drive your
thesis, keep pushing it forward when your legs are tired and all you want to do is sit down and bow out of the race.

11/2/16 SSC 150 3-4
Workshop 7: “Which Came First—the Answer or the Question?” will address the most important, and least discussed, aspect of the thesis: the research question that is so enthralling that the graduate student has no problem living with it for at least the next year of her life. A graduate student cannot be a good thinker and a poor questioner. I will discuss how each discipline is driven not by the answers but by the essential questions. This workshop will teach students how to master the art of questioning, and illustrate how these questions will lead to the thesis. I will focus on the following methods of questioning goals and purposes:

a. Questioning Goals and Purposes
b. Questioning Questions
c. Questioning Information, Data, and Experience
d. Questioning Inferences and Conclusions
e. Questioning Concepts and Ideas
f. Questioning Assumptions
g. Questioning Implications and Consequences
h. Questioning Viewpoints and Perspectives

2/8/17 SSC 150 3-4
Workshop 8: “Put Your Dukes Up: The Defense” will demystify this process and expunge any fears the researcher has about this final process. I will have a professor come in and instruct the class how to prepare for the defense, and offer several techniques to remove any doubt in the researcher’s mind that he or she will not pass the defense. I will bring in a professor to talk to you about this.

2/15/17 SSC 150 3-4
Workshop 9: “It Was Not a Dark and Stormy Night: Writing the Introduction” will break down and thoroughly discuss all the points that must be addressed in Chapter 1 of the thesis:

a. Introduction/Problem Definition
b. Need for the Study
c. Purpose of the Study
d. Definitions

e. Limitations

f. Research Question

2/22/17 SSC 150 3-4

Workshop 10: “The Story of the Squirrel Who Gathered Too Many Nuts: Understanding the Literature Survey and Writing the Literature Review” explains and simplifies perhaps the most important ally the graduate student will have: the work of other scholars. This is important because the writer must find a few scholars to put in his pocket and carry around with him everywhere he goes, and it is equally important to find some scholars that are easy pickings in a thumb wrestling war. Here I will discuss the scavenger hunt aspect of research, and offer tips to help students work smarter, not harder. And, perhaps most importantly, I will discuss the pitfalls that most often plague writers—chiefly, not knowing when to stop gathering information and actually start writing.

3/1/17 SSC 150 3-4

Workshop 11: “Copy of a Copy of a Copy: Understanding Copyright, Fair Use, and Transformation” sheds light on the ambiguous and nebulous world of Copyright issues that haunt many, if not most, Master’s candidates. This workshop will provide a brief history of Copyright law and instruct students how they can go about securing permission—and help them to use work that is not in the public domain in their thesis. The workshop will also help students determine when they do and do not need permission for material used in their thesis. Also, I will go into detail about the doctrine of Fair Use, chiefly, what I call the big four questions: What is the purpose of using the document?; What is the nature of the Copyrighted work?; What is the relative amount of the portion used?'; What is the market effect of the use on the Copyrighted work? The workshop also highlights the little known Transformative factor that helps students get around strict Copyright law: Was value added to the original by creating new information, new aesthetics, new insights, and new understandings?; Has the material you have taken from the original work been transformed by adding new expression or meaning? Finally, I will give several examples from my experience working with students who have experienced several Copyrighting issues.

3/8/17 SSC 150 3-4

Workshop 12: “How I Flew to the Moon and Proved It Was Made of Blue Cheese: Writing the Methodology Section” will look at what on the surface might
seem like the hardest section to write, but if well planned might just be the easiest section. Based on the mantra of “show me, don’t tell me,” I will discuss how the student can and must describe in detail how the study was conducted. I will explain how the student must use the methodology section to set up the reader for the following results chapter which will show the reliability and validity of the study.

3/15/17 SSC 150 3-4
Workshop 13: “Making Sense of It All: Presenting Discussing Your Findings and Results” will show students the various angles and arguments they can make to present writing that is convincing, compelling, and credible to their audience. Here the student must write like he is Neo from an action scene in *The Matrix* and he has to fend off a hundred different attackers at once. I will guide the student through the writing process where she is now in the critical position of evaluating and interpreting the findings based on the original hypothesis. I will discuss how the student will examine, interpret, and qualify the results and draw inferences and conclusions from them. Finally, I will bring the student full-circle, back to the introduction, where we will revisit the original problem. However, if the writing is true, there will be no need to remind the audience of the problem.

4/5/17 SSC 150 3-4
Workshop 14: “Last Impressions: Conclusions and Recommendations That Do Not Insult the Reader’s Intelligence” will discuss different approaches to writing a subtle summary of the initial research questions, findings, and the conclusions reached upon the research questions. The workshop will also emphasize the importance of presenting any limitation to the findings—writing about these limitations in a way that does not sound like the writer is trying to create an excuse for a lack of credible, convincing, and compelling evidence and thereby apologizing for wasting the valuable time of his audience. No—the most important message here is to let the writer know that this is the time for her to speak up—she has earned the right if she has followed all the advice in these workshops! Yes, this is the moment when the scholar has earned the right to offer suggestions and recommendations, to impart wisdom without coming off as preachy, to issue warning and proclamation of good news, to not only enter the conversation but to facilitate the conversation.
Workshop 15: “The Elevator Pitch to the Famous Hollywood Producer: Writing an Abstract that Encourages Your Audience to Keep Listening.” This workshop will discuss possibly the hardest part of the thesis writing process: How do you boil down at least two years of your life and 157 pages of a thesis with more than 57 sources to 250 words? I will offer students advice on how to successfully write an abstract that presents a terse and engaging overview of the thesis. My message here is simple: Every word must tell. What is not simple is deciding on what inept phrases must be expunged from the abstract.