

TITLE: Writing the PhD – genre, form and evaluation

POINTS: 5

WHEN: week 17, VT 2022

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ericka Johnson, Tema Genus

Please email expressions of interest to ericka.johnson@liu.se

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will discuss how PhD dissertations are written, shaped by formal requirements and local practices, and how they are evaluated. We will explore the PhD dissertation as a genre, asking what elements are incorporated in its production and discussing how these can be flexible. During the course, students will read a how-to book on writing a dissertation, as well as 3 different examples of PhD dissertations to get a feel for the variations that the genre can contain. We will also study the production steps outlined in the Tema PhD student handbooks and read an example of a Tema PhD dissertation at the 60% seminar, 90% seminar and the published final version. Finally, the course will invite professors to come and speak about recent PhD dissertations they have evaluated, giving insight into how a PhD is “graded” or evaluated.

REQUIRED READING: *Note that this course requires the reading to be done ahead of time.*

Most texts can be found on the Lisam page:

Chapter 6 in Phillips, E. and D. Pugh (2005) *How to get a PhD*. Open University Press

2 Tema PhD dissertations (1 monograph and 1 collection of articles):

Mehrabi, Tara (2016) *Making Death Matter. A Feminist Technoscience Study of Alzheimer’s Sciences in the Laboratory*. Tema G dissertation, Linköping University (as pdf on LiU bibl.)

Lee, Francis (2009) *Letters & Bytes: Sociotechnical Studies of Distance Education*. Tema T dissertation, Linköping University (available as Google books or through Lisam)

1 PhD dissertation of the student’s choice, preferably from their field

Doctorandhandbok – from student’s tema

Lindén, Lisa – 60% seminar text

Lindén, Lisa – 90% seminar text

Lindén, Lisa (2015) *Communicating Care* Lund: Arkiv. PhD diss., Tema T (as Pdf on LiU bibl.)

SCHEDULE:

1. Monday, 25 April, kl 10.15-12. Room: Lethe

Introduction, discussion of chapter 6 in Phillips, E. and D. Pugh (2005) *How to get a PhD*.

Open University Press. (distributed as a pdf) This session will start us thinking about the PhD as a genre, and as a text that is possible to write.

Exercise (to be done before the seminar): Read chapter 6 in Phillips, E. and D. Pugh (2005) *How to get a PhD*. Open University Press. Be prepared to discuss what you agree with or disagree with in this text.

2. Tuesday, 26 April, kl 13.15-15. Room: Lethe

Each student presents their chosen dissertations and then we engage in a group discussion of Lee, Mehrabi, and the other dissertations. We will discuss what generalizations we can make and to what extent the dissertations we have read for today stray from the genre.

Exercise (to be done before the seminar): Read Lee, Mehrabi and a self-selected dissertation, preferably from your field. Present the self-selected thesis for the class, focusing on structure and form.

3. Wednesday, 27 April, kl 13.15-15. Room: Lethe

Progression 1: Comparison of the various stages from the handbooks.

Exercise (to be done before the seminar):

- Bring to class the *Doktorandhandbok* from your tema and a handbook from another (preferably quite different) PhD program. Present for the class how their descriptions of the PhD are similar, different? Be prepared to discuss the stages and instructions for producing a PhD at each.
- Find out how the 60% seminar is conducted, how one chooses the opponent/reading group for it, and what follow-up happens with their comments afterwards at your department. This information can be found in the PhD handbook, but you should also talk to some of the supervisors at your tema and/or PhD students who have recently gone through the 60% to get their input.
- Find out how the 90% seminar is conducted, who is the opponent/reading group for it (how are they chosen, who has to approve this choice?), and what follow-up happens with their comments afterwards. Again, this information can be found in the PhD handbook, but you should also talk to some of the supervisors at your tema and/or PhD students at your tema.

4. Thursday, 28 April, kl 13.15-15. Room: Lethe

Progression 2: Discussion of Lindén's 60%, 90% and final dissertation.

Exercise (to be done before the seminar): Read Lindén's 3 manuscripts and discuss what changed during the process, what stayed the same? What did the manuscript contain at the various stages in terms of structure, completeness?

5. Friday, 29 April, kl 15.15-15. Room: Lethe

Dissertation manuscripts are evaluated at these various stages. Colleagues who have recently evaluated dissertations at the various mileposts and at a defence will be invited to talk about their experiences, thoughts, reflections.

Exercise (to be done before the seminar): Speak with a recent post-doc about their experience of the defence. Present to the class insights from this conversation.

EXAMINATION: The course will be examined based on active participation and a written task. Written task: based on the discussions during the lectures, revisit one of the dissertations read for session 2 and write a 1-2 page evaluation of the dissertation. Include the question you would ask at the public defence if you were on the grading committee (all members of the grading committee are expected to ask at least one question to the defendant at the end of the defence) and the (usually more critical) points you would want to discuss with the rest of the committee during the post-defence grading session. Turn-in by email to Ericka.johnson@liu.se no later than 6 May, 2022.