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Revising to PUBLISH

**WENDY BELCHER
INSTRUCTS FLEDGING AUTHORS
IN SUMMER COURSE**

A Report by Vange Heiliger

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IMAGINE MY SURPRISE at hearing these instructions from a teacher: “I want you to try putting the minimum work needed into this.” I never expected to be told to do less work for anything related to school—especially not for the enigmatic honor of getting published in a peer-reviewed journal. Wasn’t publication by the not-yet-hooded reserved for the most hard-working graduate students? For the overachiever who sacrificed sleep, relationships, and any semblance of a social life in exchange for the dreary pallor of a library tan? Yet this was Wendy Belcher’s practical advice to me when I confessed I was sick of thinking about men and vasectomy and was dreading revising my article for publication.

“Writing and Publishing the Academic Article” is a summer-long course taught by editor and writer Wendy Belcher. Offered as a perk to those students in the Graduate Summer Research Mentorship (GSRM) program, the workshop demystifies the process of publication and offers hands-on experience at revising one’s own work for publication. Some of the most valuable aspects of the class included being accountable on a weekly basis for progressing with a particular aspect of editing and having a concrete

timeline for completing the editing process and submitting the article for publication. Most importantly, Wendy emphasized finding balance in key aspects of academic work that can too easily take over a graduate student’s (or professor’s) life: reading, writing, teaching, and meetings.

Being given permission to not make rewriting a five-year-old paper my entire life meant that I could enjoy and learn from Wendy’s weekly assignments. And I won’t deny that not having grades, funding, or advancement contingent upon my writing performance allowed me to be more experimental, both with my writing style and my writing practices. By writing practices, I mean when, where, how, and how often I write. For example, when Wendy assigned my class of 20 graduate students the task of writing a minimum of fifteen minutes every day, I took the opportunity to try writing at different times of day and in different locations. A nightowl accustomed to composing on my computer, I was surprised to learn how much I enjoy writing while drinking my morning coffee, using a blue ballpoint pen and a spiralbound notebook. When I got to a stage in my writing and editing where I needed to use my computer, I discovered the trick of taking my laptop to a humid

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It's funny how graduate school is meant to prepare graduate students for a life in academia, and yet certain aspects of being a successful professor—like publishing—may be left to graduate students and young faculty to figure out on their own. Wendy Belcher's "Writing and Publishing the Academic Article" course helps demystify the process of publishing in a peer-reviewed journal and gives graduate students practical tools for achieving this necessary element of academic success.

pizza joint around the corner. The forced discomfort and lack of Internet access meant I sped through my typing as quickly as possible, avoiding the hours of procrastination with the email, websurfing, and household chores calling me at home. Tasks completed in record time, it was a relief to enjoy my evenings without a writing deadline hanging over my head.

The publishing class also shaped the way I structured my GSRM paper. I read for the mentorship on a daily (Monday through Friday) basis and wrote notes in the margins of articles. Every dozen or so articles, I typed up my reading notes along with the relevant bibliographic information. It seems obvious in retrospect, but it had never occurred to me that this was a fantastic way to compile an annotated bibliography. And once I had the annotated bibliography, it was an easy process to locate themes across the literature, to locate gaps in the field, and to decide what my argument would be. The publishing class additionally required students to do research on which journals we might want to publish in and to get the necessary contact details, word counts, and formatting requirements necessary to be considered for publication in that particular periodical. It has been easier to see a path for publication of my GSRM article because of the knowledge and skills I acquired from the publishing class.

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Evangeline M Heiliger is in her third year of the Women's Studies Ph.D. program at UCLA. Her major research interests include the science and politics of sustainable living. Her dissertation analyzes a social history of coffee with a focus on women's fair-trade and organic coffee cooperatives in Latin America.

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