

ANT 261: Science, Policy, and Society
Spring 2019: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:30 - 12:20 am, Studio D

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Writing for the Web



Documents meant for online reading need to be concise and structured visually. Writing for the web is more like poetry than academic prose.

Below are suggestions for effective writing for websites. In general, you need to grab the attention of your reader and concisely summarize your point, hinting (through media and links to other pages) at why what you are writing about matters. Be like Hemingway (supposedly): For sale: baby shoes, never used.

- **Use the inverted pyramid.** Like in journalism, start strong with your conclusion. Your more important material should be up front. Your title is especially important. Spend more time on your title and your first sentence.
- **Pictures are a thousand words.** Use images and other media to make or reinforce your point (your own, preferably, but if you must, use “creative commons” media – google that for more information). Youtube and vimeo videos can easily be embedded in WordPress pages. Media, however, cannot stand alone; you need enough text for context or to explain its significance. Provide “alt” text for all graphics that convey content, have meaning, or offer interaction – this is for accessibility reasons. In WordPress, make sure all your posts have “featured images.”
- **Keep pages scannable.** Reading online is visual. Use bullet points, headers, pull quotes, bold and italics – but avoid over-doing it. Don’t be cheesy.
- **Stay focused.** Web pages are not academic articles – break up longer papers into coherent sections for individual webpages. Further break these coherent sections so that paragraphs are not too long. Related tangents can also be presented in pull quotes.
- **Meaningful Links.** For link text, use descriptive links (Read more here) instead of non-descriptive text (Click here). While you don’t need to link every single concept, place, or person, it’s good to have at least three or four relevant links on your page.
- **Grammar and spelling are still crucial.** The old rules still apply, so you still need to edit your prose. Write in active voice and avoid passive voice. Don’t be repetitive.

Microstyle is about grabbing the attention for a moment and communicating something quickly. Economy of expression is all important. (Christopher Johnson, *Microstyle* 2011:3)

More resources:

Web Style Guide Online: <http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html>

Why writing like a college student will kill you online. <http://www.copyblogger.com/college-writing/>

Effective Academic Blogging: <http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/blogging.html>