

JEFFREY R. WILSON
PUBLIC SHAKESPEARE

Objectives: This activity is designed to expose you to public writing, its differences from academic (peer-reviewed) writing, and some strategies for doing it.

Secondarily, this activity will help you refine your argument for your research project as you head into the revision stage. Finally, it's an opportunity for some extra-credit: student who submit their essays for possible publication get a 1/3 letter grade bump on their final essay (e.g. a B+ on the paper becomes an A-).

Readings: Five Essays of Your Choice (See Directions Below)

Assignment: Write a short essay (900-1200 words) delivering your argument for your research project to a public audience. Then submit that essay for consideration in a relevant venue.

Instructions:

Part I (Before Class)

1. Read two essays of your choice from the Public Shakespeare page: <https://wilson.fas.harvard.edu/writing-with-shakespeare/public-shakespeare>. Write their titles here.
2. Identify three possible venues for your essay from the attached list. Write the names of the venues here.
3. Read one recent (non-Shakespearean) essay of your choice from each venue. Write the essays' titles here.
4. As you're reading all these essays, make a list of the writing features and strategies in public writing that are similar to and different from the academic writing we've been doing and reading in peer-reviewed journals this semester. Your points don't need to be fancy or extensive: it's just a way for you to familiarize yourself with the conventions of public writing, and to prepare to do it yourself.

Similarities

Differences

Academic Writing

Public Writing

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Part II (During Class)

1. Select 3-5 bits of key evidence from your research project. These may be amazing statistics, great quotations, bizarre facts, unknown texts, etc. Write them here.
2. Think about how you'll craft your writing style in this piece, which will be different than the style adopted in formal academic writing. Make some notes to yourself here.
3. Think about what the structure of your piece will be. Make a basic outline here.
4. Write your essay. (When you're done, you'll be exchanging essays with a partner, so please write legibly on a new sheet of paper or, if you prefer, on a laptop or some other device you can hand to your partner.)
5. Exchange essays with a partner. Read your partner's essay, making notes toward workshopping the essay (which we'll be doing next).
6. Workshop your essays with your partner.

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Part III (After Class)

1. Revise your essay based on your conversation with your partner in workshop, and your further thoughts on the piece.
2. Select a suitable venue. See the attached list, but also think about the venues you like, including those local to Harvard or to your hometown. Also, think about your particular essay: there may be a public magazine or website specific to that topic (e.g. *India Times*, *Sci Fi Monthly*) that seems most fitting. Click around on the various sites you're considering; see what sorts of things they publish; and figure out what's the best fit. You'll need to navigate on the site to find information on how to submit your work (check the "Contact Us" link).
3. Submit your essay for consideration.

Below is a template for a cover letter. Modify it as needed based on your personality and style.

Dear Editors,

I'd like to see if you're interested in considering an essay I've written titled "[Title]" (attached). The argument is that [snappy one-sentence thesis statement].

The essay grows out of a course I'm taking at Harvard University, called *Why Shakespeare?*, which grapples with his prominence in modern life. Our professor has asked us to re-fashion our ten-page heavily footnoted term papers into public-facing essays, and I thought you might be interested in the results.

Thanks for your consideration.

Regards,

Your Name

Note that sometimes publishers ask for a "pitch" rather than the full essay. If that's the case, create your pitch by using your intro plus a three-sentence overview of what you cover in the rest of the essay.

4. To get the extra credit on your third essay, submit your piece to a venue by midnight on the day of our Public Shakespeare class, and BCC me on the email (or forward me the submission confirmation: some places will make you submit it through an online portal).

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Possible Venues
(Google Them)

The Times Literary Supplement	Politico
The New York Review of Books	Vox
The Atlantic	American Prospect
Harper's	The New Republic
Salon	The Nation
The Paris Review	National Review
The New Yorker	National Interest
Los Angeles Review of Books	The American Conservative
The Baffler	n+1
Public Sphere	American Interest
Zocalo Public Square	Observer
Literary Hub	American Scholar
Poetry Foundation	Standpoint
Longform	In These Times
Big Questions Online	Commentary Magazine
Public Domain Review	National Affairs
The Public Life of the Mind	The Point
History Today	The Spectator
The New Inquiry	Prospect Magazine
Public Books	The Smart Set
Book Forum	Arcade
First Things	Philosophy Now
The Humanist	The New Atlantis
Words Without Borders	New Philosopher
The Millions	American Spectator
Electric Literature	Washington Monthly
The Rumpus	Commonweal
Book Riot	Current Affairs
Signature	New Criterion
Odyssey	New Statesman
World Literature Today	CounterPunch
Philosophy Now	
Guernica	
The Hare	
The Folger's Beyond Shakespeare	
Shakespeare Magazine	
The American Scholar	
Aeon	
New English Review	
Hazlitt	
Public Seminar	
Granta	
The Economist	
The Conversation	
JSTOR Daily	
Slate	
Weekly Standard	
Boston Review	