

Seductive Sentences: A Practical Workshop

Dr. Kali Tal (Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Bern)

Date: November 11, 2013, 10am to 4:45pm

Room: B-105, UniS, Schanzeneckstrasse 1 (Kurszentrum), Bern

ECTS: 0,5

Elegant English sentences are not easy to craft and writing persuasively in English is a challenge to native and non-native speakers alike. This course is designed to assist academics who wish to master the skills of writing precisely and accurately, and who would like to convey complex ideas in the form of readable prose. The idea that underpins this course is that the language of a good academic article is shaped to support the ideas it carries, without either oversimplifying or indulging in the unnecessarily ornate.

Though generally agreed upon by scholars of rhetoric and composition in the U.S. and Britain, the rules and guidelines used to achieving these ends are rarely taught in courses where English is studied as a foreign language. I intend to share them with you here in a concise and simple form. Because my approach is pragmatic, we begin with the sentence, and proceed with the work of stacking sentences into paragraphs, and paragraphs into sections, in order to lead the reader naturally and inevitably to the conclusion drawn by the author.

At the conclusion of the course, writers will have the necessary tools to craft sound, elegant sentences, to organize those sentences into paragraphs that convey a single idea, and to stack paragraphs that carry the reader securely through a narrative chain of arguments and evidence.

I teach in a lively, interactive fashion, without grammar exercises or any kind of rote language instruction. Instead this course combines the art of rhetoric (“the means of producing persuasion”) with clear instructions on the most effective way to convey your research and ideas to your audience(s). I use slides and “live” writing examples from papers in progress, and focus on real-world writing. You will learn to spot the errors you are most prone to make, and learn to correct them quickly. I believe in constructive criticism and encouragement, so you needn’t be worried about sharp critique. There are no writers out there, including native speakers, whose work is perfect.

This is a one-day workshop. I will lecture for two hours in the morning, and the rest of the day will be spent in guided critique of sample and student prose.

Please send 1-2 paragraphs of your prose (work-in-progress or finished) until November 4, 2013 to ktal@ispm.unibe.ch

Enrollment via ILIAS; external participants contact christian.wymann@iash.unibe.ch

Kali Tal is Senior Editor at the Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Bern, where she edits scientific and medical papers. As a freelancer, she edits academic articles and books in the social sciences and humanities, as well as the sciences, and has worked in fields ranging from legal studies, to political science, sociology, anthropology, ethnic studies and literature. As a scholar, she has published in the field of Trauma Studies (*Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, 1995, Cambridge University Press).