

Philosophy 6191-002  
Spring 2018  
Prof. Peggy Battin

Thursdays 2:00-5:00  
CTIHB, Room 406

## How to Write a Philosophy Book: A Practicum

You sometimes hear people say, “Well I’d like to write a book, but I don’t know how to get started.” Sometimes it’s “I’m starting a book, but every time I sit down at the computer my mind wanders,” or “I almost have a panic attack.” Occasionally it’s even “I don’t think I’ll look for a tenure track job because I don’t want to have to write a book.”

This course is intended to nip all this in the bud. Yes, you can write a philosophy book—indeed, in this practicum, you’ll write *two* philosophy books. They might not be very long, and they might not be all that good, at least at the start, but they’ll have all the elements necessary in the kinds of books philosophers seek to write in conveying their ideas.

BACKGROUND and ongoing assignments:

Regularly read the Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews, issued every day or two; you can subscribe (for free) at [philosophical-reviews-list@nd.edu](mailto:philosophical-reviews-list@nd.edu)

Regularly consult the online catalogues of Oxford University Press and at least one other publisher of books in philosophy, particularly publishers that bring out books in your area of interest.

PART I. Types of philosophy books.

- Readers.
- Textbooks.
- Anthologies.
- Pro/Con argumentative books.
- Collections of an author’s own papers.
- Translations.
- The dissertation expansion.
- Scholarly monographs.
- Solo-authored, original, full-fledged philosophical works.
- Broader-audience, “public intellectual” books.

PART II. Constructing an anthology.

- Sources.
- Inclusion criteria.
- Layout, balance, structure.
- Introduction, including rationale for the volume.
- Invitations.
- Permissions.

PART III. Resources and dissemination

- Library resources

e-books  
Hybrid print and electronic versions

PART IV. Publication

Types of publishers: academic and trade; vanity publishers  
Discount rates in academic and trade.  
Crossover markets  
Approaching a prospective publisher  
Proposals and submissions, contracts, deadlines, titles,  
editorial revisions, etc.  
The (impossible) challenge of the 150-word abstract.  
Referees  
Promotion

PART V. Your own book: The solo-authored, original, full-fledged philosophical work.

Focus, scope, structure of the argument  
Audience(s), in field, cross-disciplinary, general academic, popular  
Academic jargon and its function.  
The publisher's review.  
Responding to criticism.  
The full draft:  
Title page, credits, introduction, bibliography, footnotes, etc.  
Working with editors, copyeditors, production staff.

PART VI. Presenting your book:

Promotion and its challenges.  
The elevator speech: why is your book *important*?  
Advertising; social media; professional and popular buzz  
Bragging rights.

This course is a practicum. It's also a workshop. That means the class will be asked not only to do a variety of assignments but to engage in mutual critique of each others' work along the way. You'll be asked to keep a running account of your misgivings, frustrations, periods of despair, and of course those *ah-ha!* moments of elation when there's a breakthrough. You'll present your work, and present it again and again, both informally and in somewhat more formal style. We'll enlist the help of your advisor(s) in assessing the content of your work. You'll be expected to develop a focused anthology in the field you're working in and submit it, bound and in hard copy by about the midpoint of the course; you'll also be expected to submit the working version of your own original, full-fledged philosophical book—also bound and in hard copy—by the end of the course. Along the way you'll prepare proposals for prospective publishers, publishers' information-gathering forms for promotion, and various other ancillary materials. You'll be all set up to go, whenever your book project eventually matures.

And, just so that you know the challenges of book-writing aren't insurmountable, the various faculty in the Philosophy Department who've written books will be invited to come and give short presentations about their own trials and tribulations in writing their books. You'll know you're not alone.