

HES New Initiatives Fund Proposal: **“JHET Online Writing Workshops”**

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JHET WRITING WORKSHOPS WITH PAUL DUDENHEFER

Introduction and Objectives

The history of economics is a very international community and language barriers is a significant factor behind the heterogeneous representation of the works by historians written in English. In JHET we have an underrepresentation of submissions in terms of countries of affiliation of authors. This becomes more relevant when we noticed that there are several countries with a strong community of historians from which we get very few submissions — Spain and Japan are perhaps the most relevant cases to cite here. It is true that the matter gets more complicated due to the increasing competition of academic outlets available to historians around the world, but nonetheless is something worth considering by our community at large.

However, difficulties with writing and expressing and organizing one's ideas in an academic paper is not something that only non-native English speakers face. Even native speakers find it difficult to write and have an effective academic paper. It is reasonably clear as well that younger cohorts more difficulties than more experienced ones, as non-native English speakers have when compared to native speakers.

Although fostering a really international community is something that only societies can properly pursue, we strongly believe that we can improve the representation of submissions made to JHET, both in terms of countries as well as in terms of career experience, by promoting workshops on academic writing. With more diverse submissions we also hope to be able to select very promising articles that will further improve the high standards of JHET.

Project Outline

Thus, as co-editors of JHET, we would like to propose a multi-year series of online writing workshops in order to reach out a broader audience around the globe. These will be labeled as “JHET Online Workshops” in order to promote the journal, but it is clearly a public good

we are offering to our community, as there will be no official commitment of participants with the journal. Every session we editors will introduce ourselves and say a few words.

These workshops will be conducted by Paul Dudenhefer, someone with a vast experience with academic writing (including writing workshops and assistance to economics students) and long-time managing editor of HOPE. Paul is currently the assistant to the HOPE Center at Duke University.

The goal is to have several sessions in the first year, which would help us gain more experience with doing writing workshops online (something that Paul has never done). We have outlined 7 sessions of 2 hours each described below. We will have a software that can accommodate 100 persons, but we will have a lower cap for the sessions to be effective and enriching to all (probably up to 30 people). Although we really want to improve the diversity in JHET, after guaranteeing high-quality and originality, we will not restrict the online workshops to non-native English speakers only. Problems with writing is not exclusive of non-native speakers, and there can be interesting spill-overs out of their interaction with native speakers. One priority that we will give is to early-career scholars, but the ultimate composition of attendants to each sessions will really depend on the interest we get. We will circulate an open call for participation, with people registering at a website. We hope that selected people will participate in all seven sessions, but we understand that it is likely that we'll have different people over the sessions. Most sessions are self-contained, but the last one is a general discussion of the previous sessions. Some of the sessions will be tailored to non-native English speakers.

The plan is to hold one session per month, with 4 sessions in the first semester of 2019, from February to May, and 3 in the second semester, from September to November. It is clear that we won't be able to give people choices of dates and time of the sessions, and to be able to have people from all around the world participating due to large time differences. We'll set a time that would allow more people to participate.

In terms of softwares for online forums, three are the most commonly used: Cisco Webex, GoToMeeting, and Zoom, with the latter two being really the most popular and with better

features. After searching online, we found out that **Zoom** is the best option.¹ Zoom has many interesting features: “whiteboarding option that makes brainstorming and project planning as seamless as being in a conference room with your team;” it “allows [us] to split [the] main meeting into up to 50 separate sub-meetings or sessions complete with audio and video;” “Zoom's interface is cleaner, making it easier to navigate for all users.” In contrast, GoToMeeting offers “unlimited cloud recordings, transcripts, and storage starting at its mid-level Pro plan,” but we don’t anticipate this being a feature that would be relevant to our project. In terms of prices, Zoom is a bit better. It is worth mentioning that once bought, this software could be used by the HES Executive Committee (replacing Skype), and it could also be offered to HES members that would justify a need for it outside the periods of the online workshop sessions and of the Executive Committee meetings.

Strategy for Project Evaluation

At the end of each session we will ask participants to fill out a short questionnaire about what they learned in that session.

Online Writing Workshop Sessions in 2019

Session 1: Writing Generally

This session will discuss topics such as thesis and supporting evidence, introductions and context, and the importance of telling a story and engaging your readers. The working norm will be the Anglo-American notion of what a good paper is. This session is intended for all historians regardless of their native language.

Required Readings:

William Zinsser, “Writing English as a Second Language,” *American Scholar*, December 1, 2009 (<https://theamericanscholar.org/writing-english-as-a-second-language/#.XdwljOhKiUk>).

¹ We read carefully several online comparisons between GoToMeeting and Zoom, and a summary of the main differences are available here: <https://zapier.com/blog/zoom-vs-gotomeeting/>

Anthony J. Leggett, “Notes on the Writing of Scientific English for Japanese Physicists” ([http://wattandedison.com/Prof Leggett Notes on the Writing of Scientific English.pdf](http://wattandedison.com/Prof%20Leggett%20Notes%20on%20the%20Writing%20of%20Scientific%20English.pdf))

Deirdre McCloskey, *Economical Writing: Thirty-Five Rules for Clear and Persuasive Prose* (University of Chicago Press, 2019). The second edition is acceptable too.

Session 2: Introductions and Conclusions

This session will examine the elements of introductions and conclusions that can engage your readers. This session is intended for all historians regardless of their native language.

Required Readings:

Paul A. Samuelson, Thünen at Two Hundred, *Journal of Economic Literature*, December 1983, introduction.

Kevin D. Hoover, “Is Macroeconomics for Real?,” introduction.

Joseph Bisignano and Kevin D. Hoover, “Monetary and Fiscal Impacts on Exchange Rates,” Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Winter 1982, introduction (<https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/869/item/520366/toc/514140>).

Michael Emmett Brady, “The Economic Consequences of G L S Shackle’s Ignorance of Keynes’s Theory of Probability, Uncertainty, and Decision Making,” May 2017, ssrn.com, abstract and introduction.

Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 12th ed., (Pearson, 2017), chapter on introductions.

Session 3: Audience and the Long Middle: Keeping Your Readers Interested beyond the Introduction

Thinking about your audience as you move through the longest portion of your paper. This session is intended for all historians regardless of their native language.

Session 4: Four Principles of Clear Writing

Nouns as subjects; verbs as actions; begin with old information; end with new information. This session is intended for all historians regardless of their native language.

Required Readings:

Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 12th ed., (Pearson, 2017).

George D. Gopen and Judith Swan, "The Science of Scientific Writing," *American Scientist* (https://www.georgegopen.com/uploads/1/0/9/0/109073507/gopen_swan_sci_of_sci_writing_am_sci_1990.pdf).

Session 5: Academic writing vs. Public Writing: Meta-language, Quotations, Documentation, Voice

This session will discuss differences between academic writing and writing for the educated public. This session is intended for all historians regardless of their native language.

Required Readings:

Steven Pinker, "Why Academics Stink at Writing," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 26, 2014 (<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Academics-Writing/148989>).

Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup, *Style Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 12th ed. (Pearson, 2017).

Session 6: For the Nonnative Writer: Rules, Grammar, Word Usage, and Related Matters

This session will deal with sentence-level problems that nonnative English speakers tend to have.

Session 7: General Discussion of Workshops

No new ground covered per se, but a discussion of general ideas presented in the series of workshops, a review of the material, and so on. This session is intended for only those who participated in at least one of the workshops.

BUDGET

We basically have two items in our budget: Paul Dudenhefer's honorarium, and the cost of the software Zoom.² We could use the HES website to host the registration and to make the workshop materials available to participants.

| Description | Price (US\$) | When the money will be used |
|--|----------------------|--|
| Paul Dudenhefer's participation (7 sessions, 1 year) | US\$2.000 | 2 installments of US\$ 1,000, paid in February and in November |
| Zoom (annual subscription of the Pro Plan) | US\$12.99 | monthly |
| Total Cost per year | US\$ 2,149.90 | |

² Having an annual subscription to Zoom is cheaper than a monthly one: <https://zoom.us/buy?plan=pro&from=pro>. In the budget, we specified the price of the annual subscription as monthly rates, but it will be instead billed annually at the time of the subscription, in early 2020.