

# A GUIDE FOR *FACULTY* *BOOK MANUSCRIPT* *WORKSHOPS*



Tulane

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# Program Overview

Faculty book manuscript workshops were established to support tenure-track faculty (especially junior faculty) in development and completion of high-quality, pre-tenure book manuscripts. Through this program, the sponsoring faculty member is able to invite two external reviewers from other institutions and two internal faculty colleagues for a 1-2-day intensive workshop at Tulane, in which the author is provided criticism and feedback to take their near-final manuscript and transform it for publication. The program is open to all tenure-track junior faculty in the humanities, arts, and social sciences.

Funding can be utilized to support expenses including, but not limited to:

- Travel for external participants (airfare, lodging, etc.)
- Honoraria for external participants
- Workshop meals, room costs

# How to Apply

Please submit complete application on <https://provost.Tulane.Edu/faculty-manuscript-workshops-application>

## Cover Page ⇒ Please list the following:

- Sponsoring Faculty Member Name
- Sponsoring Faculty Member Department
- Sponsoring Faculty Title
- Please list additional Tulane faculty sponsoring and/or participating as panel members in this workshop
- Name of Proposed Visitors
- University Affiliation of Proposed Visitors
- Title of Proposed Visitors
- Department/Program of Proposed Visitors
- Proposed Dates of Workshop and Visitor Travel
- Proposed Total Budget for Visit

## Application ⇒ Please include the following:

- Rationale. Explain the scholarly and career benefits that would result from a Book Manuscript Workshop with your proposed visitors. Include an explanation for the participation of your proposed invitees due to their expertise in the given field/sub-field.
- Structure and content of the workshop. Please list the planned itinerary and activities for your workshop.
- Budget.
- Timing of event.
- Assessment. Faculty Book Manuscript Workshop sponsoring faculty member(s) must agree to be available for post-event assessment.
- **CV of sponsoring faculty member.**

# Preparing for the Workshop

### Things to bring:

- ❑ **A marked up copy of the manuscript for your own use.** If you need a hard copy sent to you by post, contact the organizer or author at least a few weeks beforehand.
- ❑ **The current table of contents and a version of the table of contents that you think is better.** Feel free to reorder and retitle chapters. A good table of contents will have chapters that all seem necessary to the success of the book and that appear in their only logical order. Chapters that are ordered chronologically are easier to plot. If a book is organized around themes, the ordering may need extra scrutiny. Chapters should not seem like collected articles, a common problem for revised dissertations. They should also be consistent in form and length without being formulaic.
- ❑ **A couple of line-edited pages of the manuscript for the author.** If you do not feel comfortable editing, simply print a couple of pages and highlight a writerly tic that irritates or distracts you.

### Things to watch out for:

- ❑ jargon-filled passages that try to introduce too many concepts
- ❑ gratuitous neologisms
- ❑ clunky signposting (“In this chapter, I will show...”)
- ❑ excessive abstraction within sentences (talk of levels, aspects, factors, structures or agentless processes described with nominalizations, e.g., intellectualization, routinization, and so on)
- ❑ confusing citational practices, such as long strings of author-date citations or unexplained quotes from other scholars
- ❑ tangled grammar (long sentences that include many shifts between grammatical subjects, pronouns with ambiguous referents, misplaced modifiers)
- ❑ formulaic prose or, on the other hand, artificially folksy or cliché-heavy conversational asides (see page 8 for resources on editing)

### Relevant questions to keep in mind as you prepare:

- How would you describe this book?
- What is the argument and why is it important?
- What does this manuscript accomplish?

\*Adapted from Nelson, Priya, “A Guide for Faculty Book Workshops” for the Center for International Social Science Research, University of Chicago.

# Preparing for the Workshop

## Inviting participants

### Invite no more than five participants.

It is too difficult to have a conversation that involves more than a table-full of people, and you want everyone in the room to have read your writing and done a minimum of preparatory work.

### The mix of participants should reflect your discipline and geographic area of expertise, but it should also include people who work further afield.

For example, if you are a historian of the Middle East, invite one or two people whose work mirrors your own. You should also invite an anthropologist or sociologist of the Middle East and a historian of Europe or Asia. Having this mix will ensure that you come away with an understanding of what questions might draw a variety of readers to your work.

### Invite only people whose advice you think will be pertinent, specific, and constructive.

This is not the forum to assemble the most famous scholars in your field who may or may not read your work. A book workshop is one of the few forums left at which academic celebrity has little value. Cherish this opportunity!

### Invite people whose suggestions you can afford not to follow up on.

For professional reasons, it may be politically perilous or simply stressful to have senior members of your own department involved in your book workshop since they may eventually review your promotion or tenure file. You also need to have the flexibility to reject certain suggestions if you find them unpersuasive or if they conflict with those that other participants have offered. The workshop gives you space to improve your project quite apart from the strain of professional auditing and review. Try to preserve the integrity and safety of that space.

### If you have a relationship with an editor at a publishing house, feel free to invite her.

If the prospect of her participation frightens you, well, then don't. After the workshop—and before committing to major rewrites—you may want to confirm that she thinks the changes would enhance the project's appeal to her expected readership.

## How to prepare your participants?

- Send both a PDF and Word file for the full manuscript well in advance of the workshop date (at least 1.5 months).
- Send reminders to participants in the weeks preceding the event to bring the relevant items for discussion (annotated manuscript, etc.) to ensure a productive workshop.
- Make sure the logistics of your event (room rentals, travel, etc.) are completed at least three weeks before.

# The Workshop

In general, participants should be prepared for productive discussion which will often include disagreements. Remember to resist getting lost in the small details and focus on the big ideas.



At the conclusion of the workshop, go back and revisit the questions from the beginning of the workshop. Have ambiguities been addressed? Does the group have more of a consensus?

# The Workshop

## Your discussions should address each of the following points:

- How could the chapter title be made more compelling?
- Does the chapter appear in the most logical place within the manuscript? If not, where should it go?
- How could the overall structure be improved?
- Where does the author assume too much knowledge of the expected reader? Is there background information that might be necessary to reach a broader audience?
- Are there ways to make the chapter opener more compelling?
- Which concepts are essential to the argument, and which seem gratuitous? Is the conceptual scaffolding sound?
- Is the secondary literature treated fairly, and is it gracefully intertwined with the author's own argument? Which references can be cut or given less prominent treatment?
- When does the author project the strongest voice? When does he lose it?
- Which parts of the chapter are most reminiscent of a dissertation?
- Are there examples of deft transitions between empirical and theoretical registers? Which transitions seem strained or awkward?

Helpful discussion points adapted from Nelson, Priya, "A Guide for Faculty Book Workshops" for the Center for International Social Science Research, University of Chicago.

# The Workshop

## Things to remember:

- If possible, have someone take notes at the workshop.
- With participants consent, use an audio recorder to capture all details of the discussion.
- Bring resources including this guide and other suggested resource material from the Provost's website.
- Collect any edited pages from participants for your review and reference.

## After the workshop:

- In the hours following, set aside 30 minutes – 1 hour making notes and writing anything that comes to mind. Capitalize on the ideas the workshop discussion inspires.
- Send follow-up thank you notes to all participants in the weeks immediately after the workshop. Include any clarifying questions you may have.
- Set a revision plan with the bigger picture in mind, then you can attend to “fine-tuning” your manuscript.





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