

# **Writing a Research Proposal**

Dr. M. Cleveland-Innes

Professor and Chair

Centre for Distance Education

# Agenda

**Introductions**

**Becoming a writer**

**Writing an essay of argument**

**Finding your place in the relevant literature**

**Identifying the right question**

**Choosing the right research design**

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## Dr. Martha Cleveland-Innes



**Professor & Chair  
Centre for Distance Education  
Athabasca University**

# Introductions

<http://cde.athabascau.ca/faculty/martic.php>

Names and program of participants

Qualifiers

- What but not how
- Ceteris parabis\* – proposal writing is somewhat discipline specific
- Holy grail – clarity, argument, parsimonious questions, and detailed, appropriate design

\*Latin phrase that translates approximately to "holding other things constant" and is usually rendered in English as "all other things being equal".

Read more: <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/ceterisparibus.asp#ixzz1YWzcfm5v>

# Becoming a writer

"The most universal advice on writing a successful grant proposal is to present a well written, focused solution to a problem in a logical progression. This is much easier said than done, and finding the focus is often the most difficult piece of the puzzle. To find this focus, we suggest writing a "concept paper." A concept paper summarizes in two to three pages the entire project from beginning to end. The point is to take all of the ideas in your head and put them down on paper as concisely as possible. Writing a concept paper is a good exercise in defining your priorities and mission, and can be a useful tool in obtaining valuable feedback before "diving into" the full proposal." (cf. About page).

# Writing

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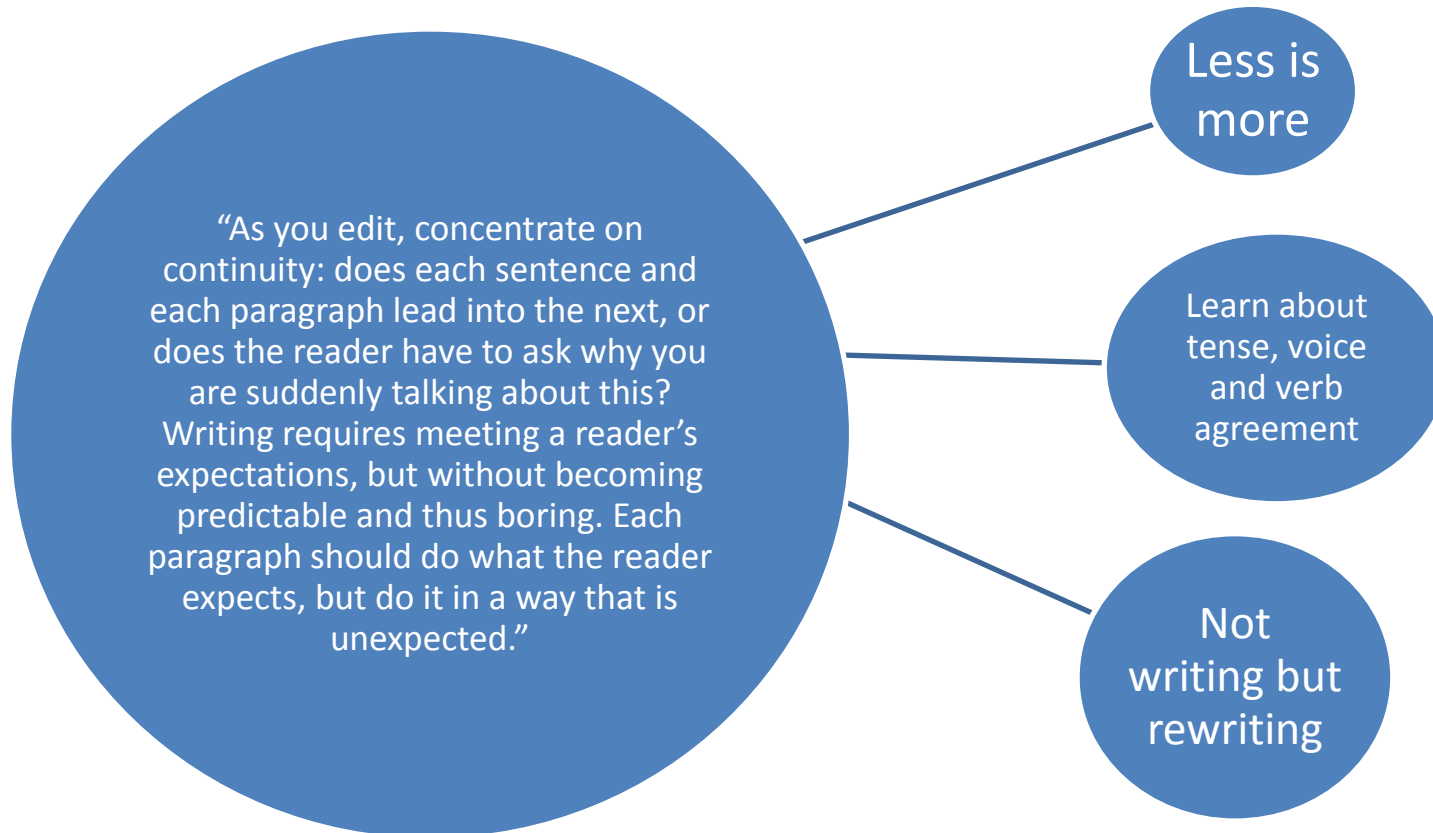
## Advice on Academic Writing

The advice files listed here by category answer the kinds of questions that Un assignments. Most were created by writing instructors here—people who are find links to good advice from other institutions under Further Resources.

- [General](#)
- [Planning and Organizing](#)
- [Reading and Researching](#)
- [Using Sources](#)
- [Specific Types of Writing](#)
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# Becoming a writer



# Writing an essay of argument





# Using the relevant literature



Choose a general topic
Find 5 articles on research in your field
Read and document
Choose 5 more articles
Read and document
What don't we know?

# Uncovering the dark spots





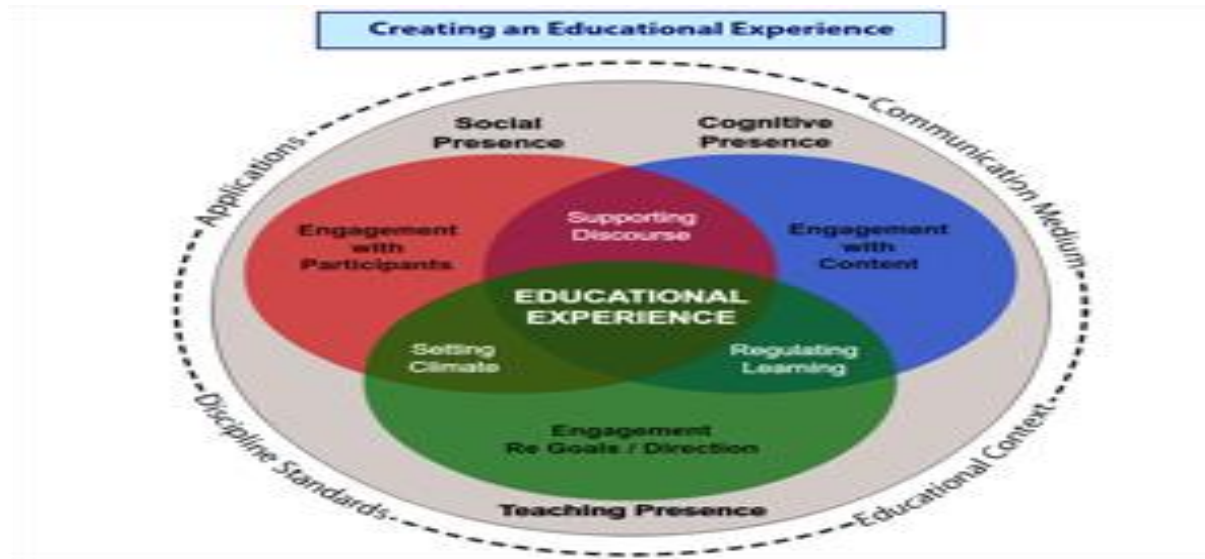
# Research background

<u>Epistemology</u>	<u>Theoretical perspective</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Methods</u>
objectivism subjectivism	positivism Interpretativism symbolic interactionism phenomenology hermeneutics feminism (post)modernism	experimental descriptive survey ethnography heuristic action research discourse anal. evaluation	scaling questionnaires observation interview focus group case study narratives ethnographic statistic. analysis data reduction cognitive mapping interpretative meth document analysis content analysis conversation anal.

# The Problem

- ✓ **Culture plays a major role in online learning** (Bates & Gpe, 1997; Morse, 2003; Hewling, 2005; Moore, 2006; Edmundson, 2007, 2009).
- ✓ **Literature is in its infancy and there are deficiencies in research-based studies especially in regards to globalization of education and cross-cultural issues** (Gunawardena, Wilson, & Nolla, 2003; Edmundson, 2007; Zawacki-Richter, Bächer & Vogt, 2009).
- ✓ **Asynchronous text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC) learning communities have afforded a growing number of cross-cultural learners the opportunity to study in internationally renowned universities or institutions** (McIssac, 2002).
- ✓ **Some of the factors that hinder successful online learning are: inability to understand specific cultural references, language limitations, inability to question authority (instructor or peers), differing emotional needs, time zone limitations, and technological limitations** (Zhao & McDougall, 2008; Uzner, 2009; Zhang & Kenny, 2010).

# Culture and the Col Model



- ✓ **The Col model does not consider cultural issues and multicultural online engagement** (Morgan, 2011).
- ✓ The underlying assumption of this study is that, **as instructors project their personalities in the online environment via their teaching and social presence, both of which are largely rooted in their dominant culture, their values, beliefs and attitudes will significantly affect learners' social and cognitive presence.**

**Culture:** *“the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual”* (Matsumoto, 1996, p. 16).

**“Cross-cultural”** refers to interaction among individuals from different cultures (<http://tinyurl.com/44vlwv3>).

# The Study

- ◆ **Purpose:** to explore how instructors of online courses accommodate and make provisions for culturally diverse learners in an online community of inquiry.
- ◆ **Theoretical frameworks used:** Col framework & MES Framework (Guyton & Wesche, 2005) ➡ **Adapted Multicultural Efficacy Scale (AMEQ)**
- ◆ **Sample population:** 10 online instructors from two Alberta post-secondary institutions volunteered to participate in the study.
- ◆ **Methodology:** Mixed methods with more more emphasis placed on the qualitative phase than on the quantitative phase.

# Research Discussion

## The human experience of coffee drinking

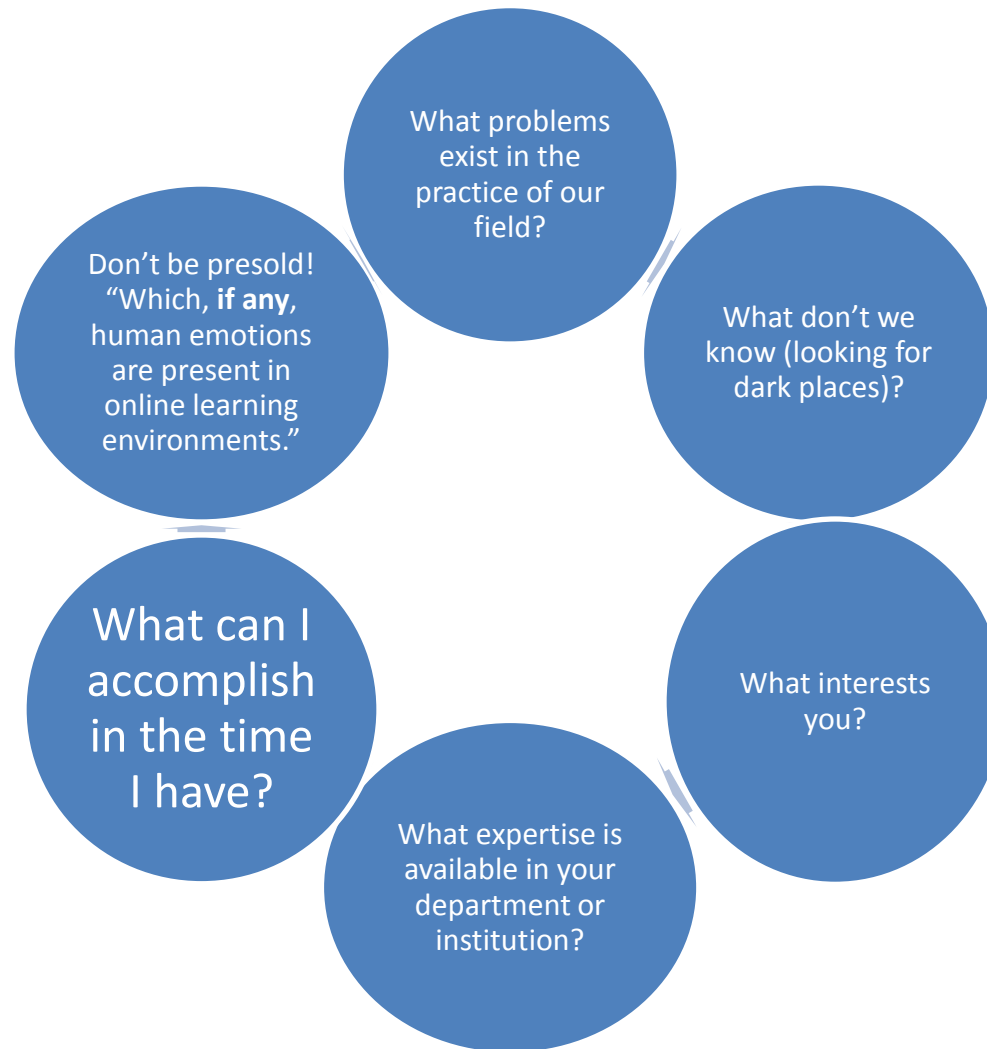


- **Step 1:** Take 5 minutes to identify what you would like to know about the above topic. What problem might you solve with this research?.
- **Step 2:** You will be placed in groups of 4 or 5. Share your ideas about coffee drinking. Choose a research question(s). What is your epistemological position. Consider a methodology and data collection/analysis process. You have 10 minutes.
- **Step 3:** Choose a recorder and a presenter. Summarize your position, questions, and methods. You have 10 minutes.





# Identifying the research question



# Choosing the right research design

The question determines the method—maybe ;-).

Practical and applied or abstract and theoretical?

Is there enough already known to help you formulate deductive notions and test them?

Is this an exploration of new relationships?

How or what questions that explore or describe – qualitative designs.

Testing and comparing relationships – quantitative designs.


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## Canadian Initiative for Distance Education Research - CIDER

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**Description:**

The **Canadian Initiative for Distance Education Research (CIDER)** is a research initiative of the **International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning (IRRODL)** and **Centre for Distance Education (CDE)**, Canada's largest graduate and professional distance education programming provider, at **Athabasca University**, Canada's Open University.

CIDER sponsors a variety of professional development activities designed to increase the quantity and quality of distance education research. CIDER's professional development scope is broad, ranging from learning and teaching application, issues of finance and access, the strategic use of technology in distance education settings, and other factors that influence distance education in Canada.

**Owner:** Terry Anderson  
Group members: 40  
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**Graduate Student Panel CIDER SESSION December 2015**

<http://cider.athabascau.ca/>

# Referencing Software

## Refworks

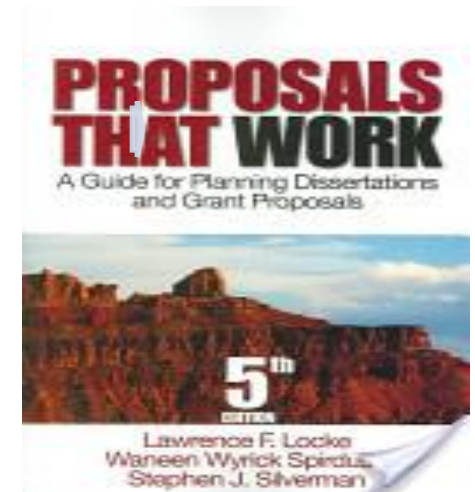
### **An introduction to RefWorks for Athabasca University students, staff and faculty**

With RefWorks you can create your own personal database of citations and annotations for use in papers. It can help you keep track of citations accessed while doing research and can also be used to automatically format papers and bibliographies into standard publication styles. Keep in mind that no citation software can replace good proofreading of bibliographies!



# Resources

Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (Eds.). (2007). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grants proposals*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.



Nair, A.S. (2007). On becoming a researcher. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/21202688/On-Becoming-A-Researcher>

