

# The Art of the Abstract



UWO Classics Graduate Pro-Seminar

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# What is an Abstract?



*Abstrahere*: draw from

Not a proposal (*proponere*)

Why would you need to  
write an abstract?



# Calls for Papers



∞ E.g.

Society of Classical Studies, World of Classics List of  
Calls for Papers

- ❧ If you want to present a conference paper
- ❧ If you are applying for funding to present a paper
- ❧ If you are submitting an accepted article or book chapter
- ❧ For inclusion in a conference program
- ❧ For a course assignment

# Who will read your abstract?



- ❧ Program Committee Members
  - ❧ Should they include you on the program?
  - ❧ Is it interesting, professional, viable, suited to the audience and the limitations of the conference schedule?
- ❧ Conference attendees
  - ❧ Should they attend your paper?
  - ❧ Do they want to talk to you about your/their work?
- ❧ Researchers
  - ❧ Do they want to read your paper?
- ❧ Funding committee members (not necessarily experts)

What does an abstract *do*?





- ❧ Summarizes your argument
- ❧ Indicates the importance of your work
- ❧ Persuades readers to want to see/hear more
- ❧ Helps scholars decide if it is useful for their research



# When should you write your abstract?



- ☞ WAY WAY before the due date!
- ☞ Show it to your colleagues.
- ☞ Put it away and think it over.
- ☞ Revise.

# How to write an abstract



- ❧ What are the published guidelines?
- ❧ What is your paper about?
- ❧ How does it respond to the existing scholarly discussion?
- ❧ What are the main steps of your argument?
- ❧ Offer examples to illustrate
- ❧ Make sure it summarizes a project that is a suitable length
- ❧ Engage your audience
- ❧ Pay attention to opening and closing sentences
- ❧ Revise, revise, revise

Where can you find  
abstracts?



# Resources



- œ Department keeps copies of abstract books
- œ *L'année philologique* and other databases
- œ Society for Classical Studies guidelines
- œ Your mentors, profs, supervisors, colleagues.

# Keywords



- Words that reflect the content of your work
- Words that will help people find your work
- Words that will lead search engines to your work