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DOING  
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## WRITELAB

What can writing do? Writelab is a weekly drop-in therapy writing group facilitated locally after Lauren Elliott and Jack Berman's participation in Janet's Workshop. Looking to conceptualize thoughts across STB and other studios, we'll explore how everyday objects, experiences and practices texture theory and how theory textures life. We'll experiment with writing alongside what's taking shape or being assembled, playing inside or fading into the background, to preserve atmospheres of indeterminacy and relationships that matter.

Monday 7-9pm PST  
April-November 2023  
Studio 41005  
Unit 15119 Main Street

Text 604 342-6412  
if the door is locked

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# **WRITELAB**

## **SECTION ONE**

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STS

# WRITELAB

What can writing do? WriteLab is a weekly drop-in theory writing group modelled loosely after Lauren Berlant and Katie Stewart's "hundreds" and Joe Dumit's "implosion." Looking to compositional methods across STS and affect studies, we'll explore how everyday objects, happenings, and practices texture theory and how theory textures life. We'll experiment with writing alongside what's taking shape or being assembled, staying stuck or fading into the background, to presence atmospheres of indeterminacy and relationships that matter.

Mondays 7-9pm PST  
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[DoingSTS.com](http://DoingSTS.com)



# Imploding and Composing

MATHEW ARTHUR

One of the most agonized questions I get when teaching affect studies is: “how can I do nonrepresentational methods when our currency as academics is writing?” “How can I write with nonhuman affectivities when I don’t have access?” My simple answer: that’s poetry. It’s science and speculative fiction. It’s theology or magic. Really, it’s just a hack at working against the “myself” that is endlessly reproduced. It’s impersonal, about vectors of movement, connection, intensity, impasse. But it’s also intensely personal in the sense that it has stakes in agency and subjectivity, with who or what can act and make meaning. It isn’t that representation has no place. Rather, words accompany other performative potentials: temperature, light, proximity, position. In STS this is called material semiotics—sensibilities and methods of analysis that treat everything in naturecultural worlds as a continuously generated effect of webs of relation (Law 2009).

What can writing do? From March to October of 2023, we met weekly on Monday nights to write. Looking to compositional methods across STS and affect studies, we explored how everyday objects, happenings, and practices texture theory and how theory textures life. We experimented with writing alongside what’s taking shape, being assembled, stay-

ing stuck, or fading into the background in order to presence atmospheres of indeterminacy and hone capacities of noticing. We took compositionality to be both how the world works and an ordinary science: material-semiotic things thrown together or taken apart.

Each week we read aloud from Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart's *Hundreds* then wrote short bursts of theory—not to rip off the form or tone, but to get a feel for theory's unruliness. Often we worked from keywords chosen at random with the roll of a twelve-sided die. We wrote about formats and forms of notation: diagram, user guide, recipe, score, code, tutorial. Or we wrote with a process unfolding across affective and material registers and scales—things intimate or geological, crises like wildfire and bad news, with seasonalities, tides, moods, pets, magic. We asked: “what’s being held together, where are the edges?” Sometimes we just made things up. However aleatory the selection, our prompts occasionally overlapped. Because we talked, took breaks, interrupted each other, left early. WriteLab’s sociality made writing less lonely. Words shared can be savoured or hated-on, detoured or laughed off. The following chapter compiles our writing.

#### REFERENCES

- Berlant, Lauren and Kathleen Stewart. *The Hundreds*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Law, John. “Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics.” In: Turner, Bryan S. (ed). *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Malden; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 141–158.

