

Soc 703: GRADUATE WRITING SEMINAR
Wednesdays 4:10-6:50

Professor Arlene Stein
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Sociology is a form of storytelling. Sociological writing should be judged for *what* it says as well as *how* it says it. This course will explore the art and craft of sociological writing. Each student will work on a project relating to his/her own research. The course is designed to help prepare you to submit your work for publication and to conceptualize the dissertation (and book!).

This seminar is restricted to advanced graduate students who have completed at least one qualifying paper. You are required to come to class with an article in the “rough,” a dissertation chapter that you will refine and revise during the course of the semester, and/or a dissertation outline. Each week, we’ll spend the first part of the class “checking in” and talking about the week’s reading(s). Then we will critically analyze one or more student papers.

In addition to the practical component of this course, we will also spend a great deal of time reflecting upon the art and craft of sociological writing. We will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different narrative approaches, and the writing challenges posed by various methodologies. We’ll consider what makes a great book chapter or journal article, and get practice in line-editing. We’ll also consider debates about sociological audiences and “public sociology” in relation to the changing contours of the publishing industry, and explore, more practically, how dissertations become books. Finally, we’ll reflect upon how our biographies shape the kinds of work we do.

Here’s my philosophy of sociological writing, in a nutshell:

1. Sociological writing is story-telling
2. There is more than one way to write sociology
3. To the extent that you can, try to find your own voice
4. Don't be tyrannized by the literature
5. Don't fetishize methods
6. On first drafts, don't attempt perfection
7. Write and rewrite, and then rewrite again
8. Try, as best as you can, to broaden your audience
9. There is value in finishing—getting it “out the door”

Required Books

Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists* ISBN 0-226-04107-7

Barry Glassner and Rosanna Hertz, *Our Studies, Ourselves*, Oxford, ISBN: 0195146611

All other readings will be posted on the course website at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal/> or they can be found on the web, as noted below.

Sept.5 Introduction

Sept.12 Sociological Writing as Craft

C. Wright Mills, "On Intellectual Craftsmanship," from *The Sociological Imagination*

Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists*, ch. 1

**Bring in your course "contract"

Sept.19 The Craft of Sociology

Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists*, ch. 2-5

Sept.26. The Craft of Sociology

Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists*, ch. 6-10

Oct.3 Exploring Sociological (and other) Journals

<http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?section=Journals&name=Editorial+Offices>

<http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/asaguidelinesnew.pdf>

<http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?section=Journals&name=Writing+an+Informative+Abstract>

<http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?section=Journals&name=Other+Scholarly+Publishing+Outlets>

http://www.in-cites.com/research/2005/december_5_2005-1.html

<http://www.socsci.umn.edu/%7Euggen/sociologyranks03.htm>

<http://sociology.huji.ac.il/Journals/SocAnthroFinal26Dec02.xls>

http://research.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/journal_rank.html

** Research 2-3 journals that you would like to submit your work to, and come to class prepared to explain why you chose those journals.

Oct.10 The Journal Review Process

Alan D. Meyer, "Balls, Strikes, and Collisions on the Basepath: Ruminations on a Veteran Reviewer"

“Publishing and the Peer Review Process”

Arlene Stein, miscellaneous journal reviews

Oct.17 What’s Wrong with Sociology: Critical Evaluations

Harvey Molotch, “Going Out”

James Jasper, “Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers”

Ben Agger, *Public Sociology* (recommended)

Oct.24 What’s Right with Sociology: Exemplary Articles

Steven Epstein, “The Construction of Lay Expertise”

Annette Lareau, “Invisible Inequality”

Oct.31 Thinking about the Dissertation

“Choosing Your Thesis or Dissertation Topic”

Lee Clarke, "Notes on Proposing"

Nov. 7 Turning Dissertations into Books

“Academic Publishing 101”

“Rutgers University Press Submission Guidelines”

Didi Felman, “What Are Book Editors Looking For?”

William Germano, *From Dissertation to Book* (recommended)

Nov. 14 Exploring “Public Sociology”

Herbert Gans, "Best Sellers by Sociologists: An Exploratory Study"

Todd Gitlin, "How Our Crowd Got Lonely"

Nov. 21- no class

Nov. 28 Risks and Rewards of Public Sociology

Symposium, “Engaging Publics in Sociological Dialogue through the Media”

LaVon Rice, "Portrait of the Sociologist as Blogger"
<http://www.asanet.org/footnotes/feb07/fn3.html>

Writing op-eds (TBA)

Dec.5 Why Do We Do What We Do? Bringing the "Self" Into One's Work

Barry Glassner and Rosanna Hertz, *Our Studies, Ourselves*

Dec.12. Bringing the Self In—cont'd

Barry Glassner and Rosanna Hertz, *Our Studies, Ourselves*

**Hand in project and/or contract