

920:504/703 Grad Writing Seminar

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Spring, 2017

Tuesdays 9:30-12:10

Sociology Department Seminar Room (Davison 128)

Contact information:

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I. Course Description:

This course focuses on writing for sociologists, and is restricted to sociology graduate students. While I provide some references on writing, the bulk of this semester will be spent writing, sharing our work, rewriting, and sharing our work again. My own experience is that true creativity comes only in the midst of the writing process. Getting it all down on paper initially is certainly important, but it's only through editing and re-editing that you figure out what you think, clarify your conceptual arguments, specify your research questions, and make your writing comprehensible to others. The perfect first draft exists only in myth.

The point of this course is for you is to turn a draft into something much better. You may have a course paper that you want to turn into a QP, or a QP you want to turn into a publishable paper, or a dissertation chapter you want to be better still. You must have a draft in hand to take this course. The first part of the course will be presenting your first draft, the second part will be presenting your revised draft. The hope is that by the end of the semester, you will have a completed QP, a paper ready to send out to a journal, or a dissertation chapter ready to go.

We will provide each other support and feedback during this process. There is a lot to learn about academic writing, and we shall share those insights with each other: how to make an argument, write hypotheses, develop research questions, structure sections, ensure evidence supports your argument, and write clearly and concisely. Very concretely, the writing seminar is by definition learning by doing.

While presenting and writing your work are two important skills, reviewing is important as well. Hence, in this course, we will review each other's work, in a constructive and productive manner.

Ultimately, this course furthers the process of professional socialization. If you dedicate yourself to the process, by the end of the semester you will have a first-rate piece of sociological scholarship.

II. Learning Goals:

Managing writing in an already too-busy life
Writing sociological scholarship
Revising and editing your work
Providing constructive feedback to peers on their work
Effectively using scholarly work on writing
Adapting practical advice on drafting and redrafting
Accepting constructive criticism, and handling nonconstructive/destructive criticism
Learning practical advice on article submission and dissertation preparation
Presenting scholarship in multiple forums

Several methods will help to achieve these objectives:

- keeping a writing log
- presenting your first draft of paper/chapters
- revising and presenting second drafts of papers/chapters
- reviewing written drafts of your peers
- facilitating review discussions

III. Diversity Statement:

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

IV. Course Requirements and Grading:

This class is graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. To pass the course (i.e., to earn an Satisfactory), you are expected to present your work twice, provide reviews for each of your colleagues twice, facilitate twice, and keep a weekly writing log.

We have only 14 meetings, one of which is given over to an introduction. Attendance and participation are required. Prior to Spring Break, each student will present her/his first draft (either one per class, or two per class, depending on class size). You *may* include a cover letter at this stage that states where you are in your paper drafting, and/or if you want your colleagues to focus on particular issues.

After Spring Break, each student will present her/his revised draft, one or two per class. Include a cover letter saying how you responded to the first round set of comments.

Each week, you are expected to comment on your colleague's work. Each student will serve as facilitator for one paper in the first part of the course, and again in the second part.

Post your paper a week before you present (e.g., Tuesday evening, at the latest). To do this, "add a topic" to the appropriate Forum on Sakai (use this format: "week #: your last name). All class members must then comment on this paper, no later than Sunday evening before the Tuesday class. To do this "start a new conversation" from within the appropriate topic.

One last requirement: before each week's class (beginning week 2, and typically Sunday or Monday), log on to the Sakai Forum site to summarize your relevant writing on your class project for the previous week. Be honest! While I expect that you will keep your day-to-day log yourself, summarize your weekly writing on the Writing Log (use this format: "Week #: your last name.")

The norm for graduate courses is: thou shalt not miss class! It's only fair that if you want constructive feedback on your work, you need to provide that same courtesy to your peers. This means that if you have to miss a session for illness or some other important reason, your written feedback on others' work is still required.

V. Academic Integrity:

This course will be conducted in full accordance with the university's Academic Integrity Policy:

"The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing." (Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy, 2013, p. 1)

Note: it is very easy to cut and paste from the internet, and/or copy verbatim selections from articles or books, without attribution. **This is called plagiarism.** It's also pretty easy to find plagiarism nowadays. You can use internet sources (preferably academic sources you find online through Rutgers libraries), as well as print sources, but paraphrase the work you use and properly cite it. Avoid over-quoting, but if you do use an author's exact words *you must put them in quotes and cite, including page numbers.* A reader needs to be able to check all sources.

VI. Course Structure:

Week 1: January 17th: Introductory session: please come in with your calendars and enough copies of your **abstract** to pass out to your colleagues.

In preparation for our Intro meeting, please read four of the essays in the Chronicle of Higher Education's "A Guide to Writing Good Academic Prose," and come prepared to discuss them (these essays are available on Sakai): Steven Pinker (pp. 4-10), Michael C. Munger (pp. 11-12), Rachel Toor (pp. 23-24), and Jennifer Howard (pp. 30-31). We'll read more of these Chronicle essays as we proceed through the semester.

Week 2: January 24th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 3: January 31st:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 4: February 7th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 5: February 14th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 6: February 21st:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 7: February 28th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 8: March 7th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 9: Spring break, no class

Week 10: March 21st:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 11: March 28th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Wek 12: April 4th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 13: April 11th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 14: April 18th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

Week 15: April 25th:

Presenter(s):

Facilitator(s):

VII. Help on Research, Thinking, and Writing:

Howard S. Becker. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Howard S. Becker. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee Clarke. "Notes on Proposing" and "On Writing and Criticism." Sakai.

William Germano. 2005. "Passive Is Spoken Here." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2005. Sakai.

James Jasper. "Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers." Sakai.

Stephen King. 2010. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Scribner.

Jane E. Miller. 2013. *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Multivariate Analysis*, Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/C/bo15506942.html>

Sarah Rosenfield. "Some Things to Think About While Reading Papers." Sakai.

William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Donald J. Treiman. 2009. *Quantitative Data Analysis: Doing Social Research to Test Ideas*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

10 Top Writing Tips: <http://withoutbullshit.com/blog/10-top-writing-tips-psychology/>

American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract." Sakai.

And, for some humor: "How to Write Good." Sakai.

American Sociological Association. 2009. *Publishing Options: An Authors Guide to Journals*. E-book edition, May 20. Sakai. [there is a newer version (2016) available online through ASA]

American Sociological Association. 2014. *ASA Style Guide*, Fifth edition. [available online through ASA]

Chronicle of Higher Education. 2016. *A Guide to Writing Good Academic Prose*. [Sakai]