

Sociology 504: Public Sociology: Communicating Social Science Research Across Different Publics

Spring 2014 Dr. Arlene Stein Friday 1-3:40

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This is a course that will both *reflect* upon the idea of “public sociology” and *produce* public sociological work. In the analytical component, we will explore such questions as: what is the sociological audience? What is the relationship between academia and public intellectual life? How do styles of writing/public address determine our relationship to different publics? The workshop component of the course will involve participating in the production of *Contexts*, the American Sociological Association’s hybrid magazine/journal that is dedicated to disseminating translating sociological work to broader publics, which is currently in its final year at Rutgers. Students in this course will learn about the production of the magazine from the inside, and participate in writing, editing, image selection, and other tasks.

The course will: 1) deepen students’ substantive expertise in cutting-edge sociological scholarship; 2) guide them in developing writing skills that address academic and non-academic audiences; 3) engage in critical and constructive discussion of the field of sociology; 4) provide an inside view of the journal reviewing and editorial decision-making. And they may even get their work published!

Books:

Eric Klinenberg, *Going Solo* or Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day*
Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing* (recommended)

Requirements:

Do the reading, participate in discussion, and contribute:

- 1) an “in brief” piece for *Contexts*
- 2) 3 blog posts
- 3) a podcast for Contexts.org

** Note: Syllabus subject to change

January 24. Introduction to Course

Howard Becker, *Telling About Society*, p. 5-14, 20-29 (sakai)

Arlene Stein, "For Whom Do We Write?"

<https://steinarlene.wordpress.com/2013/06/11/for-whom-do-we-write/>

Come to class having thoroughly read three last issues of *Contexts*, and having familiarized yourself with the website (contexts.org). Be prepared to discuss: 1) the different components of the magazine; 2) the differences between *Contexts* and a typical academic journal in terms of audience, format, writing style, etc; 3) preliminary ideas about what you would most like to contribute. We will talk about the nuts-and-bolts process of constructing *Contexts*, how you might contribute, and what we'll be doing during the semester.

By next Wednesday: Post a brief summary of your proposed "In Brief" on Sakai, read everyone's posts before class, and be ready to comment on them.

January 31. The Promise of Sociology

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, excerpt (sakai)

A. Stein, "Intellectual Craftsmanship as Refusal,"

<http://steinarlene.wordpress.com/2013/07/15/intellectual-craftsmanship-as-refusal/>

Last three issues, *Contexts* "In Briefs"

"Writing In Briefs" (sakai)

Workshop: We will discuss your *In Briefs* proposals. Post first draft by next Wednesday.

February 7. Did Professionalization Kill the Public Sociologist?

Todd Gitlin, "How Our Crowd Got Lonely" (Sakai)

Arlene Stein, "Discipline and Publish" (Sakai)

Workshop: Discussion of first drafts of In Briefs; read everyone's drafts before class.

February 14. The Lost Art of (Good) Writing

Helen Sword, "Yes, Even Professors Can Write Stylishly" (Sakai)

Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing* (sakai)

Assorted posts on writing:

<http://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2013/07/the-sociology-of-writing-sociologically.html>

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/12/30/top-five-posts-on-how-to-write-2013/>

Workshop: How does an idea become a *Contexts* feature article? Read "Author Submission Guidelines," www.contexts.org. Also read examples of feature article

proposals: one that was successfully greenlighted; and one that was unsuccessful)---in folder Proposals/Greenlights in Sakai. Think about what makes a good feature article. Final drafts of In Briefs due.

February 21. Blogs, Social Media, and Digital Sociology

Jessie Daniels and Joe Feagin, "The (Coming) Social Media Revolution in the Academy," http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/8_2/Daniels8_2.html

Miscellaneous pieces in Blogging folder—Sakai.

Also take a look at some sociological blogs, such as:

<http://thesocietypages.org/>

<http://crookedtimber.org/>

<http://globalsociology.com/>

<http://scatter.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.racismreview.com/blog/>

Workshop: Draft of blog post due in class; we'll discuss them.

February 28. Sociology as Narrative; Narrative Sociology

John Shelton Reed, "On Narrative and Sociology" (Sakai)

Read 2-3 exemplary Contexts feature articles (sakai)

Read reviews of feature submissions (sakai)

Workshop: 2nd draft of your first blog post is due and ready to go live!

Analyzing Contexts feature articles; what makes for an effective article? We will read article reviews and discuss the review process at *Contexts*.

March 7 Editing Skills-building

"Self-editing and formatting" (Contexts.org).

Ilene Kalish, "Great Books aren't Written, They're Rewritten" (sakai)

Feature articles in process (sakai)

Workshop: What happens after a feature article is accepted? The process of editing.

March 14. Sociology as Narrative, Narrative Sociology

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

Begin reading Eric Klinenberg, *Going Solo* or Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day*

Workshop: Brainstorm blog Post #2

****Spring Recess**

March 28. Narrative Sociology —continued

Finish reading Eric Klinenberg, *Going Solo* or Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader*

Workshop: Draft of Blog post #2 due; we'll discuss them in class.
Think about whom you'd like to interview for your podcast.

April 4. Interviewing, Podcasting

Why Podcast? <http://audioboo.fm/boos/747191-why-podcast>

"The Simple Guide to Academic Podcasting" (sakai)

Office Hours Playbook (sakai)

Kimberly Hoang, "Transnational Gender Vertigo"

We'll discuss podcasts and the art of interviewing, and listen to UK radio program "Thinking Allowed." We'll also listen to a Contexts podcast, discuss how they're constructed, and brainstorm possible podcasts. Before next time, make contact with interviewee, set up date.

April 11. Activist Public Sociology and its Discontents

Peter Dreier, "How Michael Harrington and Rachel Carson Changed the World" (sakai)

Patricia Hill Collins, "Truth Telling and Intellectual Activism" (Sakai)

Arlene Stein, "Sex, Truths, and Audiotape" (Sakai)

Podcast progress report; share interview questions with group; check-in, share any insights, problems that came up. Tutorial on editing podcasts.

April 18. Podcasts—continued

Workshop: We'll listen to completed podcasts. Choose 15-20 minute excerpt from your podcast to share with class.

April 25. Theorizing the Web conference—

www.theorizingtheweb.org

Blog about conference—due May 2.

May 2. New Technologies: Threat to Scholarly Authority?

Kathleen Fitzpatrick, "Peer-to-Peer Review and the Future of Scholarly Authority"

Peter Walsh, "That Withered Paradigm: The Web, the Expert, and the Information Hegemony"

<http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/walsh.html>

Workshop: Discuss blog post #3