Sociology 504/703
Writing Seminar, Spring 2020
Thursdays 9:30am-12:10pm
Department of Sociology Seminar Room

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Office Hours: Mondays 10:30am – 11:30am or by appointment

Course Description, Goals, and Outcomes:
This seminar introduces graduate students to the mysteries, joys and pains of academic writing and publishing. It’s designed to provide practical experience in academic writing and engaging in constructive peer review. Instruction draws primarily from Wendy Laura Belcher’s best-selling Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success to explain the publication process. Course content will share strategies for achieving success in academic writing, including setting up a realistic work schedule, identifying appropriate journals for submission, constructing and clarifying arguments, making claims for significance, and organizing material.

More practically, this course is designed to help students turn a draft of a paper into a publishable paper. Students should come in with a draft of a paper that they want to turn into a QP, or a QP they want to turn into a publishable paper, or a dissertation chapter they want to improve upon. It’s not necessary to have a complete paper by the first week of class, but it is expected that students will work on writing their paper while also keeping up with the weekly writing exercises and objectives. Together, in a supportive environment, we will each spend the semester revising a working draft into a finished product.

Learning Goals:
• Create and enact an effective, daily writing practice
• Become more familiar with how academic publishing works
• Turn a working paper into a paper that is ready for journal submission
• Accept and interpret feedback, especially from multiple, sometimes conflicting sources
• Provide constructive feedback to peers on their own work
• Identify techniques to maximize the clarity of arguments and writing
• Identify methods for writing that work best for each individual, including how to break a project down into manageable steps

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 clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.
Contacting me
My office hours are listed above. If you are not able to make these hours, please contact me and we can arrange to meet at another time. The best way to reach me is by email. I check email throughout the week (not on weekends), and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours.

Keeping up with class material
Active participation and attendance are vital to learning the course material. Audio or video recording of the lectures is not permitted. Students with a documented disability must have special permission to record any of our meetings.

Missing a class or multiple late arrivals
Missing a graduate class (or frequent tardiness) is equivalent to missing a week’s worth of learning material. I therefore take absences and lateness very seriously. You must have a valid reason for missing class. If you are struggling to keep up with material in this course because of factors outside of your control (e.g. chronic illness, financial aid, food or housing insecurity, personal problems, commuting trouble), please talk to me as soon as possible. We can work out a plan and, if necessary, I can direct you to services at the University that can assist you.

Phones and Laptops
Unfortunately, I have found that even in graduate classes, students are increasingly “multitasking” on their laptops or phones to the point of interfering with active participation. I consider this behavior disruptive and disrespectful.

- Your laptop should be a tool that helps you participate in class and do the exercises. Resist the urge to look something up online, check social media or email.
- Do not text or check email during class. We will have a break where you can check email and respond to texts. However, if you need access to your phone or email during class because of a unique circumstance, let me know.

Discussions and respect
Graduate classes involve critique and discussion. We will likely encounter disrespectful or harmful comments, assumptions and ideas in the material we’re reading or in our class discussions or in conversations we have with one another. These situations shouldn’t be dismissed or ignored, and likewise, fear of offending our colleagues should not silence us. Therefore, as part of our community agreement, we will develop a system for handling such moments so we can all feel welcome in the classroom, participate openly and respectfully, and learn from one another’s histories, perspectives and backgrounds.

Required Materials
(1) Laptop / tablet with keyboard
Be prepared to write during class time. You will need a laptop or a device that allows you to type. Contact me ASAP if this is a problem.

(2) Textbook
The Department has provided graduate students with three copies of Belcher’s book, which you can find in the library. Please photocopy the worksheets, rather than marking the books up themselves.

Important Notes (read this, please):

- Belcher’s process for publication is one of the best out there. She estimates that it will take about 60 hours, beyond class time, to revise an already existing draft for publication. Be prepared to do a lot of writing outside of class. This is the nature of a writing seminar.
- Every class will have 25 minutes dedicated to uninterrupted, individual writing time (that is, not as part of any exercise or workbook activity). This is deep work time. Show up for this, silence your phone and put it away, close your internet browser and write.
- The class is part writing collective and part applied workshop, that is, a combination of learning, doing, and supporting others.
- Do the workbook exercises even if you find them annoying and cost you time away from writing. Do them before class.
- You need to have the required printouts and Belcher’s workbook in every class. For some classes, we will need to work with hardcopies of worksheets and drafts of papers because we’ll be marking them by hand.
- If you ever finish a group exercise in class early, turn to revising your article.
- You can download and print out some of the forms in the book, such as the weekly calendars, at https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/workbook-forms/.
- This class is a confidential place. Don’t share what happens in this class with others. People are bringing writing at every stage; everyone should feel safe sharing rough work.
- Cooperation, respect and investment in the class is absolutely vital if this course is going to work for us all. To that end, we will draft a community agreement that outlines some principles we agree to follow as participants in the seminar.

Grading Policy

Attendance and participation are expected in every class. To receive an A, I expect you to attend and participate in every class, to complete the writing and workbook assignments on time, provide constructive feedback to your peers, and submit revisions to your paper as required. If you don’t do the exercises, show up late or miss more than one class, and/or put minimal effort into writing and peer review you can expect to get a B or a C.

*This class is designed to support your progress in the program. Please come talk to me if you feel like the course content or structure isn’t helpful.*
Course Schedule

Complete BEFORE class starts:
There is some work to do before our first class.

- Read Belcher’s workbook Introduction
- Read Week 1: Designing Your Plan for Writing (pages 1-59), fill out the boxes and forms, and doing all the tasks, day by day. Pay close attention to the “Selecting a Paper for Revision” section to make sure that your paper is appropriate.
- Begin filling out “Week 1 Calendar for Actual (Not Planned) Writing” each day
- Read p. 191, on the linear structure of this book.
- Email your paper to me by Tuesday, January 21st.
- Print your paper and bring it to class.

January 23: Introduction (Introduction & Week 1)
Bring to class: Your filled-out Week 1 worksheets, Calendar (Belcher), & a printout of your paper

~ Introduction to the Course
~ Begin Drafting Community Agreement
~ Group Discussion: Developing a writing practice, positive writing experiences, obstacles to writing, and designing a writing schedule
~ Group Exercise: Hammering out your topic
~ Individual Exercise: Begin marking up your paper

Next Week’s Assignment:
- Read Belcher’s workbook Week 2: Advancing Your Argument, filling out the boxes and forms and doing the tasks through the Day 1 tasks (pages 60-83).
- Do not do the Day 2-5 tasks; you will do them in class.
- Prepare a one-minute elevator talk on the argument of your article.

January 30: Advancing Your Argument (Week 2)
Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and a printout of your paper, with the argument section highlighted. Bring pages 83-88 of Belcher to class.

~ Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 1 and Week 2
~ Group Exercise: Reviewing each other’s argument (using pages 83-88 of Belcher)
~ Individual Exercise: Revising your article for argument
~ Finalize community agreement

Next Week’s Assignment:
- Revise your article around your argument, using Week 2.
- Read Belcher’s workbook Week 3: Abstracting Your Article (pages 90-110), doing the tasks of reading published abstracts and journal articles, drafting an abstract, and filling out the forms
and checklists. You don’t need to do the social tasks (the ones that require you to talk with or work with someone else) as you will be doing those in class.

- Be prepared to report on the published abstracts and journal articles you read.

**February 6: Abstracting Your Article (Week 3)**

*Bring to class:* Your filled-out workbook and two printouts of your abstract.

~ Discussion of reading and exercises

~ Group Exercise: Reviewing each other’s abstracts

~ Group Exercise: Presenting on published journal articles

**Next Week’s Assignment:**

- Read Belcher’s workbook Week 4: Selecting a Journal, doing the tasks of searching for and studying journals.
- Fill out the Journal Evaluation Report on at least one journal.
- Email me your top three journal choices and be prepared to present from them in class.
- Do a reverse outline of a journal article that you especially admire from one of your target journals.
- Belcher recommends that students review five years of one journal that interests them, reading all the titles, most of the abstracts, and at least four articles. She promises that this assignment transforms students’ writing. Accomplish what you can over the next week.
- Read Belcher’s workbook Chapter 5, pp 150-189: Refining Your Works Cited.
- Evaluate your citations, identifying any needed other works, identifying your entry point, and revising your related secondary literature review.

**February 13: Selecting a Journal & Refining Works Cited (Week 4 & 5)**

*Bring to class:* Your filled-out workbook for weeks 4 & 5, a printout of at least one journal evaluation report, and a reverse outline of an article from a target journal.

~ Presentation on top-3 journals & journal evaluation reports

~ Discussion of reading and exercises in weeks 4 & 5

**Next Week’s Assignment:**

- Revise your literature review
- Revise / skim your methods section
- Bring two printouts of your revised related literature review and methods section.

**February 20: Refining Your Works Cited and Methods Section (Week 5)**

*Bring to class:* Your filled-out workbook and two printouts of your related literature review and methods section.

~ Recap discussion of Week 5 (brief)

~ Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's literature reviews and methods
Next Week’s Assignment:

- Revise your literature review, based on class feedback.
- Read Belcher’s workbook Week 6: Crafting Your Claims for Significance, doing all the tasks except the So What? Exercise, which you will do in class.
- Email me three claims for significance by Wednesday noon.
- Did the class suggest you need to tighten up your methods? If you need sources for how to do so, please dig up a couple of references.

February 27: Crafting Your Claims for Significance (Week 6)

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook

~ Revisit the community agreement and look ahead to the rest of the semester
~ Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 6
~ Group Exercise: Do the So What? Exercise

Next Week’s Assignment:

- Insert your new claims for significance into your article.
- Read Belcher’s workbook Week 7: Analyzing Your Evidence, doing the tasks of highlighting the evidence in your article with various colors, analyzing the quality of evidence, and beginning to collect more if needed and possible
- Create and bring a seven-slide PowerPoint presentation overview of your article, with one slide per the following: title, research context (lit. review), methods, argument, claim(s) for significance, research design/method, evidence/findings, and conclusion. Be prepared to make a ten-minute presentation with it.

March 5th: Analyzing Your Evidence (Week 7)

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and your PowerPoint presentation on your article

~ Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 7
~ Group Exercise: Presenting your article in seven slides
~ Group Discussion: How to use the slides to help restructure your evidence.

Next Week’s Assignment:

- Revise article based on class discussion about your evidence and argument
- Read Belcher’s workbook Week 8: Presenting Your Evidence, doing the tasks of filling out the forms and revising your evidence
- Email me a draft of your entire article by Wednesday at noon.
- Bring a printout to class for the exchange exercise
March 12th: Presenting Your Evidence (Week 8)
Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and a printout of your entire article as it stands
~ Group Exercise: Reviewing each other’s articles
~ Discussion of reading and exercises

Spring Break Assignment:
- Revise article based on class discussion about your presentation of evidence.
- Read Belcher’s workbook Week 9: Strengthening Your Structure. We already reverse outlined a target journal article and our own working papers. But now is a good time to revisit these outlines. How does your reverse outline look now? Make a post-draft outline of your article and starting to restructure your article as needed.
- Rather than preparing a Powerpoint Presentation of the post-draft outline of your article, bring your outline to class as a printout, which we will exchange with each other in class.

March 19th. Spring Break. No class.

March 26th: Strengthening Your Structure (Week 9)
Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and your presentation of your outline
~ Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 9
~ Group Exercise: Reviewing each other’s outlines
~ Make a plan for peer review weeks

Next Week’s Assignment:
- Continue to revise article based on class discussion about your outline and structure
- All students: Exchange drafts by tomorrow March 27th. Prepare a peer review and email it to me April 1st
- Prepare a 5-10 minute oral presentation (no powerpoint) of your peer review in class. Group 1 presentations on April 2nd, Group 2 presentations on April 9th

April 2nd: Peer Review Group 1

April 9th: Peer Review Group 2

April 16th: Opening and Concluding Your Article (Week 10)
Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and your title.
~ Group Exercise: Revising titles together
~ Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 10

Next Week’s Assignment:
- Insert revised title into article
• Read Belcher’s workbook Week 11: Editing Your Sentences, and do the tasks, including running the Belcher Diagnostic Test on your article, highlighting it with various colors, and beginning to revise your article accordingly
• Email me a sentence from your article with a lot of highlighting in different colors (at least three colors, the more the better) by the Sunday night before class.

April 23: Editing Your Sentences (Week 11)
Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and a printout of one highlighted page from your article

~ Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 11

~ Group Exercise: Editing sentences together

Next Week’s Assignment:
• Exchange papers with someone new. Provide feedback on your partner’s paper and return by email (copying me) by April 29th. I will provide feedback on top of those comments and will return them to you during the first week of May.

April 30: Final workshop

~ Group Discussion: What’s helpful? What obstacles remain? How to find the help and structure we need.

~ Group exercise: Last chance to give feedback

Recommended Readings:
Zerubavel, Eviatar. Clockwork Muse.
Hayot, Eric, The Elements of Academic Style
Cameron, Julie, The Artist’s Way
Thomas and Turner, Clear and Simple as the Truth
Becker, Howard, Writing for Social Scientists
White, Lynn, Writes of Passage: Writing an Empirical Journal Article

For ethnographic notes:
Ghodsee, From Notes to Narratives
Narayan, Alive in the Writing

Helpful Blogs:
Thesociologyphdandme.wordpress.com
Getalife.blogspot.com