

•

SOCIOLOGY 511/703
Writing Seminar, Fall 2021
Wednesday 1:00pm-3:40pm, Sociology Dept. Library

Paul Hirschfield, PhD

Department of Sociology, 26 Nichol Avenue, Room 038 E-mail: phirschf@rutgers.edu

Office Hours: Mondays: 1:30-3:30pm in Lucy Stone Hall, A359 (5-4262) or by Appt. I also expect to be in Davison Hall #38 (2-7868) from 1-2 on Thursdays, but please make an appointment, as I will often have other meetings associated with my administrative role.

Course Description, Goals, and Outcomes

This 1.5 credit seminar is designed to provide some time and structure for graduate students to work on papers-in-progress. It is designed to give sociology graduate students practical experience in both getting their work published in peer-reviewed journals and in engaging in peer review. Drawing on Wendy Laura Belcher's best-selling *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*, this course explains the publication process and shares strategies for achieving success in the academic writing arena, including setting up a work schedule, identifying appropriate journals for submission, working with editors, clarifying arguments, making claims for significance, and organizing material.

More practically, this course is designed to help you turn a draft of a paper 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 improve. Together, in a supportive environment, we will each spend 12-13 weeks revising a working draft into a finished product.

Required Text

Belcher, Wendy Laura. 2019. *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. If you want to avoid writing in the workbook, you can print out the [forms](#) on-line instead.

Learning Goals

This course contributes to the central learning goal of “*Conduct original, theoretically engaged research grounded in highly skilled methodological techniques.*” The course works toward these following more specific goals:

- Learn how to create and enact an effective, daily writing practice
- Learn how academic publishing works
- Learn how to turn a working paper into a paper that is ready for journal submission

-
- Learn how to accept and interpret feedback, especially from multiple, sometimes conflicting sources
- Learn how to 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.

Key expectations

Active participation and attendance, as well as ‘showing up’ for other classmates (through thoughtful feedback and engagement with their work) is vital to everyone’s success in this course. It is not easy to subject one’s writing to continuous critique, especially in an intensive and prolonged fashion. In order for critique to be maximally helpful and minimally harmful, it is important to offer criticism in a spirit of generosity and reciprocity. If a situation arises in which you feel demeaned, offended, dismissed, or ignored, I hope you will feel free to bring it to my attention and that we will collaboratively figure out solutions that ensure that everyone feels valued, welcomed, and encouraged to participate fully, openly, and respectfully in the course.

Important Notes

- Many scholars recommend Belcher’s process for publication. She estimates that it will take about 60 hours, beyond class time, to revise an already existing draft for publication. Let’s see where her process gets us.
- Belcher provides a system. You cannot wait to read the workbook until the night before class, because it has daily tasks you must complete. Do the workbook exercises even if you find them annoying and cost you time away from writing.
- The class is part lecture, part workshop; that is, a combination of learning and doing. Thus, bring the required printouts and Belcher’s workbook to every class. If you are opposed to printing, we will need to figure out a system to make it easy to share your document with peers and make edits during class. Belcher recommends marking up documents by hand which can be done with a Stylus pen.
- If you ever finish a group exercise in class early, please use class time to do work related to revising your article.
- You can download and print out some of the [forms](#) in the book, such as the calendars.
- Please treat each others’ work, progress, and comments as confidential. People are bringing writing at every stage; they need to feel safe in sharing rough work.

-
- Should you wish to comment on your journey through the workbook on social media, the hashtags are #WYJA and #12WeekArticle and @WendyLBelcher. Belcher usually responds.
- This class is designed to support your progress in the program. Please talk to me if you feel like the course structure, methods, or content isn't helpful.

Potential Useful Resource

University of Chicago Press. 2021. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17th ed. Chicago and London.

Grading Policy

This class will operate as a workshop. Attendance and classroom participation are critical to a good grade, along with complete Belcher's recommended assignments on-time, contributing constructive feedback to your peers, and submitting revisions to your paper as required. That said, if health-related circumstances (e.g. illness, quarantine, care-giving) prevent you from coming to class, please get in touch with me promptly so we can figure out a way to accommodate your circumstances (i.e. figure out a way for you to participate remotely).

Covid Protocols: Face coverings are required during class pursuant to University policy.

Course Schedule

September 1st: Introduction (Week 1)

Introduction to the Course

Group Discussion: Developing a Writing Practice

Group Exercise: Hammering out your topic

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Belcher's workbook Introduction and Week 1: Designing Your Plan for Writing (pages 159), 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.*
- *Fill out your "Week 1 Calendar for Actual (Not Planned) Writing" each day.*
- *Please also read p. 191, on the linear structure of this book.*

September 15th: Designing Your Plan for Writing (Week 2)

Bring your filled-out worksheets

Discussion: Positive writing experiences, obstacles to writing, and designing a writing schedule

Individual Exercise: The Reverse-Outline

•

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.*
- *Fill out your "Week 1 Calendar for Actual (Not Planned) Writing" each day.*
- *Prepare a one-minute elevator talk on the argument of your article.*

September 22nd: Advancing Your Argument (Week 3)

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook, your filled out calendar, and your article.

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 1 and Week 2

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's argument Bring
pp 83-88 to class.

Individual Exercise: Revising your article for argument

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.*

September 29th: Abstracting Your Article (Week 4)

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. Make sure to fill out the Journal Evaluation Report on at least one journal.*
- *Submit your top three journal choices to Canvas and be prepared to present on them in class.*
- *Please submit to Canvas and bring with you 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. I believe her and encourage you to take her up on her challenge—at least partially: perhaps reviewing a single year of a journal.*

October 6th: Selecting a Journal (Week 5)

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and a printout of at least one journal evaluation report and a reverse outline from a target journal. (Please submit reverse outline to Canvas also)

Discussion of reading and exercises

Group Exercise: Presenting journal evaluation reports

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's journal lists

Next Week's Assignment:

- *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*
- *Bring two printouts of your revised related **literature review and methods section.***

October 13th: Refining Your Works Cited and Methods Section (Week 6)

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

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 5

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.*
- *Submit three claims for significance by Tuesday night.*
- *Did the class suggest you need to tighten up your methods? Can some material be moved to endnotes or to an Appendix?*

October 20th: Crafting Your Claims for Significance (Week 7)

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook

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*
- *Submit to Canvas 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.*

October 27th: Analyzing Your Evidence (Week 8)

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*
- *Submit me a draft of your entire article by Tuesday night.*
- *Bring a print out to class for the exchange exercise*

November 3rd: Presenting Your Evidence (Week 9)

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and a print out of your entire article as it stands

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's articles

Discussion of reading and exercises

Next Week's 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 print out, which we will exchange with each other in class.*

•

November 10th: Strengthening Your Structure (Week 10)

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and your presentation of your outline. Submit outline to Canvas. Bring your research question, hypotheses (if applicable) and methods sections to class.

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 9 Group

Belcher doesn't discuss methods, but we should. So we will spend some time discussing whether your methods section adequately explains your research.

Exercise: Reviewing each other's outlines

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Continue to revise article based on class discussion about your outline and structure*
- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 10*

November 17th

I will be flying out of town that day for a conference but the class can optionally convene to work together on your methods sections. Keep writing! Final drafts are due in about 2 weeks!

November 29th (Monday!): Opening and Concluding Your Article (Week 11)

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*
- *Submit a sentence from your article with a lot of highlighting in different colors (at least three colors, the more the better) by the Tuesday night before class.*

December 1st: Editing Your Sentences (Week 12)

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:

Let's split the class's work and give each paper a last read. Please distribute your most complete draft to our class list-serve by 12-4 and review each other's papers.

December 8: 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

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

For ethnographic notes:

Ghodsee, From Notes to Narratives

Narayan, Alive in the Writing

Helpful Blogs and Links:

TheSociologyPhdandMe.wordpress.com

[Writing an Effective Abstract](#)

[10 Tips on How to Write Less Badly](#)