

SOCIOLOGY 503 (16:920:503) – Spring 2022

Second Year QP Seminar

Wednesdays 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm (*every 2 weeks)

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description, Goals, and Outcomes

This course prepares second-year sociology graduate students to plan for and actualize a complete draft of their first qualifying paper (QP). The course is held every second week for a full academic year. It is one-part social research methods seminar and one-part writing seminar. By the end of the course, students should have a solid draft of a QP that is ready for comments from their QP committee members.

Preparation for the course begins the summer preceding the start of the seminar. Students should aim to have data collected by the early fall, meaning the summer is a time to find a QP chair, prepare IRB proposals (if necessary) and/or collect data or clean/arrange access to necessary datasets. Sign-on for the QP should happen by late fall, and an early first draft of the QP should be ready by late January of the spring semester. Students will work together in writing groups and pairs, with regular consultation with their QP chair.

This syllabus was originally created by Norah MacKendrick.

Learning Goals

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

- Plan a QP research project specifying topic, research question and methodology
- Collect / locate and analyze data
- Develop an original argument
- Prepare a defensible QP that can be circulated to the student’s committee for feedback.

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.

Keeping up with class material

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.

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 we will develop a community agreement where we outline a process for handling such moments so we can all feel welcome in class, participate openly and respectfully, and learn from one another’s histories, perspectives and backgrounds.

Books

Required:

- Luker, K. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*.
- Booth, Wayne, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2003. *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago press. [Any year is fine]

Highly recommended:

- Miller, Jane E. 2005. *Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [Any version fine]
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications, LTD.

Definitely worth your time:

- Zerubavel, E. (1999). *The clockwork muse: a practical guide to writing theses, dissertations, and books*. Harvard University Press.
- White, L. (2005). Writes of passage: Writing an empirical journal article. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(4), 791-798.
- Silvia, P. J. (2007). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing*. American Psychological Association.
- Belcher, Wendy Laura. 2019. *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hayot, E. (2014). *The elements of academic style: Writing for the humanities*. Columbia University Press.
- Thomas, F. N., & Turner, M. (2011). *Clear and simple as the truth: Writing classic prose*. Princeton University Press.
- Becker, Howard, *Writing for Social Scientists or Tricks of the Trade*
- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (Highly recommend that you read/skim entire book)

Helpful Blogs:

- Thesociologyphdandme.wordpress.com
- Getalife.blogspot.com

Technology

Canvas

Grading Policy

This class is designed to help you move through the program on time. It's a chance to write your first QP for credit with the support and direction of your classmates and an instructor.

For this class to work for us all, there has to be consistent attendance and active participation from everyone. With that in mind, to receive an A, you need to attend and participate in every class, complete the writing / workshop assignments on time, provide constructive and timely feedback to your peers, and complete revisions to your QP draft as required. If you don't do the exercises, login late, miss more than one class, and/or put minimal effort into peer review you can expect to get a B or a C. I understand that this academic year is highly unusual, so I will make accommodations for health issues, caring responsibilities, technological glitches, etc.

Workload from other courses is not a valid excuse for late assignments or poor attendance.

*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

For the spring semester you'll spend most of our time in small groups. The first few classes are devoted to developing and improving upon specific sections. After that, we'll workshop whole drafts of your papers. Each class will start with a check-in and overview of the meeting's objectives and activities. You'll then break into groups. We'll close the class with a class meeting to talk about common problems and troubleshoot questions.

Assignments

For this semester, you'll see that you have writing assignments with deadlines. I'll grade these as pass/fail (using a "check plus/minus" system: ✓, ✓+, ✓-) and provide brief feedback on your submissions.

Deadlines in **yellow.

Winter Break Memo: Due January 19th:

Send me a one to two-page data memo that addresses the following points:

- 1) A brief description of the data you've collected /are collecting/ analyzed so far
- 2) Update on how far along you are with data analysis (a few sentences is fine)
- 3) Some initial findings (e.g. table, a list of findings, etc.). What findings are you excited about? Are you troubled by any findings (e.g. a relationship that didn't pan out or is hard to interpret)?
- 4) Questions/roadblocks?

If you haven't started data collection, write a one-page memo providing an update on your project. How has your thinking about the project changed? Have you developed any new ideas or sections? When do you anticipate collecting data?

January 26: Evidence/Data/Findings

- Check-in re: QP progress over the break and set class-wide goals for spring semester
- Discuss data collection & analysis. Set personal concrete goals for spring semester

To-do before next class:

1. Pick a book or set of articles that use similar methods to yours. Read the methods and findings sections or appendix. Take some notes on how these sections are structured, what they leave out.
2. Write a draft of your methods section and submit it to me and your group for review. Use bullet points for areas that you aren't ready to develop yet. Submit whatever you have. Aim for 2-3 pages with citations. **Due Friday February 4.**

If you haven't already picked a methods book and/or set of articles, now is the time to find them. If you're having trouble finding materials, let me know. The following books come highly recommended, but do not cover the full range of methods used in our class:

- Jane E. Miller's "Writing about Multivariate Methods"
- Kathy Charmaz: Constructing Grounded Theory
- Gerson, K. and S. Damaske. The science and art of interviewing (a new book that is really good)
- Altheide, D. L., and Schneider, C. J. (2012). Qualitative Media Analysis. United States: SAGE Publications.

February 9: Writing the Methods Section

In this class you'll workshop your methods section with your groups. As part of that exercise, keep in mind the articles/books you draw upon as your examples/guides.

Before next class: Choose whether you want to do option A or B for next class. If going with option A, submit a data memo. What data will you use for your paper? Where will you find it/collect it? What roadblocks have you encountered? What information do you need to move ahead? If going with option B, write your findings section. Be sure to consult a relevant book or set of articles to guide you with structuring the section, phrasing and terminology, and presentation of the results.

Submit Friday February 18.

February 23: Data / Findings

Option A: Identifying, collecting, and analyzing data

You'll work in groups or independently. I'll meet with each of you to go over major roadblocks.

Option B: Writing the Findings Section

You'll workshop a draft of your findings section.

To-do before next class (for everyone): Outline or revise your literature review. **Due: Friday March 4.**

March 9: Writing the literature review

In this class we'll workshop literature reviews. We'll also go over some peer review guidelines that you'll use in the following weeks. Over the break, you'll put the pieces of your papers together and exchange them with another student in the class. You'll review another student's paper and present your review to the class.

Before next class: Put together your full paper. If some sections aren't ready, use bullet points/outline key ideas. Add to the top of the page a short 1-2 paragraph memo for me and your peer reviewer.

March 23:

Work on your full drafts. Prepare for peer review.

April 6: Peer Review of papers

Troubleshooting / work session. Discuss roadblocks, work on drafts & presentations.

I'll present how to do a journal review.

April 20: Peer Review of papers

Presentations from peer reviewers

Discuss plans for sign on/off.