

## SOC 470 & 776 – Writing Sociology Spring 2009

**Mgr. Benjamin Vail, M.Sc., Ph.D.**

SOC470 Credits: 10

SOC776 Credits: 15

Seminar time: Thursdays, 10.00-11.40 in room 34

Office hours: Mondays 14.00-15.00 in room 3.59

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### Course description

This course is intended to help masters students improve their academic writing skills and practice English. Sociology 470 is intended for Czech students, while international students should enroll in SOC776. This is a writing-intensive course that provides training in the methods of researching and writing Sociology essays in several different styles, such as writing book reviews, social issue reaction papers, and reports on quantitative and qualitative research. This writing experience is intended to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of sociological theory and methods and help them develop critical writing and reading skills to assist them in their Masters studies. By the end of the semester, they will gain experience writing in a variety of academic literary genres, learn about different perspectives on proper professional writing, understand and be able to follow academic honesty standards, and be able to cite information properly according to academic norms.

### Assignments and evaluation

#### *Writing*

- **Plagiarism essay:** During the first week of the semester, students must write a short essay explaining the concept of plagiarism and how to avoid it, in order to demonstrate their understanding of issues of academic honesty.
- **Homework:** There will be several homework assignments so students can practice technical aspects of writing.
- **Weekly essays:** Approximately every two weeks, students will write two drafts of an essay based on the assigned reading. In each two-week cycle, students will write a draft of the essay in the first week. This draft essay will receive written and verbal feedback in class from the teacher and other students. You will use this feedback to revise the essay and turn in a final draft during the second week. This gives you an opportunity to improve your writing and learn to give and receive constructive criticism. More details about these assignments will be given in class. Each essay should be 1500-2000 words in length.
- **Final essay:** A research essay 2000-3000 words in length is due by June 11, 2009. You are invited to make your thesis topic the focus of this essay. More details will be provided in class.

#### *Class participation*

- **Attendance:** All students are required to attend every seminar meeting. Any absence must be documented (for example, due to family or medical emergency). Your attendance is important because the course is organized around classroom discussion and giving feedback to each other.

- **Discussion:** Active participation in classroom discussion is an important part of your grade. You are required to read the assigned literature before the seminar meeting to facilitate discussion.
- **Critique of other students' writing:** Every other week, we will engage in the in-class critique of each student's first-draft essay. Each student will be assigned to read another student's draft essay and give a presentation about suggested revisions.

### ***Evaluation***

The quality of your use of English is not part of the grade, but you must write the essays at an adequate level of language use such that they are understandable. Your essays should express your own ideas (see the section on Academic Honesty below). However, you are free to consult with classmates or others to check the quality of your use of English.

Important:

- All essays must be submitted by 23.59 on the due date.
- You are required to write the first draft of each writing assignment.
- For every day an assignment is late, the grade will be reduced by a full letter grade.
- You are required to use the "Spell Check" tool in your word processor before submitting any written assignment. If the paper contains significant spelling errors, it will be returned to the student unread, and will not be graded until spelling is fixed. The penalty for late assignments will apply.
- Any assignment containing significant citation errors – in the text or in the References section – will be returned to the student unread, and will not be graded until the citations are fixed. The penalty for late assignments will apply.

Students will receive a final letter grade (A-F) for the semester based on the follow criteria:

<b>Final grade components</b>	<b>Final grade scale</b>
10% - Plagiarism essay; homework	A = 90 – 100%
10% - Attendance and class participation	B = 80 – 90%
80% - Essay assignments	C = 70 – 80%
	D = 60 – 70%
	E = 50 – 60%
	F = <50%

### **Academic honesty**

The Faculty of Social Studies at MU expects students to know the study rules and maintain academic honesty by refraining from plagiarism and from cheating during exams. Plagiarism means that one presents other peoples' ideas as one's own and does not credit the author. Plagiarism is one of the most serious breaches of ethical standards in the academic environment, for it denies the mission of the university and the meaning of studying. From a legal perspective, plagiarism is the stealing of intellectual property. The official FSS policy on academic honesty is available in the course's interactive syllabus in IS in English and Czech. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated under any circumstances at FSS. The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is expulsion from the course, a grade of F for the semester, and referral to the Faculty disciplinary committee.

In this course, students will become thoroughly acquainted with the problem of plagiarism and how to avoid it. If you have questions about plagiarism, contact the instructor. In the first week of class, students are required to read about ASA citation guidelines and write a short essay entitled "What is plagiarism and how can I avoid it?" Students are also required to read and sign a Statement on

Academic Honesty and give it to the instructor within the first two weeks of class. These materials can all be found in the “Writing Resources” section of the interactive syllabus in IS.

## Weekly schedule

(See online Interactive Syllabus for specific reading assignments)

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Seminar topic</b>	<b>Required reading</b> (* = reading for SOC776 students only)
1	February 19	Introductions and course orientation	- Syllabus - Statement on academic honesty - Quick guide to essay-writing and citation style - Choose book to review
2	February 26	<b>No Class</b> Proper citation and writing guidelines	- Johnson, et al. pp. 14-98, 108-110 - Guide to writing well (online) - Sociology Writing Group: Working With Sources; Outlining - ASA style guide - Begin reading for your book review
3	March 5	Writing an expository essay (5-paragraph essay)	- Sociology Writing Group: Finishing Up - Orwell: Politics and the English language* - 26 Golden rules - Handout on writing expository essays - All Internet resources on 5-¶ essays
4	March 12	Discuss expository essay 1 <sup>st</sup> draft	- Zinsser: Simplicity* - Mahrer: Proofreading your own writing - Little, Brown Handbook
5	March 19	Writing a book review	- Johnson, et al. pp. 181-203 - Sociology Writing Group: The Textual Analysis Paper - Belcher - Three example book reviews
6	March 26	Discuss book review 1 <sup>st</sup> draft	- Procter: Book review guidelines - Dartmouth Writing Center: Why and how to revise
7	April 2	Writing a social issue paper	- Johnson, et al. pp. 156-180 - <b>Examples of social issue papers (TBA)</b>
8	April 9	<b>No class – research and writing</b>	- Strunk: <i>The elements of style</i> pp. 1-89 (online)* - Giddens: What is Sociology?* - Mills: The Promise* - Charon and Vigilant: The Discipline of Sociology & The Meaning and Uses of Sociology*
9	April 16	Discuss social issue paper 1 <sup>st</sup> draft	- Little, Brown Handbook

10	April 23	Writing a quantitative report	- Johnson et al. pp. 100-138, 147-154, 204-218 - Sociology Writing Group: The Quantitative Research Paper - Van Poppel and Day - Arber - Marsh - Mack and Lansley
11	April 30	Writing a qualitative report	- Johnson, et al. pp. 219-234 - Sociology Writing Group: The Quantitative Research Paper - Kerlin - Holdaway - Polsky - Duneier
12	May 7	<b>No class – research and writing</b>	- Little, Brown Handbook
13	May 14	Discuss quantitative/qualitative report 1 <sup>st</sup> draft	- Homan - Georges and Jones - Mills: On Intellectual Craftsmanship*

### Summary of assignments

Due date	Assignment
March 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short essay on academic honesty</li> <li>• Sign and return statement on academic honesty</li> <li>• Citation homework</li> <li>• Choose book to review</li> </ul>
March 10	Expository essay 1 <sup>st</sup> draft
March 18	Expository essay
March 24	Book review 1 <sup>st</sup> draft
April 1	Book review
April 14	Social issue paper 1 <sup>st</sup> draft
April 22	Social issue paper
April 30	Abstract writing homework
May 12	Quant/qual report 1 <sup>st</sup> draft
May 21	Quant/qual report
June 11	Final essay

<b>Literature</b>	No. of pages
Arber, S. 1998. "The Research Process: Planning Social Surveys," Pp. 312-317 in Marsh, I., Cambell, R. and Keating, M. <i>Classic and contemporary readings in sociology</i> . Harlow, UK: Prentice Hall.	6
American Sociological Association. 2007. <i>American Sociological Association Style Guide</i> . Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.	46
Belcher, Wendy. "Book review guidelines." <a href="http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/siteart/jli_bookreviewguidelines.pdf">http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/siteart/jli_bookreviewguidelines.pdf</a>	4
Charon, Joel M. and Lee Garth Vigilant. 2002. <i>The Meaning of Sociology</i> , 8th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.	22
Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. "A Statement on Method," pp. 333-357 in <i>Sidewalk</i> . New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.	25
Fowler, H. Ramsey and Jane E. Aaron. 1989. <i>The Little, Brown Handbook</i> , 4th ed. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co.	~76
Georges, R.A. and Jones, M.O. 2001. "The Human Element in Fieldwork." Pp. 384-385 in Giddens, A., ed. <i>Sociology: Introductory readings</i> , revised edition. Cambridge: Polity press.	2
Giddens, Anthony. 2006. "What is Sociology?" in <i>Sociology</i> . Cambridge: Polity Press.	28
Holdway, S. 1998. "Participant Observation (1): Inside the British Police," Pp. 318-323 in Marsh, I., Cambell, R. and Keating, M. <i>Classic and contemporary readings in sociology</i> . Harlow, UK: Prentice Hall.	6
Homan, R. 1998. "The Effects of Social Research," Pp. 350-355 in Marsh, I., Cambell, R. and Keating, M. <i>Classic and contemporary readings in sociology</i> . Harlow, UK: Prentice Hall.	6
Internet resources on writing expository essays	5
Johnson, W., et al. 2006. <i>The sociology student writer's manual</i> (5th edition). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.	264
Kerlin, B. 2000. "Qualitative Research in the United States," <i>Forum: Qualitative Social Research</i> 1(1).	10
Mack, J. and Lansley, S. 2001. "Absolute and Relative Poverty in Britain: An Illustration of Survey Work," pp. 386-388 in Giddens, A., ed. <i>Sociology: Introductory readings</i> , revised edition. Cambridge: Polity press.	3
Mahrer, Kenneth D. 2004. "Proofreading your own writing? Forget it!" <i>The</i>	2

*Leading Edge*, November.

- Marsh, C. 2001. "The Value of the Survey Method," Pp. 382-383 in Giddens, A., ed. *Sociology: Introductory readings*, revised edition. Cambridge: Polity press. 2
- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press. 52
- Orwell, G. 1946. "Politics and the English language." ~20
- Polsky, N. 1998. "Participant Observation (2): Deviant Lives and Careers," Pp. 324-331 in Marsh, I., Cambell, R. and Keating, M. *Classic and contemporary readings in sociology*. Harlow, UK: Prentice Hall. 8
- Procter, Margaret. 1999. "The book review general guidelines."  
<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/> 1
- Strunk, William. 1918 [1999]. *Elements of Style*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Priv. print. [Geneva, N.Y.: Press of W.P. Humphrey]. 90
- Sociology Writing Group. 2008. *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*. 6th ed. New York: Worth Publishers. ~115
- Van Poppel, F. and Day, L.H. 1996. "A Test of Durkheim's Theory of Suicide-- Without Committing the 'Ecological Fallacy,'" *American Sociological Review* 61(3):500-507. 8