

# **SOC 776**

# **WRITING SOCIOLOGY**

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Room 3.59

Consultation Hours:

**Tuesdays 14.00-15.00**

**or by appointment**

# What you will do in the Social Issue Paper:

- 1) Clearly define the issue you will address.
- 2) Clearly state your position on the issue.
- 3) Defend your position.
- 4) Conclude concisely.

# Technicalities:

- *The essay should be at least 1,000 words, but no more than 1,200 words.*
- *The first draft is due on **SUNDAY, MARCH 20 at 23.59** – please send a copy to your partner AND post one in the Homework Vault.*
- *Your peer review comments are due **in class** on Tuesday, March 22 - please bring a hard copy to class for your partner and post a copy to the Homework Vault.*

# Why do sociologists write the way they do? (Kai Erikson 2008)

- *Because it's not just what we see, but how we look at it – that we are destined to write more abstractly (example of looking down in the city from the 14th floor).*
- *Because we are concerned with general tendencies rather than particular events.*
- *Because we think in terms of collateral arrangements rather than sequential ones...Our eyes are trained on the spaces between interacting individuals—on the shape of their conversation, the architecture of their transaction, the way the words are spoken and the gestures enacted, form a composition independent of the persons who make it up.*
- *Because our eyes are turned toward the behavior of multitudes, not individuals.*

# Orwell - Dying Metaphors

- New era business is a whole different ball game.
- The President has his hand firmly on the tiller of government and it is now plain sailing.
- That's just the ticket, old chap. I'm over the moon about it.

## **Misuse:**

*Tow the line* instead of *toe the line*

*The hammer and the anvil* – who gets the worst of it?

*The proof is in the pudding* (*is in the eating*)

*Could care less* instead of *Couldn't care less*

# Orwell – Operators/Verbal False Limbs

- Characteristic phrases: *render inoperative, militate against, make contact with, be subjected to, give rise to, give grounds for, have the effect of, play a leading part (role) in, make itself felt, take effect, exhibit a tendency to, serve the purpose of, etc., etc.*
- My cat Rhonda exhibits a tendency to sleeping in the day in order to be ready to hunt when night falls.
- My cat Rhonda sleeps in the daytime so she can hunt at night.

# Orwell - Pretentious Diction

- *phenomenon, element, individual (as noun), objective, categorical, effective, virtual, basic, primary, promote, constitute, exhibit, exploit, utilize, eliminate, liquidate*
- *epoch-making, epic, historic, unforgettable, triumphant, age-old, inevitable, inexorable, veritable*
- *deregionalize, impermissible, extramarital, non-fragmentary*

# Orwell - Meaningless Words

- *romantic, plastic, values, human, living, dead, sentimental, natural, vitality*
- *Fascism, socialism, freedom, patriotic, realistic, justice, and especially, **democracy***
- *class, totalitarian, science, progressive, reactionary, bourgeois, equality*
- *Foreign words and phrases*



# The result? Political euphemisms

- Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*.
- Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry; this is called *transfer of populations* or *rectification of frontiers*.
- People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die in Arctic labor camps; this is called *elimination of undesirable elements*.

According to Orwell, a scrupulous writer will ask herself at least four questions:

- What am I trying to say?
- What words will express it?
- What image or idiom will make it clearer?
- Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?
- And hopefully two more:
- Could I put it more shortly?
- Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?

# George Orwell's "Rules"

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Hanan C. Selvin and Everett Wilson, both uncommonly literate sociologists themselves, contributed this scrap in 1984:

- The impression is commonplace that a family system marked by such factors as late-age-at marriage, a high degree of non-marriage, a high incidence of marital disruption, and a low marital fertility schedule is conducive to the high involvement of women in economic activities outside the home.
- *[W]omen who marry late, who remain single, who are separated from their husbands, or who have fewer children to take care of, are more likely to have jobs away from home.*

*The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power.*



*If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to “normalize” formally the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality.*

# Some useful and/or interesting links

- **Examples of Bad Writing**

<http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/writsamp0.htm>

- **The Bad Writing Contest: Press Releases,**

**1996-1998 -** [http://denisdutton.com/bad\\_writing.htm](http://denisdutton.com/bad_writing.htm)

- **The Elements of Style William Strunk, Jr.:**

<http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html>

## **Maximizing Meaning in Your Text**

<http://www.transaction.net/web/tutor/text/index.html>



**STOP!**  
**GRAMMAR**  
**TIME!**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otCpCn0l4Wo>



# Plagiarism

- **Definition** (from Stern 2006) using someone else's work – words, ideas, or illustrations; published or unpublished—without giving the creator of that work sufficient credit.
- **Intentional vs. unintentional** – when in doubt, document. The purpose of documentation is not only to give credit but also to help the reader locate your source. Besides that, it clearly tells a reader what ideas are yours and what ideas are someone else's, and shows how reliable your sources are.
- There are two parts to documentation – the **attribution** and the **reference**.

# What you *must* document:

- ***Quotations*** - If you use an author's specific word or words, you must place those words within quotation marks *and* you must credit the source.
- ***Information and Ideas*** - Even if you use your own words, if you obtained the information or ideas you are presenting from a source, you must document the source.

# You do *not* have to document:

- ***General common knowledge*** is factual information considered to be in the public domain, such as birth and death dates of well-known figures, and generally accepted dates of military, political, literary, and other historical events.
- ***Field-specific common knowledge*** is “common” only within a particular field or specialty. It may include facts, theories, or methods that are familiar to readers within that discipline. For instance, you may not need to cite a reference to Durkheim’s concept of *anomie* – consider your audience.

The study presented here takes an unusually comprehensive look at one critical point of entry into academic performance. It shows a group of freshmen in the transition into the academic discourse of college, looking at the ways in which they interpret and negotiate an assignment that calls for reading-to-write. On such tasks, students are reading to create a text of their own, trying to integrate information from sources with ideas of their own, and attempting to do so under the guidance of a purpose they must themselves create. Because these reading-to-write tasks ask students to integrate reading, writing, and rhetorical purpose, they open a door to critical literacy. Yet this same interaction often makes reading-to-write a difficult process for students to learn and to manage.

# NEXT WEEK'S READINGS

- Mahrer, Kenneth D. 2004. "Proofreading your own writing? Forget it!" *The Leading Edge*, November. (2 pp.)
- Trim, Michelle. 2007. *What every student should know about practising peer review*. New York: Pearson Longman, pp. 1-20. (19 pp.)
- **HOMEWORK DUE: 1st draft of social issue essay due March 20 by 12 pm, peer review due in class**