

SOCb2500 SOCIOLOGICAL WRITING – SYLLABUS SPRING 2020

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 13.00 – 14.00 or by appointment

Course objectives:

At some point in their academic life, students of sociology must develop their own voice to express their thoughts and knowledge – to convey the products of their sociological imagination. One of the primary ways in which they do so is through their writing skills. This course is intended to help students improve their academic research, reading, note-taking, and writing skills and to practice exchanging their work with their peers. First and foremost, this is a writing-intensive course that provides training in writing social scientific essays and research papers. Further, special attention is given to learning effective methods of research and norms for proper citation of sources, as well as reading academic texts and taking efficient notes. Importantly, students gain experience in organizing the writing process, offering and receiving constructive criticism and revising first drafts of their work. The ultimate goal is to boost students' confidence in their academic writing skills and prepare them for future endeavors both inside and out of the university.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students will gain experience in:

- Reading academic texts and taking notes
- Research and citation practices
- Response/discussion papers
- Expository essays
- Writing essays on quantitative or qualitative research

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Read academic texts effectively
- Organize and plan the writing process
- Give and receive constructive criticism
- Evaluate and revise first drafts
- Demonstrate knowledge of and practice proper research and citation

Planned learning activities and teaching methods:

The teaching methods used in this course involve weekly seminar meetings, reading of literature, homework exercises and several formal writing assignments.

Syllabus:

- Week 1 – Introduction to the course
- Week 2 – What is bad writing and how can we recognize it?
- Week 3 – How can we engage sources effectively?
- Week 4 – How do we write analytical response/discussion papers?
- Week 5 – Peer Review #1: How do we help one another constructively?
- Week 6 – How do we write an expository or opinion essay?
- Week 7 – Reading Week (NO CLASS)
- Week 8 – Peer Review #2: Social Issue Essay
- Week 9 – How do we get started on a research essay?
- Week 10 – How do I structure a literature review? (NO CLASS)
- Week 11 – How do we finish sociological research and begin writing?
- Week 12 – How do we finish writing a research essay or thesis?
- Week 13 – Peer Review #3 and Presentation of Essay First Drafts

Assessment methods and criteria:

Formal writing assignments:

- Response to academic article (300-400 words)
- Social issue opinion essay (*1000 words*)
- Final research essay (*2500-3500 words; 10-13 pp. double-spaced, Times New Roman*)

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.
- **Peer Review:** We will engage in the written and oral in-class critique of each student's first drafts of the written assignments. Each student will be assigned to read another student's draft essay and give a presentation about suggested revisions.

Students receive a final letter grade (A-F) based on the following criteria:

- 10 points - Response/discussion paper
- 15 points - Social Issue Essay
- 30 points - Class participation (each class and peer review = 2%)
- 10 points - Final essay draft and presentation
- 35 points - Final essay

Evaluation is assessed as follows:

90-100 points = A

80-89 points = B

70-79 points = C

66-69 points = D

60-65 points = E

0-59 points = F

Language Usage:

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.

Using the MU Information System:

Course resources are available to students through Masaryk University's online Information System (IS). In the IS you will find an interactive syllabus which contains important general information about the course and the weekly schedule with links to some of the required course materials – including the required reading and all other information. A version of the weekly lecture PowerPoint presentation slides will be available on the interactive syllabus. The lecture notes are intended as a study aid so you can listen carefully to the lecture without having to take notes on every slide during the lecture presentation. They are *not* meant to be used to avoid your attendance at the lecture.

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. 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.**

E-mail Policy:

Students may contact the instructor at any time by e-mail with questions about the course. I will strive to reply to your questions within 24 hours of receipt of your e-mail, 48 hours on weekends or holidays.

Literature:

- American Sociological Association. 2014. *American Sociological Association Style Guide*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.
- Becker, Howard. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson, William A., ed. 2006. *The sociology student writer's manual*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Somekh, Bridget and Cathy Lewin. 2011. *Theory and Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Turabian, Kate L. 2018. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 9th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

ALWAYS CHECK THE INTERACTIVE SYLLABUS FOR UPDATED READING AND ASSIGNMENTS!

Week	Date	Seminar topic	Required reading
1	Feb 19	Introduction to the course	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Syllabus 2. FSS Disciplinary Rules 3. ASA Style Guide (download for reference throughout semester)
2	Feb 26	What is bad writing and how can we recognize it?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turabian, Ch. 3, pp. 25-37 (25 pp.) 2. Erickson, Kai, 2008. "On Sociological Writing," <i>Sociological Inquiry</i> 78(3):399–411. (12 pp.) 3. Pinker, Steven. 2014. <i>Why Academic Writing Stinks and How to Fix It</i>. Retrieved February 1, 2017 (http://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Academics-Stink-at/149105). Pages 2-9 only!
3	Mar 4	How can we engage sources effectively?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turabian, Ch. 4, pp. 38-50 (12 pp.) 2. Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, The. 2003. "Acknowledging, Paraphrasing and Quoting Sources." Retrieved February 15, 2012 (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Acknowledging_Sources.pdf). (7 pp.) 3. Greetham, Bryan (2001). <i>How to Write Better Essays</i> (Palgrave). Ch. 11-12 (Reading purposefully), pp. 78-93. <p>OPTIONAL READING:</p> <p>Stern, Lisa. 2006. <i>What Every Student Should Know about Avoiding Plagiarism</i>. New York: Pearson/Longman. (1-73).</p>

4	Mar 11	How can we write analytical response/discussion papers?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructions for writing response/discussion papers 2. Becker, <i>Writing for Social Scientists</i>, Preface & Chapter 1. <p>HOMEWORK DUE: RESEARCH AND CHOOSE A TEXT RELATED TO YOUR FINAL PAPER.</p>
5	Mar 18	Peer Review #1 How do we help one another constructively?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mahrer, Kenneth D. 2004. "Proofreading your own writing? Forget it!" <i>The Leading Edge</i>, November. (2 pp.) 2. Trim, Michelle. 2007. <i>What every student should know about practising peer review</i>. New York: Pearson Longman, pp. 1-20. (19 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Response/discussion paper due Monday, March 16 at 13:00 in the Homework Vault and to your peer-review partner; peer review due in class and in the Homework Vault</p>
6	Mar 25	How do we write a good great expository or opinion essay?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Johnson, Ch. 9 "Social Issue Papers," pp. 156-180. (24 pp.) 2. Purdue Writing Lab, The. 2010. "The Expository Essay." Retrieved February 16, 2012 from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/02/ 3. Writing Expository Essays, various sources (5 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Topic for Social Issue Essay due in class (TQS format)</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Becker, <i>Writing for Social Scientists</i>, Chapter 2</p>
7	Apr 1	NO CLASS (Reading Week)	
8	Apr 8	Peer Review #2 (Social issue essay)	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No required reading <p>HOMEWORK DUE: 1st draft of social issue essay due April 6 at 13:00 in the Homework Vault and to your peer-review partner; peer review due in class and in the Homework Vault</p>
9	Apr 15	How do we begin a research essay?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Turabian, Ch. 1-2, pp. 1-24. (24 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Final version of social issue essay due on Monday April 13 at 13:00 in the Homework Vault; Final essay topic and research question (in class)</p>

10	Apr 22 (NO CLASS)	How do I structure a literature review?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Somekh & Lewin – Chapter 2 “Working with Literatures” (8 pp.) 2. <i>Becker, Writing for Social Scientists</i>, Ch. 8 (14 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: 3-5 sources for final essays, Due April 22 in the Homework Vault, formatted to ASA Style</p>
11	Apr 29	How do we finish sociological research and begin writing?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turabian, Ch. 5-7, pp. 51-85. (34 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Paper proposal, due April 29 in the Homework Vault</p>
12	May 6	How do we finish writing a research essay or thesis?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Becker, Writing for Social Scientists</i>, Ch. 3 & 4 (45 pp.) 2. Turabian, Ch. 9-14, pp. 102-135 (32 pp.) <p>OPTIONAL BUT STRONGLY RECOMMENDED!</p> <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Meeting with professor to discuss research essay proposal and overall progress</p> <p>OPTIONAL: <i>Becker, Writing for Social Scientists</i>, Ch. 5 & 6</p>
13	May 13	Peer Review #3 Presentation/Peer Review of First Essay Drafts	<p>No reading!</p> <p>HOMEWORK DUE: First draft of research essay due May 10 at 13:00 in the Homework Vault and to your peer-review partner; peer review due in class and in Homework Vault; 3-5 minute in-class presentation of draft</p>