

SOC b2500
Sociological Writing
(“Making Sociology Speak”)

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Consultation Hours:

**Wednesdays: 13.00-14.00 or by
appointment**

REQUIREMENTS FOR WEEKS 11-12

- **2-3 page proposal** that expands your initial sentence, including: development of *research question* and potential *hypothesis or answer*; touch upon *literature* available; how you will actualize – *method*; hint at your *potential argument* – due **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2019 at 13.00.**
- **Meeting with me BEFORE WEDNESDAY, MAY 6:**
 - Elevator story (90-seconds)
 - “Stuck on an elevator” story (5-10 minutes)
 - Receive feedback on the 2-3 page proposal

FINAL ESSAY

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- 3,500-4,000 words ~ 11-13 pp.
- 2.5 cm. margins, 12-pt or larger font, left justified
- **PLEASE REMEMBER TO NUMBER THE PAGES and INCLUDE YOUR NAME!** Ideally, you would do this in the header or footer.
- -Title page and abstract (150 words or less)
- -Text w/footnotes (I prefer them to endnotes)
- -References (using ASA format)

FINAL ESSAY TIMELINE

- **FINAL ESSAY DRAFT** for in-class peer review due to your partner and in the Homework Vault by **Wednesday, May 13 by class time.**
- **PEER REVIEW COMMENT SHEET** for your partner due in Homework Vault and to your partner by **Monday, May 18 by 13:00.**
- **FINAL ESSAY** due EITHER **June 22 or September 22. (Email me when uploading)**

My elevator story (90 seconds or less)

- I am working on the problem of (state your question).
- I think I can show that (state your hypothesis) because (state your reasons).
- My best evidence is (summarize your evidence).

useful phrases for writing a proposal/introduction

- <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Assembling the core of your argument

- **Turn your working hypothesis into a claim/thesis statement**
- **Evaluate your claim**
- **Support your claim with reasons and evidence**
- **Acknowledge and respond to readers' points of view**
- **Use warrants if readers question the relevance of your reasons**

Your argument answers the following questions:

- What are you claiming?
- What are your reasons?
- What evidence supports your reasons?
- But what about other points of view?
- How are your reasons relevant to your claim?

Three types of flawed arguments

- The ***individual argument***: "The individual is free to make choices, and any outcomes can be explained exclusively through the study of his or her ideas and decisions."
- The ***human nature argument***: "Humans are by nature X, therefore it is not surprising that Y."
- The ***society argument***: "Society made me do it." (reification)

Some rules of evidence

- Sociology is an empirical discipline; this means basing your conclusions on evidence documented and collected with as much rigor as possible.
- Empirical evidence usually draws upon observed patterns and information from collected cases and experiences, not just from isolated, anecdotal reports.
- **Above all else, remember that your opinion alone is not sufficient support for a sociological argument.**
- Even if you are making a theoretical argument, you must be able to point to documented instances of social phenomena that fit your argument. Logic is necessary for making the argument, but is not sufficient by itself.

Logical Fallacies

- **Slippery Slope:** This is a conclusion based on the premise that if A happens, then eventually through a series of small steps, through B, C,..., X, Y, Z will happen, too, basically equating A and Z. So, if we don't want Z to occur, A must not be allowed to occur either. Example:

If we ban Hummers because they are bad for the environment eventually the government will ban all cars, so we should not ban Hummers.

- **Hasty Generalization:** This is a conclusion based on insufficient or biased evidence. In other words, you are rushing to a conclusion before you have all the relevant facts. Example:
- *Even though it's only the first day, I can tell this is going to be a boring course.*

Logical Fallacies

- **Post hoc ergo propter hoc:** This is a conclusion that assumes that if 'A' occurred after 'B' then 'B' must have caused 'A.'

Example:

I drank bottled water and now I am sick, so the water must have made me sick.

- **Genetic Fallacy:** This conclusion is based on an argument that the origins of a person, idea, institute, or theory determine its character, nature, or worth. Example:

The Volkswagen Beetle is an evil car because it was originally designed by Hitler's army.

- **Begging the Claim:** The conclusion that the writer should prove is validated within the claim. Example:

Filthy and polluting coal should be banned.

Logical Fallacies

- **Circular Argument:** This restates the argument rather than actually proving it. Example:

George Bush is a good communicator because he speaks effectively.

- **Ad hominem:** This is an attack on the character of a person rather than his or her opinions or arguments. Example:

Green Peace's strategies aren't effective because they are all dirty, lazy hippies.

- **Ad populum:** This is an emotional appeal that speaks to positive (such as patriotism, religion, democracy) or negative (such as terrorism or fascism) concepts rather than the real issue at hand. Example:

If you were a true American you would support the rights of people to choose whatever vehicle they want.

Logical Fallacies

- **Red Herring:** This is a diversionary tactic that avoids the key issues, often by avoiding opposing arguments rather than addressing them. Example:

The level of mercury in seafood may be unsafe, but what will fishers do to support their families?

- **Straw Man:** This move oversimplifies an opponent's viewpoint and then attacks that hollow argument.

People who don't support the proposed state minimum wage increase hate the poor.

Logical Fallacies

- **Moral Equivalence:** This fallacy compares minor misdeeds with major atrocities.

That parking attendant who gave me a ticket is as bad as Hitler.

- **Either/or:** This is a conclusion that oversimplifies the argument by reducing it to only two sides or choices. Example:

We can either stop using cars or destroy the earth.

Structure of a Research Essay

- Introduction
- Review of Literatures
- Method/Methodology
- Argument/Findings/Data
- Discussion (often intertwined with Findings)
- Conclusion

Four-part scheme for Introduction

- Current Situation (what your readers now think or do)
- You are disrupting something and challenging it.
 - I used to think..., but....
 - Most people think..., but...
 - What events seem to show..., but...
 - .Researchers have shown..., but...
- Research questions (what your readers need to know but don't)
- Significance of the Questions (SO WHAT?)
- Answer (what your readers should know) **DON'T BE AFRAID TO GIVE AWAY YOUR ANSWER.** It's not a mystery novel!

People in the United States have always differentiated between the native-born and the foreign-born; however, nowadays there is a new category – “illegal.” So-called illegal immigrants suffer exclusion at both the social and symbolic levels because people classify them as “impure” and unworthy of inclusion in the “American” mainstream core. How does this happen in a small city where large numbers of immigrants have changed the demographic makeup in the past decade? What are the cultural structures underpinning the ways in which residents of Danbury, CT categorize each other? *By revealing the ways in which this process occurs in the small city of Danbury, we learn about the forms of inclusion and exclusion in the civil spheres of democratic nation states.* Residents of Danbury use both moral and legal criteria to decide who “belongs” in their city (or in the United States at all) by drawing symbolic boundaries around three categories of people: Americans, Immigrants or Aliens.

Beginnings of organization

- **Identify Key terms that unite your paper:** for every major concept, identify a key term. My key terms are – illegal, symbolic, boundaries, cultural, inclusion and exclusion, moral, legal
- **Find the key terms Distinctive to Each Section**
- use subheads wisely!

Order sections by ordering reasons

- **Straightforward and standard:**
 - **Chronological.** Earlier to later or vice versa.
 - **Part by Part.** Ordering by relationship.
- **What readers like:**
 - Short to long, simple to complex
 - More familiar to less familiar
 - Most acceptable to most contestable
 - More important to less important (or vice versa)
 - Step-by-step understanding. Cover events, principles, definitions first.

Filling in the blanks

- **Sketch in a brief introduction to each section and subsection**
- **Sketch in evidence and acknowledgements**
- **Resist the temptation to shoehorn in the leftovers. Let go!**

Some Drafting Tips

- **Draft in a way that feels comfortable**
- **Picture your readers asking friendly questions**
- **Be open to surprises and changes**
- **Develop productive working habits**
- **Work through writer's block**

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS

- **REQUIRED READING:**

Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists*, Ch. 3 & 4 (45 pp.)

Turabian, Ch. 9-14, pp. 102-135 (32 pp.) **OPTIONAL BUT STRONGLY RECOMMENDED!**

- **HOMEWORK DUE:** Meeting with professor to discuss research essay proposal and overall progress