

SOC 470 & SOC 776 - WRITING SOCIOLOGY

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 16:00 – 18:00; Wednesdays: 14:00 – 15:40

This course is intended to help masters students improve their academic writing skills and to practice English. This is a writing-intensive course that provides training in the methods of researching and writing sociological essays in several different styles. The intent is to boost students' confidence in all stages of the writing process, prepare students to write well in a variety of academic literary genres, introduce various perspectives on proper professional writing and to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of sociological theory and methods.

Course objectives

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

- Book/Article reviews
- Expository essays
- Social issue reaction papers
- Reports on quantitative and qualitative research according to social science journal guidelines

Special attention is given to learning effective methods of research and norms for proper citation of sources to maintain academic honesty. Student also gain experience organizing the writing process, making in-class presentations, offering and receiving constructive criticism and revising first drafts.

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

- Organize and plan the writing process
- Prepare and discuss in-class presentations
- Give and receive constructive criticism
- Evaluate and revise first drafts
- Demonstrate knowledge of and practice proper citation

Teaching methods

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

Assessment methods

Student evaluations are based on several writing assignments and class attendance and participation, as described below.

Writing assignments

- 5-paragraph opinion essay (*600-800 words*)
- Book or article review (*600-800 words*)
- Social issue paper (*800-1000 words*)
- Final research essay (*No more than 4000 words; 10-15 pp. double-spaced*)

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:** Approximately every other week, we will engage in the written and oral 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.

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

Final grade components	Final grade scale
30% - Attendance and class participation	A = 90 – 100%
35% - Essay assignments	B = 80 – 90%
35% - Final Research Essay**	C = 70 – 80%
	D = 60 – 70%
	E = 50 – 60%
	F = <50%

**** Final essay not required for students taking SOC 781**

Penalties for Late Assignments

Assignments should be submitted into the Assignments folder in the course's IS page by 23:59 on the due date, unless otherwise specified by the teacher. If you have trouble uploading to the IS, send the file to the teacher by e-mail. First drafts that are received late need not be read or commented on by the teacher or the author's peer review partner. Final drafts that are late will receive a grade of F and no feedback.

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.

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 weeks of class, students are required to read about ASA citation guidelines and to perform practices exercises in identifying plagiarism. 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 on the interactive syllabus in IS.

Books – required reading

The meanings of social life: A cultural sociology. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2003.

American sociological association style guide. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association, 2007. xvi, 108 s. ISBN 9780912764309. [info](#)

Becker #1 - *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book, or Article.* Howard S. Becker. University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Becker #2 – *Telling about Society.* Howard S. Becker. University of Chicago Press, 2007.

The sociology student writer's manual. Edited by William A. Johnson. 5th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006. xii, 260 p. ISBN 0-13-192851-1. [info](#)

A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers. Sociology Writing Group. 6th edition. New York: Worth Publishers, 2008.

Stern, Linda. *What every student should know about Avoiding Plagiarism.* Pearson Education, Inc. 2007.

Turabian, Kate L. *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers,* Fourth Edition, University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Chapters & Articles – required reading

*Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2008). "Iconic consciousness: the material feeling of meaning." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26: 782-794.

*Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2008). "Iconic Experience in Art and Life: Surface/Depth Beginning with Giacometti's Standing Woman." *Theory. Culture & Society* 25(5): 1-19.

Belcher, Wendy, "Writing the Academic Book Review," (from the Journal *Aztlán*)

Berger, Peter L. "Introduction." Pp. 1-24 in *Invitation to Sociology: a Humanistic Perspective*. New York: Anchor Books.

Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. "How to Get an Article Accepted at *American Anthropologist* (or Anywhere)," *AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST*, Vol. 110, Issue 3, pp. 281–283, Parts I & II.

Durkheim, Emile. "Social Facts." Pp. 433-440 in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, edited by Michael Martin and Lee C. McIntyre. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Erickson, Kai, "On Sociological Writing," *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 78, No. 3, August 2008, pp. 399–411

Giddens, Anthony. 2006. "What is Sociology?" in *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

*Jacobs, Mark D., and Lyn Spillman. 2005. "Cultural sociology at the crossroads of the discipline," *Poetics* 33: 1-14.

Mahrer, Kenneth D. 2004. "Proofreading your own writing? Forget it!" *The Leading Edge*, November.

Miller, Joann and Robert T. Perrucci. 2001. "Back Stage at *Social Problems*: An Analysis of the Editorial Decision Process, 1993–1996," *Social Problems*, Vol. 48, No. 1, pages 93–110.

Orwell, G. 1946. "Politics and the English language."

Peterson, Richard A., and Roger M. Kern. 1996. "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore." *American Sociological Review* 61:900-907.

Sand-Jensen, Kaj. 2007. "How to write consistently boring scientific literature," *Oikos* 116: 723-727

*Sewell, William H., 1992. A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology* 98 1, pp. 1–29

Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51:273-286.

Trim, Michelle. 2007. *What every student should know about practicing peer review*. New York: Pearson.

Optional Reading

Fowler, H. Ramsey and Jane E. Aaron. 1989. *The Little, Brown Handbook*, 4th ed. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press.

Turabian, Kate L. 1996; 2007. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. University of Chicago Press.

* Readings required only for students taking SOC 781

Weekly Schedule

(See online Interactive Syllabus for specific reading assignments and any changes!)

Week	Date	Seminar topic	Required reading (* = reading for SOC 776 students only)
1		<i>Course orientation; avoiding plagiarism</i>	Syllabus Stern: Avoiding plagiarism (73 pp.) Statement of Academic Honesty (signed copy to instructor)
2		<i>Proper citation and writing guidelines</i>	ASA Style Guide (download for reference throughout semester) Turabian, Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-43 Sociology Writing Group (SWG), Chapters 1-2. pp. 1-44 Sand-Jensen
3		<i>The Sociological Imagination? Writing an expository essay</i>	Becker #1, Chapters 1-4, pp. ix-89 Berger Durkheim Giddens
4		<i>Discuss expository essay 1st draft</i>	Erikson Mahrer Orwell Trim (Peer Review) Draft of 5-paragraph essay due in class
5		<i>What is sociology? Part I: Modernity and the Cultural Turn</i>	Alexander – Chapters 1, 4*, 8* ; Peterson Sewell* Swidler 5-paragraph essay due by 23:59
6		<i>Writing a social issue paper</i>	Johnson et al, Chapters 4-9, pp. 79-180 SWG – Part III, pp. 215-222.
7		<i>No class – Research and writing</i>	
8		<i>Discuss social issue paper 1st draft</i>	Becker #2 – Preface, Chapters 1-3, pp xi-53 Reading: Jacobs & Spillman* Draft of social issue essay due in class
9		<i>Writing a book/article review</i>	Alexander – Chapter 6* Becker #1 – Chapters 5-6, pp. 90-120 Belcher: Book Review Guidelines Johnson et al, Chapter 10, pp. 181-203 SWG – Chapter 5, pp. 118-141 Examples of book/article reviews by Jaworsky Social issue essay due by 23:59
10		<i>Discuss book/article review 1st draft</i>	Becker #2 – Chapters 4, 7, 8, pp. 54-70 & 109-149 Draft of book/article review essay due in class

11	<i>Writing a research essay: writing well and getting published</i>	SWG, Chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, pp. 45-117 & 142-214 Boellstorff Miller & Perrucci Book/article review essay due by 23:59
12	<i>What is sociology? Part II: The Iconic Turn</i>	Becker #1 – Chapters 7-10, pp. 121-184 Johnson et al, Chapter 3, pp. 62-78 Alexander – 2 articles on the Iconic Turn*
13	<i>Discuss research essay 1st draft</i>	No reading! Draft research essay due in class Final research essay due 23:59 on January

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