

GLCb1004 ACADEMIC SKILLS – SYLLABUS

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Course objectives:

At some point in their academic life, students of the social sciences must develop their own voice to express their thoughts and knowledge. One of the primary ways in which they do so is through their academic 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 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 papers
- Writing a research essay

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.

Assessment methods and criteria:

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:

- 5 points - Response paper (350 words)
- 10 points - Paper Proposal (500 words)
- 40 points - Class participation and homework
- 15 points - Final essay draft (1000 words) and presentation
- 30 points - Final essay (2000 words) – due date **January 11, 2026**

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 after each class. 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. In addition, the use of AI tools should be judicious and under the direction of the teacher. The official FSS policy on academic honesty and on the use of AI technology are 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.**

All assignments submitted in this course must be your own work. Any use of generative AI in working on assignments is prohibited. The assignments assigned in this course are designed to motivate you to develop creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The use of AI technology will limit your ability to develop these skills and achieve the learning objectives of this course.

PLEASE NOTE:

All assignments may require an oral defense. Students will have to prove that their paper does not contain parts that can be classified as plagiarized or contain academic fraudulence. Students have to demonstrate that they used all the references enlisted in the paper and show beyond doubt that they wrote the paper by being able to defend it in a discussion.

E-mail Policy:

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

DETAILED SYLLABUS

ALWAYS CHECK THE INTERACTIVE SYLLABUS FOR UPDATED READING AND ASSIGNMENTS!

Wee ↓	Date	Seminar topic	Required reading
1	Sept. 19	Introduction to the course	1. Syllabus 2. APA Style Guide (download for reference throughout semester) 3. FSS Disciplinary Rules 4. MUNI policy on AI

2	Sept. 26	What is Critical Thinking in the Social Sciences?	<p>1. Best, Joel. (2021) <i>Is That True? Critical Thinking for Sociologists</i>. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. READ Chapters 1 and 2</p> <p>HOMEWORK (due in Information System Homework Vault before class): Please come up with an argument about global challenges in which you strongly believe (200 words or less). Please bring an electronic or hard copy to class.</p>
3	Oct. 3	Reading social science	<p>1. Greetham, Bryan (2001). <i>How to Write Better Essays</i> (Palgrave). Ch. 11-12, pp. 78-93.</p> <p>HOMEWORK (due in class): Prepare two questions related to your reading for the Week 3 of your introductory course. The first should be a question answered in the reading. The second question should involve something that caught your attention and you would like to know more about. Please bring an electronic or hard copy to class.</p>
4	Oct. 10	Effective Notetaking	<p>1. Greetham, Bryan (2001). <i>How to Write Better Essays</i> (Palgrave). Ch. 13-15, pp. 94-117</p> <p>HOMEWORK (due in class): Please take written notes on the reading for the Week 4 of your introductory course. They can be electronic or hard copy; please bring them to class.</p>
5	Oct. 17	Writing Response papers	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructions for writing response/discussion paper 2. Meghji, A. (2024). "From Public Sociology to Sociological Publics: The Importance of Reverse Tutelage to Social Theory" <i>Sociological Theory</i> 42(2), pp. 114-136 (23 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK (due in Information System Homework Vault before class): Write a short response paper (350 words), on the text by A. Meghji.</p>
6	Oct 24	Peer Review #1	<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 in Homework Vault before class): Write a short peer review (200 words) of the response paper assigned to you.</p>
7	Oct 31	NO CLASS – Reading Week	

8	Nov. 7	Starting a research essay	<p>REQUIRED READING: Turabian, Kate L. 2018. <i>A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations</i>. 9th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1-2, pp. 1-24. (24 pp.)</p> <p>HOMEWORK (due in class): Please prepare and bring a proposed topic and research question to class (to present in 2-3 minutes)</p>
9	Nov. 14	Engaging sources	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turabian, Kate L. 2018. <i>A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations</i>. 9th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 3, pp. 25-37 (12 pp.) 2. Greetham, Bryan (2001). <i>How to Write Better Essays</i> (Palgrave). Ch. 23, pp. 176-181. (5 pp.) 3. 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.) <p>HOMEWORK (due in class): 3-4 academic sources for your research paper</p>
10	Nov. 21	Reviewing Literature	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Becker, Howard. 1986. <i>Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book or Article</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 8 (15 pp.) 2. Sparkman, Max, and Alan Witt. "Claude AI and Literature Reviews: An Experiment in Utility and Ethical Use." <i>Library Trends</i> 73, no. 3 (2025): 355-380. 3. Appendix 3: APA reference style (5 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK (due in Information System Homework Vault before class): Annotated Bibliography, with 3-4 correctly formatted (academic) sources</p>
11	Nov. 28	The writing process and Peer Review #2	<p>REQUIRED READING: Turabian, Kate L. 2018. <i>A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations</i>. 9th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 5-7, pp. 51-85. (34 pp.)</p> <p>HOMEWORK DUE (due in Information System Homework Vault and emailed to your peer review partner before class): Paper Proposal (500 words); Peer Review (200 words)</p>

12	Dec. 5	Writing and revising a first draft	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <p>1. Becker, Howard. 1986. <i>Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book or Article</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 4 (21 pp.)</p> <p>Turabian, Kate L. 2018. <i>A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations</i>. 9th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 9-11, pp. 102-123 (21 pp.)</p> <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Meeting with professor outside of class to discuss research essay proposal and overall progress</p>
13	Dec. 12	Peer Review #3 and Presentation of Essay First Drafts	<p>No reading!</p> <p>HOMEWORK DUE: First draft of research essay (1000 words) due Tuesday, December 9 at 13:00 in Homework Vault, written peer review using form provided, due in class and in Homework Vault; 5-minute in-class presentation of draft</p>