

## **Sociology 194: Writing Social Science Research**

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This course trains students in the skills of writing analytical research papers for the social sciences. Writing is more than communication; it is a tool that we can use to develop and clarify our thinking. We are not born with this knowledge; instruction and practice shape our capacities to write well. Additionally, a community of scholars or peers provides the social energy for writing. We will provide this community for each other during the semester. We will water the seeds of inspiration in ourselves and in each other, because inspiration catalyzes creativity.

Social science writing entails explicit and implicit types of knowledge. Explicit knowledge lends itself to verbal learning instruction, while implicit knowledge is difficult to learn without observing it in action and practicing it. This course is designed to train you in both the explicit and the implicit knowledge of writing. We will cover the structure, mechanics, and rules of writing, as well as the stages of research. Students will practice these fundamentals by designing and developing their own research papers, the final drafts of which will be due at the end of the semester.

Course objectives include increased ability in critical thinking, analysis, creativity, formulating research, projects, reading scholarly work, drafting, editing, and incorporating feedback from others. Increased ability in these areas promises to benefit your experience—and success—beyond the classroom. I hope this course facilitates your enjoyment of scholarly work and nurtures your personal writing practice.

### **The Research Paper**

You will choose a topic, formulate a question, and follow through with the research required to answer it. This involves doing a literature review and designing a project using a method, such as participant observation, interviews, or surveys to answer your question. The actual data collection involved will be minimal, because this course focuses on research processes and writing.

Think of the paper as a research proposal based on a small pilot study. In other words, you will use primary sources (data you generate) and secondary sources (data that other scholars generated) to determine how you would answer your research question based on the preliminary results you obtain.

You are free to choose the topic of your paper, albeit within parameters that we will discuss in class. I encourage you to study something that you find both fascinating—or at least interesting—and doable.

### **Course Materials**

Assigned reading for this course is available in a reader at Replica Copy, 2138 Oxford., and in the Berkeley writing guide, *Writing for Sociology*, available online (go to the Sociology Department website). These are instructional texts on writing research. However, much of your reading will be the outside sources you use in your literature review.

### **Course Requirements and Due Dates**

Attendance and Participation.....	20%	Every meeting
Paper Proposal.....	5%	February 4
Annotated Bibliography.....	5%	February 19
Literature Review.....	10%	March 3
Methods draft.....	5%	March 31
Results.....	10%	April 7
Discussion.....	5%	April 14
Final Paper.....	40%	May 12

### **Attendance and Participation**

This seminar emphasizes discussions, so be prepared to actively engage with the readings. This requires preparation (e.g. reading the assigned material). We will have regular check-ins about the progress of your research. There will also be in-class writing and peer-review opportunities.

Your participation grade depends on regular attendance, as well. Attendance grade will not suffer if you miss two classes or less. However, your participation grade might. Please do not email me about missing class unless you miss more than two, in which case you will need verification of your legitimate reason for missing. In-class participation, writing, and other work cannot be made up under any circumstances.

### **Paper Proposal (~ two pages)**

You will discuss what your paper will be about in this proposal. You will introduce the topic and explain why it is important. You will state your research question and discuss how you plan to answer it, including the nature of your research and relevant data sources. You may change your topic after writing your proposal, but no changes will be permitted after February 26.

### **Annotated Bibliography (~two pages)**

An annotated bibliography includes citations of books, articles, and other sources along with a brief description (about 150 words). Full credit requires at least five annotated sources. The annotated bibliography helps you develop your literature review; it is not part of your final paper.

### **Literature Review (~ four pages)**

A literature review contextualizes your research question within the existing scholarly work on the same topic. You will provide an overview of the empirical and theoretical dimensions of the scholarship that is most relevant to your project, and explain how it is relevant. You must cite correctly and provide a list of references. After writing this literature review, you may wish to reevaluate and revise your research question.

**Methods section (~ one page)**

In your Methods section, you will discuss what method you will use to collect your data and how the data collection unfolded.

**Results section (~ seven pages)**

In your Results section, you will present your findings and the data analysis that produced them.

**Discussion section (~one page)**

Your discussion section highlights the most interesting aspects of your findings. Did you successfully answer your research question? How does your study contribute to scholarly knowledge on your topic? This section also includes a summary of what you learned from your pilot study, what you would do differently in a follow-up study, and what you would expect to find.

**Final Paper**

The final draft of your research paper should be well-edited and polished. I will look for evidence that you incorporated my feedback into your revisions. You may need to do additional reading and/or research to back up your claims or clarify your argument etc. The paper will have an introduction (about one-two pages) and conclusion (about one page) in addition to the sections listed above. This paper should be 15-20 pages long if you're taking the class for three units, and 20-25 pages if you're taking the class for four units.

All assignments should be double-spaced, use 12-point "Times New Roman" font, and have 1" margins, page numbers, and a title. The title for your final paper should reflect its content. Proper citations are required.

**Course Schedule**

**Week One, January 21** Course overview

**Unit One: Research Design and Literature Review**

**Week Two: January 28** Choosing a topic and constructing a question; the components of a research paper

*Writing for Sociology*: "Introduction"; Ch. 2.6, "The Components of a Research Paper;"  
Ch. 3.1, "Picking a Topic with Care."

Alford, Robert. (1998) *The Craft Of Inquiry : Theories, Methods, Evidence*. New York: Oxford University Press: Ch. 1, "The Craft of Inquiry" and Ch. 2, Designing a Research Project."

**Week Three: February 4** Finding and evaluating the literature

\*Paper Proposal due

In-class tutorial; bring your laptops.

**Week Four: February 11** Understanding the literature review

Hart, Chris. *Doing a Literature Review*. London: SAGE, 1998: Ch. 2, "Reviewing and the Research Imagination."

Becker, Howard. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986: Ch. 8, "Terrorized by the Literature."

**Week Five: February 19** Writing the literature review

\*Annotated Bibliography due in class

*Writing for Sociology*: Ch. 6, "Handling Other People's Writing"

## **Unit Two: Methodology and Analysis**

**Week Six: February 26** Choosing a research method

\*Begin data collection

Bring three of your sources to class.

**Week Seven: March 3** Finding participants

\*Literature Review due in class

Morrill, Calvin, David B. Buller, Mary Klein Buller, and Linda L. Larkey. (1999)  
"Toward an Organizational Perspective on Identifying and Managing Formal Gatekeepers." *Qualitative Sociology* 22: 51-72.

**Week Eight: March 10** Methodological considerations

Iddo Tavory and Stefan Timmermans. (2009) "Two Cases of Ethnography: Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method." *Ethnography* 10 (3): 243-263.

**Week Nine: March 17** Transforming analysis into findings

Murray Davis. "That's Interesting!" *Philosophy of Social Science*, (1), 1971.

**Week Ten: March 24** No class

#### **Unit Four: Writing Processes**

**Week Eleven: March 31** Transforming results into a thesis statement  
\*Methods draft due in class

*Writing for Sociology*, Ch. 5 “Thesis Statements and Arguments.”

**Week Twelve: April 7** Articulating analysis and theory  
\*Results draft due in class

Becker, Howard. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986: Ch. 1  
“Freshman English for Graduate Students.”

**Week Thirteen: April 14** Finishing the final draft

Becker, Howard. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986: Ch. 3, “One Right Way,” and Ch. 4, “Editing by Ear.”

#### **Unit Five: Presentations**

**Week Fourteen: April 21** Informal Presentations  
\*Discussion draft due in class

**Week Fifteen: April 28** Informal Presentations

**Final Paper Due by Thursday, May 12 at 2pm  
in my box in 410 Barrows Hall.**