

# Sociology 194

## Writing Social Science Research

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UC Berkeley  
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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, 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. We 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.

## **Grading and Coursework**

*All assignments must be submitted in class on paper; no electronic submissions will be accepted. Assignments must be submitted on time. Late assignments will be penalized one grade per day.*

Attendance and Participation.....	20%
Proposal.....	5%
Literature Review.....	15%
Methods Section.....	5%
Results Section.....	15%
Presentations.....	5%
Peer Review.....	5%
Final Paper.....	30%

### **Attendance and Participation**

Your participation grade depends on regular attendance. Attendance grade will not suffer if you miss only one class; however, your participation grade will suffer if you're not in class to participate. Do not email me about missing class unless you miss more than one and wish to request exemption for the attendance policy, in which case you will need verification of your legitimate reason for missing. Even then, you will not be able to receive credit for participation (even with a valid excuse and documentation). In other words, in-class participation, writing, and lecture-knowledge cannot be made up under any circumstances, for any reason.

This seminar emphasizes discussions and peer review, like a writing workshop, so be prepared to share your work. Contributions to discussions include thoughtful comments as well as positive attitude and active listening. Good participation also requires reading the assigned material and keeping up with the schedule of writing. We will have regular check-ins about the progress of your research. There will also be in-class writing and peer-review opportunities.

The following descriptions are for the assignments that build your final paper. Each of these assignments is a rough draft of the corresponding section in the final paper, and will be evaluated as such. You will revise and develop them for the final paper, incorporating the feedback you received.

### **Peer Review**

For each peer-review assignment you will exchange your work with one of your peers. The "peer editing" section of your grade will reflect the quality of the feedback you provided your partner.

### **Research Proposal (1 page)**

You will discuss what your research will be about in this proposal. You will introduce the topic and explain why it matters to you and why it is important as a research topic. State your research question and discuss how you plan to answer it, including the methods you think would be best to study it. How is it theoretically-oriented and/or empirically-oriented? You may not be able to change your topic after submitting your proposal, so choose wisely.

**Literature Review (3-4 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 (1-2 pages)**

In your Methods section, you will discuss what method you will use to collect your data, why you chose that method, and how the data collection unfolded. Include details about particular techniques that you found useful as well as any problems.

**Results section (4-5 pages)**

In your Results section, you will present your findings and the data analysis that produced them. Include evidence—from your data—for the claims you make about your findings. Your evidence should also act as examples, illustrating your claims.

**Presentations (10 minutes)**

At the end of the term, students will present their research to the class, and the class will give each presenter feedback on the project.

**Final Paper**

The final draft of your paper should be well-edited and easy-to-read. I will look for evidence that you incorporated feedback into your revisions. You may need to do additional reading and/or research to back up your claims or clarify your argument. The paper will have an Introduction and Conclusion in addition to the sections listed above. This paper must be 15-20 pages long if you are taking the class for three units, and 20-25 pages if you are taking the class for four units.

**Guidelines and Resources****Formatting Guidelines**

Use a modified-MLA format style:

- single space* the header at the top-left of your first page (name, course, assignment, date);
- center your creative title above the start of your text;
- no title page;
- use *two spaces* between sentences;
- single space* block quotations;
- 1" margins;
- doubled-spacing;
- pagination;
- 12-point Times New Roman font;
- staple pages together;
- no contractions or passive voice.

### **Disability accommodations**

If you need disability-related accommodations in this class please inform the instructor. Students who need academic accommodations should contact the Disability Students Program, 260 Cesar Chavez Center.

### **Writing Tutors and the Student Learning Center (SLC)**

The SLC provides peer writing tutors. You are expected to make use of their services. Each student must take a draft of each assignment to a writing tutor before submitting it to the instructor. Ask the tutor to help you with “clarity,” including grammar, organization, and word choice. You do not need an appointment. Find them in the Chavez Center on campus (<http://slc.berkeley.edu>).

NOTE: Plagiarism, broadly put, is the presentation of another’s words and/or ideas as one’s own. It is grounds not only for automatic failure, but also for administrative disciplinary action. This also applies for other forms of academic dishonesty (a.k.a. cheating). Please see the Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct, Section III B, Academic Violations, and Section IV, Disciplinary Procedures.

### **Course Materials**

A course reader is available at Replica Copy, 2138 Oxford, tel.: 549.9991.

*Writing for Sociology*. The Department of Sociology, 2011. Available on BCourses.

### **Recommended Reading**

Johnson, William A., et. al. “Writing Competently.” Use this as a reference for grammar.

### **Office Hours**

Office hours are an important part of university learning. I ask that students email me to arrange an appointment. This way, we can find a time that works for everyone. My email address is: [j\\_kaiser@berkeley.edu](mailto:j_kaiser@berkeley.edu). I usually do not use email over the weekend. Allow at least 24 hours for a reply.

*Attention:* this syllabus may be altered at the discretion of the instructor.

You will be dropped from the course if you miss any of the first three weeks of class.

### **Course Schedule**

<b>Week One, January 19</b> Course overview
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## Unit One: Research Design and Literature Review

**Week Two, January 26** 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;” and Ch. 3, “The Writing Process.”

Alford, Robert. Ch. 2, “Designing a Research Project.”

**Week Three, February 2** Finding the literature

*\*Research Proposal due in class (2 copies)*

*In-class tutorial; bring your laptops*

Rosenwasser and Stephen. Ch. 14, “Finding, Citing, and Integrating Sources.”

**Week Four, February 9** Understanding the literature review

Rosenwasser and Stephen. Ch. 13, “Using Sources Analytically: The Conversation Model.”

**Week Five, February 16** Writing the Literature Review

*\*List of sources due in class*

*Writing for Sociology*. Ch. 6, “Handling Other People’s Writing.”

## Unit Two: Methodology and Data Collection

**Week Six, February 23** Choosing a research method

Ostertag, Stephen. “Writing in Sociology: A Guide for UConn Students.”

**Week Eight, March 9** Methodological Considerations: theory and evidence

Bring two of your sources to class!

### **Unit Three: Putting the Paper Together**

**Week Nine, March 16** Writing as a tool for data analysis

Rosenwasser and Stephen. Ch. 3, "Analysis: What It Is and What It Does" (53-82).

**Week Ten, March 23** Clarity

*\*Methods section due in class (2 copies)*

Rosenwasser and Stephen. Ch. 15, "Forms and Formats" (333-347).

*Writing for Sociology*. Ch. 4, "Mechanics."

**Week Eleven, March 30** Spring break

**Week Twelve, April 6** The "Red Thread": making an evidence-based argument

Discuss instructions for final paper

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

**Week Thirteen, April 13** Developing and revising your argument

*\*Results section due in class (2 copies)*

Rosenwasser and Stephen. Ch. 12. "Recognizing and Fixing Weak Thesis Statements"  
(255-264)

## **Unit Four: Writing Workshops**

**Week Fourteen, April 20** Presentations

**Week Fifteen, April 27** Presentations

**Final Paper is due in my box in 410 Barrows by Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. No electronic or late submissions will be accepted.**