Writing is the most important part of scholarly work. It is the place where you figure out what you think is important, what you think is true, and what you want to say about it; and it is the principle vehicle through which you enter a larger scholarly conversation. That makes it fun – the place you where really get to think, to make the necessary move from consumer to creator of social analysis. And that makes it hard – the place where you ask yourself what matters and put your answer out for all to see.

The purpose of this seminar is to help all of you move through this process and produce an original paper. In that spirit, the class will be structured as a workshop, organized around presentations of your ongoing work. We will spend one week reading as a group, and then turn to reading and discussing what you write. This means that part of the class commitment is to present your own written work, and part of it is to thoroughly read and constructively critique the work of your colleagues. The commitment is to yourself, to write nomatter what, and to your colleagues, to seriously engage their work.

The course will meet on alternate Wednesday afternoons this semester and alternate Monday mornings in the spring. Because the class meets biweekly, formal enrollment and credit will be for the spring term. In order to enroll for the class in the spring, you must produce, at a minimum, either a draft of an introduction, a fleshed-out paper outline, a draft literature review or a several page précis of the paper you plan to write, by the end of fall term. Which of these you decide to write depends on what you find to be most helpful, given the nature of your project, where you are in the process, and what kind of thinker you are. I’m happy to meet with you individually to discuss what product would make most sense for you as the term goes on.

The class will be contract graded. A completed paper draft at the end of spring term is required for a grade. There will be no incompletes. That paper will receive an A if you have attended all classes. Each missed class – barring unavoidable circumstances like illness or travel for research purposes – will be penalized half a grade (that is, a paper with one missed class will garner an A- for the class as a whole, one with two missed classes will garner a B+, and so on).

Writing for Social Scientists is available in the BC bookstore (as well as in O’Neill reserve).
The course has a Blackboard website. Writing to be discussed should be posted **no later than the Monday before class at noon** under the “Materials for Discussion” link on the website’s homepage as an attachment (if you have the most recent Word, please remember to save documents in a form that can be opened by those working with the 2003 and earlier versions). You can use the “message” box for questions or requests for specific kinds of feedback if that would be helpful.

**Semester schedule:**

September 10: Introductions


October 8: Presentations for discussion.

October 22: Presentations for discussion.

November 5: Presentations for discussion.

November 19: Presentations for discussion.

December 3: Presentations for discussion.

**Fall drafts are due (in hard copy) in McGuinn 409 no later than Thursday, December 11 at noon.**