Everybody taking this class knows how to write already. We all learn how to write essays and term papers in college, and some of us became adept at producing these on very tight deadlines. This class, however, is about scholarly writing in sociology—a very particular kind of writing. The format of an MA paper or thesis in our department is an article suitable for submission to a professional meeting. Writing this kind of article requires some very particular skills, including knowing how to:

1. Identify a field of study and research questions that allow you to contribute something new to a scholarly debate or debates.
2. Carry out a serious piece of original research, whether qualitative or quantitative.
3. Frame your study in a “literature review”—a survey of books and articles that reflect on your research questions, and link your work to a broader set of scholarly conversations.
4. Write up your findings in the format used in scholarly conference papers and journal articles.
5. Re-write and re-re-write in response to critical feedback from your colleagues.

This kind of writing can and should be more fun than the kind we learn in college, since we get to choose what we write about and find out something original and new—rather than just responding to assignments and presenting other people’s research. But it is also challenging, and the only way to learn how to do it is through practice.

In this class, we’re going to practice. Most of our class time is going to be spent collectively talking about and giving feedback on students’ ongoing research projects. We will also be analyzing the structure of published sociological articles, producing “mini-drafts” of pieces of our own work, and commenting on the work of classmates. The final goal at the end of two semesters is to produce a draft of a paper.

**Dates, Deadlines and Benchmarks:**

This course meets approximately every other **Friday from 11:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.** in the fall (Spring schedule to be announced). Although the course lasts for two semesters, students should register for the seminar in the Spring term only. The entire two-semester course is worth 3 credits.

This class is premised on making progress as a group: it only works if everybody in the class is **more or less** at the same stage in the research/writing process. “More or less” does not mean “exactly”; however, it does mean that everybody needs to adhere to a few very basic deadlines and benchmarks, which include the following:
1. To join the class in the fall, you must have a draft of a research proposal, and to have begun research or be ready to begin research immediately. You also need to have an advisor with whom you are working on your research project, and with whom you are in regular contact. **If you are carrying out an interview-based research project and have not yet submitted to IRB, you should do so before the first day of class.**

2. All students are required to develop a seminar contract at the beginning of the semester outlining general benchmarks that you intend to meet, to be shared with the class as a whole. At the end of the semester, you will debrief with the class on your meeting (or failure to meet) these self-scheduled deadlines and benchmarks.

3. To continue (and register for) the class in the spring, you must be well along in your research and hand in a rough draft of your article introduction, with accompanying bibliography, by January 6.

**Texts:**

Luker, excerpts from *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences* (available on Canvas).

**Grading:**

Students will be graded on the drafts of their research papers submitted at the end of the Spring term. All completed drafts will receive a grade of “A,” with the following exception: **students are allowed to miss one class session per year with no grade penalty.** After that, students will be penalized a half-grade per class missed (i.e., if you miss 2 class sessions, you get an A-minus, a B-plus for 3 class sessions missed, and so on).

**Schedule, Fall 2013**

Week 1: September 5

No class.

Homework #1 due by 8 a.m.: post your current research proposal to Canvas.
Week 2: September 12

Class meeting.
- Discuss contracts
- Discuss research proposals
- Q & A about the research process

Homework #2 due by 8 a.m, the day before class:
- Draft of a seminar contract outlining your overall objectives for the end of the semester, a breakdown of steps you will take to achieve those objectives, and a timeline for achieving them; submit to me by email.
- A response to your fellow students’ research proposals posted on Canvas (see instructions); be prepared to share your responses in class!
- A list of at least 2 questions or issues you hope to have answered or clarified by the course (these will help me in course planning).

Week 3: September 19

No class.

Week 4: September 26

Class meeting.
- In-class progress reports.
- Guest speaker: Sarah Babb, a discussion on organizing qualitative data.

Homework #3 due by 8 a.m, the day before:
- Two articles from scholarly journals (see Canvas).
- A final seminar contract to be posted on Canvas.

Week 5: October 3

No class.
Week 6: October 10

Class meeting.
- In-class progress reports.
- Talk about structure of academic articles.

Homework #4 **due by 8 a.m. the day before**: an analysis of the structure of four scholarly articles (see Canvas).

Week 7: October 17

Class meeting.
- Figuring out what your research is “about.”
- In-class review of online databases.
- Discussion of Luker, Chapters 1 and 4.

Homework #5 **due by 8 a.m. the day before**: a response to Chapters 1 and 4 of Luker, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*, and find 5 research questions from 5 articles (see Canvas).

Week 8: October 24

No class

Week 9: October 31

No class.

Homework #6 due by 8 a.m.
- A **minimum** 1 page (single-spaced) research memo posted to Canvas and e-mailed to your advisor detailing the progress you have made in your research, interesting findings, compelling quotes, etc.
Week 10: November 7

Class meeting
- In-class progress reports.

Homework #7 due by 8 a.m. the day before:
- A response to your fellow students’ research memos, posted to Canvas. Be prepared to share in class.
- An analysis of the introductory sections of four scholarly articles.

Week 11: November 14

No class.

Week 12: November 21

No Class

Week 13: November 28

Class meeting
- In-class progress reports.
- Discussion of Luker and seminar worksheets.

Homework #8 due by 8 a.m. the day before.
- A response to Luker Chapter 5 and Belcher, *Writing for Social Scientists* pp. 151-60. Post to Canvas and be prepared to share in class.
- Writing Seminar worksheet.

Week 14: December 5

No class

Homework #9 due by 8 a.m.: a revised literature review, including a minimum 10-item bibliography of scholarly books/articles, including at least three items not on your original research proposal bibliography, indicated in **bold**.
Week 15: December 12

Class meeting.
- In-class contract debriefings.
- Discuss Homework 9

***Winter Break***

Draft of article introduction due by January 9, 2014.

***Schedule, Spring 2014: To Be Announced***