

**SC 761: Second Year Graduate Writing Seminar (Fall/Spring: 3)**  
**\*\*\*Fall 2009\*\*\***

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.
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. I expect that most people in this class have not completed their research yet (although some of you may have). Therefore, much of our class time is going to be spent collectively talking about and giving feedback on students’ ongoing research projects. We will also be reading a book about writing for sociologists, analyzing the structure of published sociological articles, producing “mini-drafts” of pieces of articles, and commenting on classmates’ work. The final goal at the end of two semesters is to produce a draft of a paper.

**Dates, Deadlines and Benchmarks:**

This course does not meet every week; the frequency and timing of the class meetings will vary, and is subject to negotiation. 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. *If you are*

*carrying out an interview-based research project and have not yet submitted to IRB, you must do so immediately!*

2. 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 December 21. This article introduction must be in standard journal article format, and it must contain *at least* three references that you did not use in your original submitted proposal.

### **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).

### **Tentative Schedule, Fall 2009**

September 10: Introductions.

September 17: Student research proposals I. Homework due by 8 a.m.: response to student proposals.

September 24: Student research proposals II. Homework due by 8 a.m.: response to student proposals.

October 1: No class—individual meetings.

October 8: Figuring out what your research is “about.” In-class review of online databases. Homework due by 8 a.m.: response to Chapters 1 and 3 of Luker, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*, including Chapter 3 exercise.

October 15: No class.

October 22: In-class progress reports. In-class review of RefWorks. Homework due by 8 a.m.: an analysis of the structure of four scholarly articles.

November 5: No class.

November 12: In-class progress reports. Homework due by 8 a.m.: response to Luker Chapter 4, including Chapter 4 exercise.

November 19: No class.

December 3: No class.

Draft of article introduction due by December 21.

**Tentative Schedule, Spring 2010: To Be Announced.**