

## Sociology 504: Public Sociology

Spring 2013 Arlene Stein

[arlenes@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:arlenes@rci.rutgers.edu) Thursday 1:10-3:50

Office hours: Thursday 4-5 and by appointment



This is a course that will both *reflect* upon the idea of “public sociology” and *produce* public sociological work. In the analytical component, we will explore such questions as: what is the sociological audience? What is the relationship between academia and public intellectual life? How do styles of writing/public address determine our relationship to different publics? We will read work by M. Burawoy, B. Agger, C. W. Mills, among others. The workshop component of the course will involve participating in the production of *Contexts*, the ASA’s hybrid magazine/journal which is dedicated to disseminating translating sociological work to broader publics. The magazine is now housed at Rutgers (and at Seattle University). Students in this course will learn about the production of the magazine from the inside, and actually participate in writing, editing, image selection, and other tasks. The course will: 1) deepen students’ substantive expertise in cutting-edge sociological scholarship; 2) guide them in developing writing skills that address academic and non-academic audiences; 3) engage in critical and constructive discussion of the field of sociology; 4) provide an inside view of the journal reviewing and editorial decision-making. And they may even get their work published!

### Required books:

Dan Clawson, Robert Zussman, et al, eds., *Public Sociology* (California 2007)

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed* (Holt 2002)

### Requirements:

*Do the reading, participate in discussion, and contribute:*

- 1) an “in brief” piece for *Contexts*
- 2) a blog entry
- 3) a podcast for *Contexts.org*

\*\* Note: Syllabus subject to change

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## **January 24. Introduction to Course**

### **January 31. Representing Society, Addressing Different Publics**

Read: Howard Becker, *Telling About Society*, p. 5-14, 20-29

Come to class having thoroughly read one or more back issues of *Contexts*, and having familiarized yourself with the website (contexts.org). Be prepared to discuss such questions as: 1) the different components of Contexts; 2) the differences between Contexts and a typical academic journal in terms of audience, format, writing style, etc; 3) preliminary ideas about what you would most like to contribute to Contexts. We will talk about the nuts-and-bolts process of constructing Contexts, and how you might contribute.

### **February 7. The Public Sociology Debate**

Read: Michael Burawoy, "For Public Sociology" in Clawson, et. al. Last four issues' "In Briefs."

Workshop: We will discuss how to write In Briefs and consider the kinds of pieces we might contribute to future issues. By Tuesday: Post the first few paragraphs of your proposed "In Brief" on the Wiki in Sakai

### **February 14. Did Professionalization Kill the Public Sociologist?**

Read: Todd Gitlin, "How Our Crowd Got Lonely" (Sakai)

Ben Agger, "Beginning Science," from B. Agger, *Public Sociology* (Sakai)

Arlene Stein, "Discipline and Publish" (Sakai) --recommended

"Author Submission Guidelines" ([www.contexts](http://www.contexts.org))

Read everyone's proposed "In Briefs"

Workshop: How does an idea become a feature article? Brainstorming article ideas and possible authors for future issues. We'll also read proposals for feature articles, as well as editorial responses, and consider the process of "greenlighting" articles. And we'll discuss your "In Briefs."

### **February 21. Sociology as Narrative, Narrative Sociology**

Read: John Shelton Reed, "On Narrative and Sociology" (Sakai)

Helen Sword, "Yes, Even Professors Can Write Stylishly" (Sakai)

Colson Whitehead, "How to Write" (sakai)

Selected feature articles (TBA)

Workshop: Analyzing Contexts feature articles; what makes an article successful? We will read article reviews and discuss the review process at *Contexts*. You get to review an article yourself. First draft of "In Briefs" are due.

### **February 28. The Uneasy Relationship of Sociology and Journalism**

Read: Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*

B. Ehrenreich, "A Journalist's Plea" (in Clawson et al)

Workshop: We'll listen to the UK radio program "Thinking Allowed." We'll also listen to a Contexts podcast, discuss how they're constructed, and brainstorm possible podcasts you'd like to do. Second drafts of "In Briefs" are due. Before next time, make contact with interviewee, see if she/he would like to be interviewed, set up date

### **March 7. Books, Op-Eds and the Public Sphere**

Read: Herbert Gans, "Best Sellers by Sociologists: An Exploratory Study" (sakai)

Herbert Gans, "Public Ethnography: Ethnography as Public Sociology" (Sakai)

"Self-editing and formatting" (Contexts.org).

Selected *New York Times* op-eds (sakai)

Workshop: What happens after feature articles are accepted for publication? We'll go over your final "In Briefs." We'll also discuss podcasts in progress, and the art of interviewing.

### **March 14. Activist Public Sociology and Social Movements**

Michael Burawoy, "A Public Sociology for Human Rights" (sakai)

Peter Dreier, "How Michael Harrington and Rachel Carson Changed the World" (sakai)

Patricia Hill Collins, "Truth Telling and Intellectual Activism" (Sakai)

Workshop: Contexts article review process: Read selected reviews (in Reviews folder, sakai). We may do some proofreading in class, among other things.

Podcast progress report; share interview questions with group

### **\*\*Spring Recess**

### **March 28. Perils of Public Sociology**

Read: Arlene Stein, "Sex, Truths, and Audiotape" (Sakai)

Read Op-ed file in resources folder.

Workshop: Podcasts due; we'll listen to them in class.

### **April 4 – no class**

### **April 11. Blogs and Social Media**

William Deresiewicz, "Start a Blog" (Sakai)

Take a look at some sociological blogs—TBA.

Workshop: writing blog posts.

### **April 18. Visual Sociology, Photojournalism**

Read Howard Becker, *Telling About Sociology*, pp. 186-203

Workshop: We'll discuss the relationship between words and images, and how images can illuminate sociological understanding. Take a look at the photo essays in Contexts, and also the photos and graphics in the last few issues. Blog progress reports.

**April 25. New Technologies: Threat to Scholarly Authority?**

Read: Kathleen Fitzpatrick, "Peer-to-Peer Review and the Future of Scholarly Authority"

Workshop: Discuss blogs in progress.

**May 2. Conclusion, Party**

Blog posts due. We'll discuss them, and reflect upon public sociology and other matters.