

Sociology 572: Telling Sociological Stories (draft)

Professor Arlene Stein

Spring 2017 9:30-12:10

Davison Hall seminar room, Douglass, Rutgers University

In recent years, there has been a great deal of talk about the importance of broadening the scope of scholarly work to engage with different publics. In the social sciences, these discussions have cohered around the idea of “public sociology” or “public anthropology,” and so forth. Such discussions take on a particular immediacy today, at a time of great political polarization, and when scholars are increasingly under attack. In this course we will reflect upon the meaning of engaged intellectual work and learn how to incorporate it into our scholarly practice.

During the course, we will reflect upon the role of intellectuals and the relationship among intellectuals, institutional settings, and audiences. We will consider the history of the public intellectual or scholar-activist. We will also think about the meaning of public scholarship in relation to the long history of American anti-intellectualism, and relate it to the current populist mobilization. Since the styles of writing, and kinds of platforms we use, determine whom we reach, we’ll read exemplary work by scholars and sociologically minded journalists who draw readers in using narrative devices such as plot, scenes, and character development.

In the workshop component of this course we will practice public scholarly work, and learn to communicate with different audiences, telling engaging stories about our research using the tools of narrative. We’ll also look at how social media opens up new possibilities for scholarly communication.

Learning Goals:

This course is meant for students of any of the social sciences, though others may find it useful as well, including those who are considering pursuing non-academic careers. The course will seek to enable students to: 1) develop writing skills that address academic and non-academic audiences; 2) use digital tools for communicating with different audiences 3) reflect upon the relationship of social science scholarship and different publics

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Requirements:

Come to each class having done the reading

Complete weekly writing assignments

Complete a final project, which you will submit for publication: an op-ed, or an article for *The Conversation* or similar publication

Required Books:

Eric Klinenberg, *Going Solo*

Mary Chayko, *Super Connected: The Internet, Digital Media, and Techno-Social Life*

Arlene Stein and Jessie Daniels, *Going Public* (to be published February 2017; I will circulate chapters in advance)

January 19. Teach-in: “The Role of the Scholar in the Age of Trump” (optional, recommended)**Jan. 23. Introduction, Reflecting Upon the Political Moment**

“After Trump’s Election, Political Scientists Feel New Urgency,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*

Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, excerpt

Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, excerpt.

Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals*, excerpt

January 30. Intellectuals and Publics

Ben Agger, “Beginning Science,” from B. Agger, *Public Sociology*

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

Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*, excerpt

Patricia Hill Collins, “Truth Telling and Intellectual Activism”

C Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, excerpt

Michael Burawoy, “For Public Sociology”

Feb. 6. The Craft of Writing

George Orwell, “Why I Write”

http://orwell.ru/library/essays/wiw/english/e_wiw

Arlie Hochschild, “I Spent Five Years With Some of Trump’s Biggest Fans..”

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/08/trump-white-blue-collar-supporters>

Stein and Daniels, So You Want to Go Public? “Writing Beyond the Academy,” in *Going Public*

Helen Sword, “Yes, Even Professors Can Write Stylishly”

Feb. 13. Telling Stories About Your Research

Arlene Stein and Jessie Daniels, “Telling Stories About your Research” in *Going Public*

Matt Desmond, "The Eviction Epidemic," *The New Yorker*
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/08/forced-out>

Laura Hamilton and Elizabeth Armstrong, "The (Mis)education of Monica and Karen," *Contexts*

Contexts submission guidelines <https://contexts.org/submission-guidelines/>
Contexts submission files

Feb. 20. Using the Tools of Narrative

Ted Conover, *Newjack*, excerpt

Ted Conover, *Immersion*, excerpt

Jack Hart, *Storycraft*, excerpt

4:30 Lecture, Ted Conover, "Thinking Like a Social Scientist, Writing Like a Journalist: Tales from the Field"

Feb. 27. Telling Stories About Your Research: Op-eds, Essays

Corey Robin, "How Intellectuals Create a Public"

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations"

Op-eds file

The Conversation <https://theconversation.com/us/pitches>

Paul Hirschfield, "Why Do American Cops Kill So Many Compared to European Cops?"

<https://theconversation.com/why-do-american-cops-kill-so-many-compared-to-european-cops-49696>

March 6. Telling Stories about Your Research: Blogging

Stein and Daniels, "The Digital Turn" in *Going Public*

"Policy Press Guest Blogger Guidelines"

Patrick Dunleavy, "How to Write a Blogpost from Your Journal Article in Eleven Easy Steps"

Take a look at group blogs such as *Racism Review*, *Savage Minds*, *Social (In)Queery*, *Cybergology*, *Sociological Images*, *Crunk Feminist Collective*

Spring Break

March 20. Books for General Audiences

Stein and Daniels, "Books for General Audiences" in *Going Public*

Eric Klinenberg's *Going Solo*

March 23. Op-Ed Workshop at IRW (Optional, Recommended)

March 27. Books--continued

Eric Klinenberg's *Going Solo*

Sharon Marcus, "How to Talk about Books You Have Read"

April 3. No class, but you are required to attend at least one day of the “Theorizing the Web” conference. Friday, April 7th and Saturday, April 8th at the Museum of the Moving Image in New York City.

April 10. Rethinking Audiences in the Digital Age

Stein and Daniels, “Building an Audience”
Mary Chayko, *Superconnected*, excerpts

April 17. Social Media--continued

Mary Chayko, *Superconnected*, excerpts
Guest speaker: Mary Chayko

April 24. The Future of Scholarly Authority

Peter Walsh, “That Withered Paradigm: The Web, the Expert, and the Information Hegemony”

<http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/walsh.html>

Kathleen Fitzpatrick, “Peer-to-Peer Review and the Future of Scholarly Authority”

Kalev Leetaru, “How Academia, Google Scholar and Predatory Publishers Help Feed Academic Fake News,” *Forbes*

Bianca Elena Ivanof, “Open Research for Academics: How to Be an Academic in the Twenty-First Century”

Eric Klinenberg, “What Trump’s Win Compels Scholars to Do,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*

May 1. The Risks and Necessity of Public Engagement

Arlene Stein and Jessie Daniels, “The Perils of Going Public,” “Making it Count, Making a Difference,” in *Going Public*

Jessie Daniels and Polly Thistlethwaite, “Being a Scholar-Activist Then and Now,” in *Being a Scholar in the Digital Era*

Rebecca Solnit, “Hope is the Embrace of the Unknown”

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/15/rebecca-solnit-hope-in-the-dark-new-essay-embrace-unknown>