

SOCIOLOGY 703

Writing Seminar, Fall 2020

1.5 credits
Thursdays* 1:00-3:40pm (*every 2 weeks)
Canvas and Zoom

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Mobile phone: Will provide in class

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Course Description, Goals, and Outcomes:

This 1.5 credit seminar is designed to provide some time and structure for graduate students to work on papers-in-progress. Instruction focuses on the basics of academic writing and constructive peer review. Instruction draws primarily from Wendy Laura Belcher's best-selling *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success* to explain the publication process. Course content will share strategies for achieving success in academic writing, including setting up a realistic work schedule, identifying appropriate journals for submission, constructing and clarifying arguments, making claims for significance, and organizing material.

More practically, this course is designed to help students turn a draft of a paper into a publishable paper. Students should come in with a draft of a paper that they want to turn into a QP, or a QP they want to turn into a publishable paper, or a dissertation chapter they want to improve upon. It's not necessary to have a complete paper by the first week of class, but it is expected that students will work on writing their paper while also keeping up with the bi-weekly writing exercises and objectives. Together, in a supportive environment, we will each spend the semester revising and improving upon working drafts.

Learning Goals:

This course contributes to the learning goal of "*Conduct original, theoretically engaged research grounded in highly skilled methodological techniques.*" The course works toward these following more specific goals:

- Create and enact an effective, daily writing practice
- Become more familiar with how academic publishing works
- Turn a working paper into a paper that is ready for journal submission
- Accept and interpret feedback, especially from multiple, sometimes conflicting sources
- Provide constructive feedback to peers on their own work
- Identify techniques to maximize the clarity of arguments and writing
- Identify methods for writing that work best for each individual, including how to break a project down into manageable steps

Diversity statement

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 clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Keeping up with class material

Active participation and attendance, as well as 'showing up' for other classmates (through thoughtful feedback and engagement with their work) is vital to everyone's success in this course.

Discussions and respect

Graduate classes involve critique and discussion. We will likely encounter disrespectful or harmful comments, assumptions and ideas in the material we're reading or in our class discussions or in conversations we have with one another. These situations shouldn't be dismissed or ignored, and likewise, fear of offending our colleagues should not silence us. Therefore we will develop a community agreement where we outline a process for handling such moments so we can all feel welcome in class, participate openly and respectfully, and learn from one another's histories, perspectives and backgrounds.

Books

Belcher, Wendy Laura. 2019. *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (You need this edition, not the previous one, from 2009.) If you want to keep your workbook clean, you can print out the forms at <https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/workbook-forms/> and use those instead of writing in the book.

Important Notes (read this, please):

- Belcher's process for publication is one of the best out there. She estimates that it will take about 60 hours, beyond class time, to revise an already existing draft for publication. Be prepared to do a lot of writing outside of class. This is the nature of a writing seminar.
- Do the workbook exercises even if you find them annoying and cost you time away from writing. Do them *before* class. We can't do all the exercises in this bi-weekly course. I encourage you to continue working with Belcher's book even during weeks when we don't meet and over the spring semester.
- Using break out rooms, we'll work in pairs and small groups to do some of the exercises in Belcher's book.
- You can download and print out some of the forms in the book, such as the weekly calendars, at <https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/workbook-forms/>.
- This class is a confidential place. Don't share what happens in this class with others. People are bringing writing at every stage; everyone should feel safe sharing rough work.
- Cooperation, respect and investment in the class is absolutely vital if this course is going to work for us all. To that end, we will draft a community agreement that outlines some principles we agree to follow as participants in the seminar.

Grading Policy

Attendance (via online platforms) and active participation are expected in every class. To receive an A, I expect you to attend and participate in every class, to complete the writing and workbook assignments on time, provide constructive feedback to your peers, and submit revisions to your paper as required. If you don't do the exercises, show up late or miss more than one class, and/or put minimal effort into writing and peer review you can expect to get a B or a C.

***This class is designed to support your progress in the program. Please come talk to me if you feel like the course content or structure isn't helpful.**

Course Schedule

Please complete BEFORE class starts:

There is some work to do before our first class.

- Read Belcher's workbook Introduction
- Read Week 1: Designing Your Plan for Writing (pages 1-59), fill out the boxes and forms, and doing all the tasks, day by day. Pay close attention to the "Selecting a Paper for Revision" section to make sure that your paper is appropriate.
- Begin filling out "Week 1 Calendar for Actual (Not Planned) Writing" each day
- Read p. 191, on the linear structure of this book.
- **Email your paper (even if it's just an outline) to me by August 30th**

Thurs, 10-Sep Introduction (Introduction & Week 1)

Have on hand: Your filled-out Week 1 worksheets, Calendar (Belcher)

- ~ Introduction to the Course
- ~ Begin Drafting Community Agreement
- ~ Group Discussion: Developing a writing practice, positive writing experiences, obstacles to writing, and designing a writing schedule
- ~ Group Exercise: Hammering out your topic
- ~ Individual Exercise: Begin marking up your paper

Before next class

- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 2: Advancing Your Argument, filling out the boxes and forms and doing the tasks through the Day 1 tasks (pages 60-83).*
- *Do not do the Day 2-5 tasks; you will do them in class.*
- *Prepare a one-minute elevator talk on the argument of your article.*

Sep-24: Advancing Your Argument (Week 2)

Have on hand: Your filled-out workbook and a printout of your paper, with the argument section highlighted. Bring pages 83-88 of Belcher to class.

- ~ Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 1 and Week 2
- ~ Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's argument (using pages 83-88 of Belcher)

- ~ Individual Exercise: Revising your article for argument
- ~ Finalize community agreement

Before next class:

- Revise your article around your argument, using Week 2.
- Read Belcher's workbook Week 3: Abstracting Your Article (pages 90-110), doing the tasks of reading published abstracts and journal articles, drafting an abstract, and filling out the forms and checklists. You don't need to do the social tasks (the ones that require you to talk with or work with someone else) as you will be doing those in class.
- Be prepared to report on the published abstracts and journal articles you read.

October 8: Abstracting Your Article (Week 3)

Have on hand: Your filled-out workbook and two printouts of your abstract.

- ~ Discussion of reading and exercises
- ~ Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's abstracts
- ~ Group Exercise: Presenting on published journal articles

Before next class

- Read Belcher's workbook Week 4: Selecting a Journal, doing the tasks of searching for and studying journals.
- Fill out the Journal Evaluation Report on at least one journal.
- Select your top three journal choices and be prepared to present on them in class.
- Do a reverse outline of a journal article that you especially admire from one of your target journals.
- Belcher recommends that students review five years of one journal that interests them, reading all the titles, most of the abstracts, and at least four articles. She promises that this assignment transforms students' writing. Accomplish what you can over the next week.
- Read Belcher's workbook Chapter 5, pp 150-189: Refining Your Works Cited.
- Evaluate your citations, identifying any needed other works, identifying your entry point, and revising your related secondary literature review

Note that we won't discuss this in class. Do this on your own and reach out to me if you would like to go over your journal choice.

October 22: Methods Check-in

Have on hand: Your methods write-up or outline

- ~ Discuss how methods sections are coming along. What do we need to include? What can we eliminate or put in an appendix?
- ~ Troubleshoot common obstacles
- ~ Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's methods

Before next class:

Pick three journal articles or book chapters whose literature review you admire. Reverse outline the literature review section. What do you notice? Jot down some patterns and observations and be prepared to discuss them in class

November 5th: Writing a literature review

- ~ What makes a good literature review? What doesn't?
- ~ Group exercise: review each other's literature reviews

Next Week's Assignment:

- Revise your literature review, based on class feedback.
- Read Belcher's workbook Week 6: Crafting Your Claims for Significance, doing all the tasks except the So What? Exercise, which you will do in class.
- Email me three claims for significance by Wednesday noon.
- Did the class suggest you need to tighten up your methods? If you need sources for how to do so, please dig up a couple of references.

November 19: Crafting Your Claims for Significance (Week 6)

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook

- ~ Revisit the community agreement and look ahead to the rest of the semester
- ~ Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 6
- ~ Group Exercise: Do the So What? Exercise

Before next class:

- Insert your new claims for significance into your article.
- Create and bring a seven-slide PowerPoint presentation overview of your article, with one slide per the following: title, research context (lit. review), methods, argument, claim(s) for significance, research design/method, evidence/findings, and conclusion. Be prepared to make a ten-minute presentation with it.

November 26: Thanksgiving Week. No class

December 3rd: Last Class

- ~ Presentation of PowerPoints
- ~ Comments and feedback
- ~ Make a plan for spring semester (I'll be available every week for consultation and feedback)