

SOCIOLOGY 503 (16:920:503) – Spring 2023

Second Year QP Seminar

Wednesdays 5:00 pm – 7:40 pm (*~every 2 weeks)

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description, Goals, and Outcomes

This course prepares second-year sociology graduate students to plan for and actualize a complete draft of their first qualifying paper (QP). The course is held every other week for a full academic year. It is one-part social research methods seminar and one-part writing seminar. By the end of the course, students should have a solid draft of a QP that is ready for comments from their QP committee members.

Preparation for the course begins the summer preceding the start of the seminar. Students should aim to have data collected by the early fall, meaning the summer is a time to find a QP chair, prepare the IRB proposal (if necessary) and/or collect data or clean/arrange access to necessary datasets. Sign-on for the QP should happen by late fall, and an early first draft of the QP should be ready by late January of the spring semester. Students will work together in writing groups and pairs, with regular consultation with their QP chair.

This syllabus was originally created by Norah MacKendrick.

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:

- Plan a QP research project specifying topic, research question and methodology
- Collect / locate and analyze data
- Develop an original argument
- Prepare a defensible QP that can be circulated to the student’s committee for feedback.

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 materials we’re reading or in our class discussions. These situations shouldn’t be dismissed or ignored. 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

Required:

- Luker, K. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*.
- Booth, Wayne, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2003. *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago press. [Any year is fine]

Highly recommended:

- Miller, Jane E. 2005. *Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [Any version fine]
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications, LTD.

Definitely worth your time:

- Zerubavel, E. (1999). *The clockwork muse: a practical guide to writing theses, dissertations, and books*. Harvard University Press.
- White, L. (2005). Writes of passage: Writing an empirical journal article. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(4), 791-798.
- Silvia, P. J. (2007). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing*. American Psychological Association.
- Belcher, Wendy Laura. 2019. *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hayot, E. (2014). *The elements of academic style: Writing for the humanities*. Columbia University Press.
- Thomas, F. N., & Turner, M. (2011). *Clear and simple as the truth: Writing classic prose*. Princeton University Press.
- Becker, Howard, *Writing for Social Scientists or Tricks of the Trade*
- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (Highly recommend that you read/skim entire book)

Helpful Blogs:

- [Thesociologyphdandme.wordpress.com](https://thesociologyphdandme.wordpress.com)
- [Getalife.blogspot.com](https://getalife.blogspot.com)

Technology

Canvas

Grading Policy

This class is designed to help you move through the program on time. It's a chance to write your first QP for credit with the support and direction of your classmates and an instructor.

For this class to work for us all, there has to be consistent attendance and active participation from everyone. With that in mind, to receive an A, you need to attend and participate in every class, complete the writing / workshop assignments on time, provide constructive and timely feedback to your peers, and complete revisions to your QP draft as required. If you don't do the exercises, login late, miss more than one class, and/or put minimal effort into peer review you can expect to get a B or a C. I understand that the pandemic continues to affect our schedules and well-being, so I will make accommodations for health issues, caring responsibilities, technological glitches, etc.

Workload from other courses is not a valid excuse for late assignments or poor attendance.

*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

For the spring semester you'll spend most of our time in small groups. The first few classes are devoted to developing and improving upon specific sections. After that, we'll workshop whole drafts of your papers. Each class will start with a check-in and overview of the meeting's objectives and activities. You'll then break into groups. We'll close the class with a class meeting to talk about common problems and troubleshoot questions.

Assignments

For this semester, you'll see that you have writing assignments with deadlines. I'll grade these as pass/fail (using a "check plus/minus" system: ✓, ✓+, ✓-) and provide brief feedback on your submissions.

****Deadlines in yellow.**

Winter Break Memo: Due January 17th:

Send me a one to two-page data memo that addresses the following points:

- 1) Research statement: your question and statement are likely to have changed over the past several months. Refer to Booth et al. again and provide a statement.
- 2) A brief description of the data you've collected /are collecting/ analyzed so far
- 3) Update on how far along you are with data analysis (a few sentences is fine)
- 4) Some initial findings (e.g. table, a list of findings, etc.). What findings are you excited about? Are you troubled by any findings (e.g. a relationship that didn't pan out or is hard to interpret)?
- 5) Questions/roadblocks?

If you haven't started data collection, write a one-page memo providing an update on your project. How has your thinking about the project changed? Have you developed any new ideas or sections? When do you anticipate collecting data?

We'll be circling back to some topics/sessions we skipped in the fall term. At our first meeting, in addition to sharing an update, please be prepared to workshop preliminary claims and arguments in class. In preparation:

- Read *Craft of Research*, Sections 7-10.

January 18: Evidence/Data/Findings; Preliminary Claims & Arguments

- Check-in re: QP progress over the break and set class-wide goals for spring semester
- Discuss data collection & analysis. Set personal concrete goals for spring semester
- Work in pairs to workshop claims and arguments
- Re-group to discuss common problems, patterns, and solutions

Before Next Class:

1. Begin to outline a theoretical framework. Headings and bullet points preferred.
2. Use a mapping/visualization technique to connect your research question to the theoretical framework. If you're working with variables, include them in this map.
3. Be prepared to share this in class: **draft a document of your framework map.**

February 8: Mapping a theoretical framework

1. Class discussion of theoretical frameworks
2. Workshop framework maps: Provide a typed-out version of your question and an outline of your theoretical framework. Your partner will map this. Then compare your map with your partner's and discuss.
3. Discuss common problems, etc.

February 15: Individual Meetings via Zoom

I'll meet with you individually to discuss your paper.

Before Next Class:

1. Pick a book or articles that use similar methods to yours. Read the methods and findings sections or appendix. Take some notes on how these sections are structured, what they leave out.
2. Write a draft of your methods section and share with everyone for review. Use bullet points for areas that you aren't ready to develop yet. Submit whatever you have. Aim for 2-3 pages with citations. **Due Monday March 6.**

If you haven't already picked a methods book and/or set of articles, now is the time to find them. If you're having trouble finding materials, let me know. The following books come highly recommended, but do not cover the full range of methods used in our class:

- Jane E. Miller's "Writing about Multivariate Methods"
- Kathy Charmaz: Constructing Grounded Theory
- Gerson, K. and S. Damaske. The science and art of interviewing (a new book that is really good)
- Altheide, D. L., and Schneider, C. J. Qualitative Media Analysis.

March 8: Writing the Methods Section

In this class you'll workshop your methods section with your groups. As part of that exercise, keep in mind the articles/books you drew upon as your examples/guides.

Before Next Class (individual meetings):

Outline or revise your literature review and share with me. **Due: Monday March 20.**

Week of March 22: Writing the Literature Review – Individual Meetings

I'll meet with you individually to go over your literature review and overall project status.

Before Next Class:

Choose whether you want to do option A or B for next class.

- Option A, submit a data memo. What data will you use for your paper? Where will you find it/collect it? What roadblocks have you encountered? What information do you need to move ahead?
- Option B, write your findings section. Be sure to consult a relevant book or set of articles to guide you with structuring the section, phrasing and terminology, and presentation of the results. Share with the class.

Due: Monday April 10.

April 12: Data / Findings

Option A: Identifying, collecting, and analyzing data

You'll discuss your progress and any roadblocks.

Option B: Writing the Findings Section

You'll workshop a draft of your findings section.

Before Next Class:

1. Put together your full paper. If some sections aren't ready, use bullet points/outline key ideas. Add to the top of the page a short one to two-paragraph memo, explaining the paper's status. Share with everyone. **Due: FRIDAY April 21.**
2. Prepare 10 to 15-minute presentation of your paper.

April 26: Presentation and Peer Review of papers

- I'll present how to do a journal review and how to respond to reviewers' comments.
- Present paper.
- Discuss plans for sign on/off.