

**SOC b2500**  
**Sociological Writing**  
**(“Making Sociology Speak”)**

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Consultation Hours:

**By appointment**

# 3 TRUTHS AND 1 LIE

- Please write down 4 statements; 3 of the statements are truths about yourself or some aspect of your life, and 1 of the statements is a lie.

# Why do we conduct research?

- Because we have to (e.g., finishing a thesis)
- Because we want to be academics (e.g., PhD proposal)
- Because we want to change the world (e.g., policy and governmental reports in our home countries)
- What else?

# Evaluating Sources

Academic literature often meets these criteria:

- the publication is *peer reviewed*
- the publication is *published / edited by a university or scholarly society*
- the *author of the article* is from a university or scholarly society
- the publication *reports research*
- the publication contains a *bibliography* and references other works
- the publication is written by more than one author
- the paper was *presented at a conference*, particularly an international conference, esp. if it was peer reviewed.

# Evaluating Sources

Articles from these sources are often NOT academic:

- newspapers
- magazines and trade journals
- newsletters
- journals published weekly or more frequently (although significant exceptions include *Nature* and *Science*)
- very short articles (e.g., one or two pages)
- articles that have no bibliography

<http://guides.lib.monash.edu/history/research-tips/academic-sources>

# Evaluating Sources

But there are reasons you might need the following types of non-academic but reliable sources:

- Think tank reports (research the author!)
- Government reports
- Academic blogs (contemporary relevance)
- Media reports of events and/or statistics

***BUT – always be aware of bias!***

# Evaluating Sources

- In short, assess the following:
  - AUTHOR
  - DATE OF PUBLICATION
  - EDITION OR REVISION
  - PUBLISHER
  - TITLE OF JOURNAL (visit the website if you are not sure; see if it's peer-reviewed)

# How (not) to use Wikipedia

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)
- As an overview of the topic
- A place to see where to find more information
- A place to mine the bibliography



# Keeping it all organized

- Use *referencing software* to keep your sources organized, for example, Zotero:  
<https://www.zotero.org/>
- Add to your bibliography automatically from the web
- Choose your bibliographic style
- Coordinate with your word processing software
- Old fashioned? Maintain an *annotated bibliography*, in which you:
  - Summarize
  - Assess
  - Reflect

# “Writing it up”: Some useful websites

- Purdue OWL <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
- The University of Manchester Academic Phrasebank
- <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- Dictionary, Thesaurus and Grammar Help  
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>
- Get a “word of the day” subscription  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/word-of-the-day>
- Grammarly.com (not a substitute for proofreading!)  
[www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com)

# The magic of Google Scholar

- [Transnational migration studies: Past developments and future trends](#) [\[PDF\] from peggylevitt.org](#)  
..., BN **Jaworsky** - Annu. Rev. Sociol., 2007 - annualreviews.org

Abstract The past two decades have witnessed a sea change in migration scholarship. Most scholars now recognize that many contemporary migrants and their predecessors maintain various kinds of ties to their homelands at the same time that they are incorporated into the ...

[Cited by 175](#) - [Related articles](#) - [AONE Full Text @ iCONN](#) - [BL Direct](#) - [All 14 versions](#)

# The importance of keywords: Tips for Searching

- Using Boolean Operators (and, or, not):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oa66AxTbjxA>

*Help! I still didn't find anything...OR  
I found way too much...*

## **Additional Tips for Searching**

- Word choice – keep it simple!
- Phrase search – use quotation marks for an exact phrase “migrant worker”
- Limit - In Google, use site: (migrant site:gov)
- Exclude – In Google, use dash migrant – worker
- Truncate – In Google, +migrant

# Why do sociologists write the way they do? (Kai Erikson 2008)

- *Because it's not just what we see, but how we look at it – that we are destined to write more abstractly (example of looking down in the city from the 14th floor).*
- *Because we are concerned with general tendencies rather than particular events.*
- *Because we think in terms of collateral arrangements rather than sequential ones...Our eyes are trained on the spaces between interacting individuals—on the shape of their conversation, the architecture of their transaction, the way the words are spoken and the gestures enacted, form a composition independent of the persons who make it up.*
- *Because our eyes are turned toward the behavior of multitudes, not individuals.*

# Why Academic Writing Stinks (Pinker 2014)

- *Metadiscourse*
- *Professional narcissism*
- *Apologizing*
- *Shudder quotes*
- *Hedging (vs. Qualifying)*
- *Metaconcepts & nominalizations (“zombie nouns”)*
- *The Curse of Knowledge*

# George Orwell's "Rules"

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.



**Are you old enough to remember  
who this is?**



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otCpCn0l4Wo>

Hanan C. Selvin and Everett Wilson, both uncommonly literate sociologists themselves, contributed this scrap in 1984:

- The impression is commonplace that a family system marked by such factors as late-age-at marriage, a high degree of non-marriage, a high incidence of marital disruption, and a low marital fertility schedule is conducive to the high involvement of women in economic activities outside the home.
- *[W]omen who marry late, who remain single, who are separated from their husbands, or who have fewer children to take care of, are more likely to have jobs away from home.*

*The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power.*

**Judith Butler**, professor of rhetoric and comparative literature at the University of California at Berkeley, in an article entitled *Further Reflections on the Conversations of Our Time*, published in the scholarly journal *Diacritics* (1997)