

ESOn4011/SOCd0106 – SPRING 2025
Thursdays 10:00--11:40, Room P21b
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Consultation Hours: Wednesdays, 11:00-12:00, or by appointment

Course Description:

At some point in their academic life, students of sociology must develop their own voice to express their thoughts and knowledge – to convey the products of their sociological imagination. One of the primary ways in which they do so is through their writing skills. This course is intended to help students improve their academic writing skills and to practice exchanging their work with their peers. First and foremost, this is a writing-intensive course that provides training in writing sociological essays in several different styles. Further, special attention is given to learning effective methods of research and norms for proper citation of sources. Students also gain experience in organizing the writing process, offering and receiving constructive criticism and revising first drafts of their work. The intelligent use of artificial intelligence (AI) constitutes a major theme in the course, with students learning how to use AI to their advantage without the problem of plagiarism. The ultimate goal is to boost students' confidence in their academic writing skills and prepare them for future endeavors both inside and out of the university.

Course objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will gain experience writing:

- Book/Article reviews
- Expository essays
- Social issue reaction papers
- Articles on quantitative and qualitative research according to social science journal guidelines

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Organize and plan the writing process
- Prepare and discuss in-class presentations
- Give and receive constructive criticism
- Evaluate and revise first drafts
- Demonstrate knowledge of and practice proper citation
- Effectively employ artificial intelligence tools to enhance their writing

Teaching methods:

The teaching methods used in this course involve weekly seminar meetings, reading of literature, homework exercises and several formal writing assignments.

Formal writing assignments:

- Social issue opinion essay (*1000-1200 words*)
- Book or article review (*650-800 words; 1000-1200 for edited volume*)

- Final research essay (4,000 words +/- 10%, without references; up to 8,000 words for PhD students)

Class Participation:

- **Attendance:** All students are required to attend every seminar meeting. Any absence must be documented (for example, due to family or medical emergency). Your attendance is important because the course is organized around classroom discussion and giving feedback to each other.
- **Discussion:** Active participation in classroom discussion is an important part of your grade. You are required to read the assigned literature before the seminar meeting to facilitate discussion.
- **Peer Review:** We will engage in the written and oral in-class critique of each student's first drafts of the written assignments. Each student will be assigned to read another student's draft essay and give a presentation about suggested revisions.

Students receive a final letter grade (A-F) based on the following criteria:

22% - Essay assignments (welcome essay = 2%, social issue essay = 10%, book review = 10%)

20% - Class participation (each class = 2%)

10% - Peer Review 1 and 2 = 3% each; Peer Review 3 = 4%)

7% - Final Essay draft and presentation

41% - Final Essay

Evaluation is assessed as follows:

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

66-69 = D

60-65 = E

0-59 = F

Language Usage:

The quality of your use of English is not part of the grade, but you must write the essays at an adequate level of language use such that they are understandable. Your essays should express your own ideas (see the section on Academic Honesty below). However, you are free to consult with classmates or others to check the quality of your use of English.

Using the MU Information System:

Course resources are available to students through Masaryk University's online Information System (IS). In the IS you will find an interactive syllabus which contains important general information about the course and the weekly schedule with links to some of the required course materials – including the required reading and all other information. A version of the weekly lecture PowerPoint presentation slides will be available on the interactive syllabus. The lecture notes are intended as a study aid so you can listen carefully to the lecture without having to take notes on every slide during the lecture presentation. They are *not* meant to be used to avoid your attendance at the lecture.

Academic Honesty

The Faculty of Social Studies at MU expects students to know the study rules and maintain academic honesty by refraining from plagiarism and from cheating during exams. Plagiarism means that one presents other peoples' ideas as one's own and does not credit the author. Plagiarism is one of the most serious breaches of ethical standards in the academic environment, for it denies the mission of the university and the meaning of studying. From a legal perspective, plagiarism is the stealing of intellectual property. In addition, the use of AI tools should be judicious and under the direction of the teacher. The official FSS policy on academic honesty and on the use of AI technology are available in the course's interactive syllabus in IS. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated under any circumstances at FSS. **The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is expulsion from the course, a grade of F for the semester, and referral to the Faculty disciplinary committee.**

PLEASE NOTE:

All assignments may require an oral defense. Students will have to prove that their paper does not contain parts that can be classified as plagiarized or contain academic fraudulence. Students have to demonstrate that they used all the references enlisted in the paper and show beyond doubt that they wrote the paper by being able to defend it in a discussion.

Literature:

- American Sociological Association. 2014. *American Sociological Association Style Guide*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.
- Becker, Howard. 2007. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson, William A., ed. 2006. *The sociology student writer's manual*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Sociology Writing Group. 2008. *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*. 6th ed. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Somekh, Bridget and Cathy Lewin. 2011. *Theory and Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Turabian, Kate L. 2018. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 9th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Suggested Reading:

- Becker, Howard S. 2007. *Telling about Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fowler, H. Ramsey and Jane E. Aaron. 1989. *The Little, Brown Handbook*, 4th ed. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co. (any edition is fine).
- Turabian, Kate L. 2010. *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*. 4th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ALWAYS CHECK THE INTERACTIVE SYLLABUS FOR UPDATED READING AND ASSIGNMENTS!

Week	Date	Seminar topic	Required reading
1	Feb 20	Introduction to the course	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Syllabus 2. FSS Disciplinary Rules 3. ASA Style Guide (download for reference throughout semester) 4. Masaryk University statement on AI 5. How to use Chat GPT – “CHAT GPT Instructions”
2	Feb 27	What is bad writing and how can we recognize it?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pinker, Steven. 2014. <i>Why Academic Writing Stinks and How to Fix It</i>. Retrieved February 1, 2017 (http://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Academics-Stink-at/149105). Pages 2-9 only! 2. Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, The. 2003. “Acknowledging, Paraphrasing and Quoting Sources.” Retrieved February 15, 2012 (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Acknowledging_Sources.pdf). (7 pp.) 3. SWG, Ch. 3, “Working with Sources.” pp. 45-59
3	March 6	How do we write a good great expository or opinion essay?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Johnson, Ch. 9 “Social Issue Papers,” pp. 156-180. (24 pp.) 2. Purdue Writing Lab, The. 2010. “The Expository Essay.” Retrieved February 16, 2012 from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/02/ 3. Writing Expository Essays, various sources (5 pp.) 4. Becker, <i>Writing for Social Scientists</i>, Chapters 1 and 2. (47 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE IN CLASS: INDIVIDUALIZED READING FOR SOCIAL ISSUE ASSIGNMENT & PARAGRAPH ABOUT TOPIC</p>
4	March 13	Peer Review #1 How do we help one another constructively?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mahrer, Kenneth D. 2004. “Proofreading your own writing? Forget it!” <i>The Leading Edge</i>, November. (2 pp.) 2. Trim, Michelle. 2007. <i>What every student should know about practising peer review</i>. New York: Pearson Longman, pp. 1-20. (19 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: 1st draft of social issue essay due Tuesday, March 11 13:00, peer review due in class and in the Homework Vault</p>

5	March 20	How do we review a book or article? (WB)	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belcher, Wendy. n.d. "Writing the Academic Book Review." (http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/press/siteart/jli_bookreviewguidelines.pdf). (4 pp.) 2. Bamyeh, Mohammed A. "From the Editor: Ways to Write a Good Book Review." (2 pp.) 3. SWG, Ch. 5, "The Textual Analysis (or Article Critique) Paper" (23 pp.) 4. Examples of two book reviews by Jaworsky (4 pp.) 5. Example of 750-word edited volume review (2 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Final version of social issue essay due, Wednesday, March 19 by 13:00.</p>
6	March 27	Peer Review #2 (Book Review)	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turabian, Ch. 1-2, pp. 1-24. (24 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: 1st draft of book review due Tuesday, March 25 by 13:00, peer review due in class and in the Homework Vault</p>
7	April 3	NO CLASS (Reading Week)	
8	April 10	How do we conduct research and engage the literature?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Somekh & Lewin – Chapter 2 "Working with Literatures" (8 pp.) 2. Becker, Writing for Social Scientists, Ch. 8 (14 pp.) 3. "Selected AI-Based Literature Review Tools." Available at https://tamu.libguides.com/c.php?g=1289555 <p>HOMEWORK DUE IN CLASS: Topic, Research Question, 3-4 academic resources for the essay BRING LAPTOP TO CLASS!</p>
9	April 17	How do we begin sociological writing?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turabian, Ch. 5-7, pp. 51-85. (34 pp.) 2. SWG, YOUR CHOICE of Ch. 6 (Quantitative) or Ch. 7 (Ethnographic) (35 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Final version – book review due Tuesday, April 15 by 13:00.</p>

10	April 24	How do we finish writing a research essay or thesis?	<p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turabian, Ch. 10-14, pp. 106-135 (29 pp.) OPTIONAL! 2. Becker, Writing for Social Scientists, Ch. 3 & 4 (45 pp.) <p>HOMEWORK DUE: Finalized Paper Proposal, Tuesday, April 22 at 13:00 in Homework Vault; Optional Meeting to discuss proposal with professor by May 5</p> <p>OPTIONAL: Becker, Writing for Social Scientists, Ch. 5 & 6</p>
11	May 1	NO CLASS - HOLIDAY	
12	May 8	NO CLASS- HOLIDAY	
13	May 15	Peer Review #3 Presentation/Peer Review of First Essay Drafts	<p>No reading!</p> <p>HOMEWORK DUE: First draft of research essay due by Monday, May 12 at 13:00, peer review due in class and in Homework Vault; 3-minute in-class presentation of draft</p>