

## Advanced Sociological and Anthropological Writing

Fall 2013 T/Th 10:10-11:55 Leighton 304	Meera Sehgal Leighton 217, x4975 Office Hours: M 10:00-12:00, F 9:30-11:30 and by appointment
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### Description

Did you ever... Feel simultaneously excited and nervous about launching into comps, what may well be your first major independently produced research and writing project? ...Sharpen 20 pencils at once, invest heavily in color-coded note cards, or engage in other “secular rituals” to magically control the risks of writing? ...Wonder what formatting rules are good for, and worry that they get in the way of your creativity? ...Feel mystified about how anthropologists and sociologists—as authors—make it into print? ...Struggle to explain how sociology and anthropology differ and how they interact?

**Advanced Sociological and Anthropological Writing** builds upon experience you already have with writing in the major, to prepare you for the writing and presentation components of your senior comprehensive exercise and for lives of effective written communication beyond Carleton. This course explores different genres of writing and different audiences for writing in the social sciences. By focusing particular attention on scholarly articles published in professional journals in sociology and anthropology, and how they are produced, reviewed, revised, and revised again, the course provides you a measure of professional socialization. And, by exploring the commonalities and differences in academic writing in our two sister disciplines, the course should move us toward clarity regarding the boundaries between sociology and anthropology.

What is the relationship between the research process and the writing process, and between thinking (like a sociologist or like an anthropologist) and writing? Good sociological/anthropological thinking contributes to lucid and even enjoyable writing, as well as to careful, systematic, and “disciplined” writing. By disciplined writing, I refer not to buckling down at one’s desk and staying on task, but rather to writing in an idiom appropriate to the disciplines of sociology and anthropology.

In this advanced writing course, we use the concept of “thinking across the page” to break the writing process into “pages” that are in some way “thinkable.” With the help of peer-response and instructor feedback you will work—collaboratively—on your own academic writing process, developing your voice as a sociologist-anthropologist.

### Goals

My **goals for this course** are to have you approach the research for your comprehensive projects without fear, to produce innovative and thoughtful writing, to learn the discipline and joys of revision, and to foster a scholarly community within the classroom and among a cohort of majors. I also hope this course will liberate you and your comps advisor to concentrate on topical and conceptual matters. In the language of our **departmental student learning objectives**, writing, critiquing, and revising the component elements of a journal-type article based upon your own research addresses our second, third, and fourth departmental student learning outcomes: “formulate appropriate sociological and/or anthropological research questions about socio-cultural phenomena; select appropriate sociological and/or anthropological research methods to study socio-cultural phenomena; apply sociological and

anthropological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.” Comparing journal articles within and across the disciplines of sociology and anthropology addresses our fifth SLO: “Describe how sociology and anthropology interact with one another, interact with other liberal arts disciplines, and contribute to various interdisciplinary conversations.”

## Requirements

I aim for this syllabus to be responsive to your needs as mature SOAN seniors deeply involved in every aspect of your comps theses. Thus, *some* aspects of this course will be flexible. But until I say so, requirements are requirements!



## Writing

Imagine that you are enrolled in a fitness class—at least 30 minutes of moderate to strenuous activity at least five days per week. Regardless of assignment due dates, I’d like you to *write*—related to your comps—at least 30 minutes a day, at least five days per week. Not all of this will be for others’ consumption, and not all of it will even be for you to keep, but it will make you more fit as a writer. You’ll get your ideas on paper, and be more comfortable revising. (Working on comps is learning to *love* revisions!)

We will have a number of in-class writing exercises. The majority of your writing, however, will be out of class. It includes writing on your own comps thesis, writing “focus notes” as a cover page to work that you hand in to your classmates for peer review, and writing peer reviews of your classmates’ work. When you hand in work to me, you will include a cover page with your “focus notes” as well as a one-paragraph summary of the most helpful comments you received from your peers. If relevant, you can include an additional paragraph about unhelpful portions of peer reviews.

Hint: develop a fail-safe method to **back up all files of your writing every day!** Remember: if you write the most brilliant piece and then lose it to a hard drive crash, no one will ever read it. All writing work is to be turned in via e-mail or on Moodle.

Summary:

- daily writing
- in-class writing
- “focus notes” cover page for peer reviewers
- “focus notes” and response to peer reviews for instructor
- peer reviews of your writing group’s work
- all assignments on the comps schedule (proposal, first draft)



## Peer Reviews

Responding to your peer’s scholarship, in written form, is a central part of being a professional sociologist or anthropologist. It also teaches you what to aim for in your own scholarly writing, and builds community. In the language of scholarly publishing, the usually anonymous people who respond to your work are termed “peer reviewers.” This is the role that you will take for members of your writing group.

In preparing your own work for peer review, include a “focus notes” cover page, describing one or two aspects you would like your peer reviewers to concentrate on while reading your draft. Describe how you’ve incorporated their previous comments, or—if you have continued to write new material

rather than revising—tell your reviewers at what page they should start reading. All drafts for **peer review are due on Friday by 5:00pm for peer review sessions to be held on the following tuesday.**

“**Due**” means you should send your work as an attachment to all members of your writing group and to me at or before that time. Please label your files with your name and a descriptor. Because of the need for collaboration in peer reviews, I won’t grant extensions of due dates for written work except in case of dire emergency—which don’t include computer/printer failures.

In responding to your peer’s writing, follow your Peer Review Guidelines handout for both written and oral reviews. Make margin comments *and* write up a short summary review. Bring these to class on the following tuesday, in duplicate (for the author and for me).



### Writing Groups

To facilitate the peer-review process, the class is divided into seven writing groups (handout on constitution of each group forthcoming). Each member of a writing group will read and review drafts of their partners’ writing, and will receive written and oral responses from their two/three writing partners.



### Reading

Compared to other senior seminars, this class will have relatively little assigned reading. What *is* assigned is important for class discussion. I expect you to read the assigned readings before the day they are due, to read them carefully, and to come prepared to discuss them in class. Some reading assignments, *marked in italics*, ask you to skim, meaning to read selectively those parts that appear most relevant to your own project and/or writing concerns. In addition to assigned readings, I have made a miniature library of research, writing, and publication guides available to you in open reserves of Gould Library. A list is appended to this syllabus. I expect you to use these resources as appropriate for your particular writing needs and for your particular projects. Style guides will be your friends—valuable reference works that you will use to revise, revise, and revise again. You will need them, even if I do not assign chapters on independent clauses or when to use semi-colons!

Article-length readings are available via e-reserves (password soan). The required book is:

Howard S. Becker (2007) *Writing for Social Scientists* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). University of Chicago Press.

Optional Books (on reserve in the library):

Diane Hacker and Nancy Sommers (2012) *A Pocket Style Manual* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s.

Sociology Writing Group (2008) *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). New York: St. Martin’s (hereafter GWSP)

### Attendance and Participation

Attendance and *presence* matter! In this seminar, you’ll learn much from each other as well as from me. This is not a class in which you should allow yourself to be shy. I’ll do what I can to encourage you to participate, but ultimately it is your responsibility to be an active member of the discussion. If you choose never to participate in class discussion, your final grade will be lower than what it would have been had you been an active participant.

Please plan to come to every class unless you’re really sick or have a crisis. **If you miss class for**

**some other reason, your final grade will be lowered (one “plus” or “minus” for each unexcused absence).** If you have to miss, please let me know why *before* class.

### **Grades**

Because I want you to focus on your writing and not get stressed about grades, I won't assign letter grades for the written work I turn back to you; instead you will receive  $\surd$ ,  $\surd+$ , or  $\surd-$ . I will, though, keep tabs both on the writing you do toward your comps thesis and the reviewing you do of your peers' writing, as well as attendance and participation. In assigning your final class grade, I will take into account all relevant factors:

- the quality of your written work;
- the level of improvement in your writing over the course of the term, especially your reasoned attentiveness to suggestions in your revisions;
- the quality and effort you display in your peer reviews;
- the level and quality of your participation in class discussion;
- your attendance record.

If you are stressed about not receiving letter grades on your written work, please come see me during my office hours and I can let you know how you're doing, grade-wise.

### **Citations**

In your written work for this class, anything you quote must be cited with author's name, date of publication, and page number. Significant ideas you refer to should be cited with author's name and date of publication, in some instances with page numbers. Choose one of the citation styles of the two major sociological and anthropological associations, and use it consistently throughout the term (and in your comps thesis):

American Sociological Association: <http://www.asanet.org/Quick%20Style%20Guide.pdf>

American Anthropological Association: [http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style\\_guide.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf)

### **Helpful Information**



### **Office Hours**

Please make use of my scheduled office hours. If you can't come during my normal office hours, please e-mail me about scheduling another time.

### **Special Needs**

If you have any challenge that you think may pose obstacles to your successful completion of the course, please discuss this with me at the beginning of the term so that we may accommodate your situation.



**Schedule**

WEEK	DATE	READING Read things in this font, <i>and skim in this font!</i>	ACTIVITY	WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE
I	9/17		<b>1a</b> Why Write? <b>1b</b> Social Science Writing and Getting Started	
	9/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becker, Ch 1</li> <li>• Read the comps proposal you wrote in methods (or your first rough draft if you changed your topic)</li> </ul>	SoAn Faculty on their Writing Process – Guest Speakers - Adrienne Falcon - Nader Sohrabi  <b>2</b> Proposals: What good are they?	If you have changed your comps topic, write a rough draft of your new proposal and bring it to class.
II	9/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becker Ch 2, 3</li> </ul>	SoAn Faculty on their Writing Process – Guest Speakers: - Constanza Ocampo-Rader - LaToya Beck	
	9/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booth, Ch 3, 4</li> </ul> <i>Take from these what is useful for you!</i>	<b>4</b> Proposal Assignment II: From Proposal to Draft	<b>F 9/27</b> Turn in your final proposal draft for peer editing (All Groups )
III	10/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becker, Ch 4, Editing by Ear</li> <li>• Booth, Ch 14</li> </ul>	<b>5</b> Peer Editing	
	10/3		<b>5</b> Peer Editing	
	<b>10/4</b>			<b>Thesis proposal due to your comps adviser</b>
IV	10/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becker, Ch 8</li> <li>• Belcher, Ch 5</li> <li>• Readings listed in order of priority!</li> </ul> ----- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GWSP Ch 2, 3</li> <li>• Ackerman (Ch. 14 in Graff</li> </ul>	<b>9a</b> Literature Reviews Class in Library 306; Workshopping with <b>Kristin Partlo</b>  ----- <b>6</b> Waiting for comments/ making continual progress	

		and Birkenstein, on parts of an article)	Proposal celebration and post-mortem	
	10/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read one article each—relevant to your comps—from a scholarly anthropological and a sociological journal</li> <li>Look through your packet of table of contents</li> </ul>	<b>7a</b> Distinguish sociology and anthropology	Write a sentence each describing the structure, arguments, data, methods, and theories of the two articles you read.
V	10/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-read your proposal</li> </ul>	<b>7b</b> A trans-discipline experiment	
	10/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>No Class – MS away, presenting paper at South Asia Conference</b></li> <li>Boellstorff 2010, Making Peer Review Work (up to “In This Issue”)</li> <li>Belcher, Ch 9, pp 221-232 (skim)</li> </ul>		
VI	10/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boellstorff 2008/2010, How to Get an Article Accepted, Parts 1&amp;2</li> <li>Bean, Ch 14 (on rubrics)</li> </ul>	<b>8b</b> Rubrics, Guidelines, and Checklists 	Develop a rubric for the evaluation of a good comps thesis, based on the research article model, and bring to class.
	10/24			
VII	10/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Becker, Ch 3, 6 (esp. pp. 117-120; <i>you may skim the rest of the chapter as you wish</i>), skim Ch 7</li> </ul> 	<b>10</b> Writing Matters and Writer’s Cramp 	Turn in literature review draft and annotated outline of works to be read, and why, for peer review.
	10/28		<b>9b</b> Peer review of literature reviews	
VIII	10/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/">http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/</a></li> <li>GWSP, Ch 4</li> <li><a href="http://www.asanet.org/Quick%20Style%20Guide.pdf">http://www.asanet.org/Quick%20Style%20Guide.pdf</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf">http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf</a></li> </ul>	<b>11a</b> Research Ethics and Writing Ethics: IRBs, academic honesty, plagiarism, and citations	Turn in first draft including outline of remaining research, analysis, and writing steps, for peer review.

				
	11/5		<b>11b</b> Peer editing of first drafts	
	<b>F, 11/8 4:00pm</b>			<b>First draft of thesis due to your comps adviser</b>
IX	11/12		First draft celebration and post-mortem The Intellectual Value of Posters - Guest Speakers: - Liz Raleigh - Doug Foxgrover	
	11/14	<i>Booth et al., skim Parts III and IV for what's useful; look at the definition of a warrant on p. 152.</i>	<b>12</b> Moving along and looking ahead	
X	11/19		Individual Conferences &/or writing support circle	



## Outline of Course Topics and Activities

### Part One: Why Write?

#### 1a Why Write?

- Why do you write?
- What experiences do you have with different kinds of college-level writing? Have they been more knowledge reporting or knowledge creating?
- How do you write when you get an assignment? Procedures and rituals? Checklist vs. synthetic and rich writing?
- What is your model for what a comps thesis should look like?
- How have these different writing experiences prepared you for comps?

#### 1b Social Science Writing and Getting Started

- What is social science writing?
- What writing assignments have you done? Make a typology? How much within each type? How comfortable do you feel with each type of writing? What do you discern as strengths and weaknesses after this retrospective look at your Carleton and SOAN writing experience?
- How is writing a thesis different?
- Risk and facing our fears

## Part Two: Proposals: What good are they for research?

2 Proposals: What good are they for research? What good are they for writing your thesis?

- Thinking through
- Preparing for the field
- As a reference document while doing research and analyzing results
- What about the unexpected? How do you turn “when things go wrong” into “making something out of the unexpected”? (mapping dead ends and pathways out of it)

3 Proposal Assignment:

- Which parts of the proposal can be turned into *drafts* of sections of your thesis? What do you have to change to incorporate these parts into your thesis? (Grammar/tense; actually do the research; revise, cut and expand different areas of lit review—for ex—to fit with how your research focus develops)
- How do you not get *stuck* at this early point in your thinking (make sure you revise and revise and revise again to reflect your research and analysis)?
- Good introductions; topic statements, articulating the research question

4 Peer Review—how do we do it?

- Responding to conceptual issues—what are the primary and secondary messages?
- Editing for repetition and organization (but don’t let editing make you think you should be “stuck” with this version; your thesis is a living, growing, changing creature!)
- Editing for surface error (important for later stages; for earlier stages, only if it gets in the way of *meaning*, of communicating your message)
- Using checklists: look at them once at the beginning, then don’t look at them during your writing process; look at them again once you are done, to help you *revise*.

6 Making continual progress: What to do while you are waiting for comments

- And, what goes into the “first draft”?

## Part Three: Sociology vs. Anthropology: What is the difference, and how do the two interrelate?

7a Distinguish sociology and anthropology by examining our models for the thesis (scholarly journal articles).

- Soc-anthro family tree (from AT&T and ST&T)
- Comparing two journal articles on the same topic: What are the parts of a journal article? Are they divided up in different ways in soc vs in anthro? Variation within disciplines?
- What about tone, form of presentation? Types and use of data? Methods? Theories? How explicit are the theories, and where in the articles are they made explicit?
- Possibly: Comparing journal tables of contents—between journals/disciplines and over time—without stereotyping: how do the topics compare? The titles and the theories implicit in them?

7b A trans-discipline experiment

- In-class assignment: Brainstorm with one another, in pairs, if you consider your project to fall more into anthro, more into soc, or at the intersection of the two sister disciplines.
  - What methodological considerations make it so?
  - Which theoretical frameworks are you using, and why?
- Then, how might you transform your project into either a soc or an anth question?
  - How might you reframe the research question?
  - What assumptions would be different?

- Whose work would you reference and build upon?
- What differing methods and theories would you apply?

#### **Part Four: The Scholarly Journal Article in So/An**

**8a** What is our model? The scholarly journal article in sociology and/or anthropology. Includes and integrates theory and empirical data.

- Review your notes from 7a: what are the parts of a journal article? What are the different ways of dividing it up?
- What advice do journal editors give to authors seeking to submit manuscripts? How do journal editors evaluate manuscripts?

**8b** Rubrics, Guidelines, and Checklists

- On the basis of what you know about what makes for a good journal article, construct a rubric for evaluating a comps thesis. Bring it to class, and post it on Moodle. Class discusses various rubrics, creates a master rubric. [Compare to SOAN criteria and assessment tools.]
- What are the pros and cons of rubrics, guidelines and checklists?

**9** Literature Reviews

- Thinking in Venn Diagrams
- Make a proto-topic; review the literature; refine the question
- Lit reviews in the thesis place your topic as part of a wider conversation; should not be hermetically sealed, but rather integrated into the whole comps, referred to in other sections.

#### **Part Five: Writing (and not Writing) like a Professional**

**10** Writing Matters and Writer's Cramp

- Daily writing
- Writing out of order (and choosing which order to write in)
- The why's of page limits

**11** Research Ethics and Writing Ethics: IRBs, academic honesty, plagiarism, and citations

- Writing about methods (revision from proposal is not just about correctness, but about re-seeing)

**12** Moving along and looking ahead

- Making progress while still collecting and analyzing data
- Varieties of organizing results and analysis "sections"
- How to use winter break
- Writing abstracts
- Writing conclusions
- Oral Presentations



## A Library of Readings

### Key:

**Required readings (in the bookstore or on e-reserve)**

**Optional readings (in the bookstore)**

Readings that are part of the open reserve library of reference works

*N.B. This bibliography is NEITHER in AAA nor ASA style!*

### Specifically on Social Science Writing

Paul Atkinson, Sara Delamont, and William Housley (2008) *Contours of Culture: Complex Ethnography and the Ethnography of Complexity*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

**Howard S. Becker (2007) *Writing for Social Scientists (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. University of Chicago Press.**

Howard S. Becker (2007) *Telling About Society*. University of Chicago Press.

Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw (2011) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Second Edition Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

James D. Faubion and George E. Marcus (Eds.) (2009) *Fieldwork Is Not What It Used to Be: Learning Anthropology's Method in a Time of Transition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

**H.L. Goodall (2008) *Writing Qualitative Inquiry: Self, Stories, and Academic Life*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.**

Luke Eric Lassiter (2005) *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jane E. Miller (2004) *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers*. University of Chicago Press. (A [study guide](#) of exercises is available online.)

***Sociology Writing Group (2008) *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. New York: Worth.***

John Van Maanen (2011) *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*, Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### Social Science Works that Experiment with Writing

Ruth Behar (1996) *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*. Boston: Beacon.

Alma Gottlieb and Philip Graham (1993) *Parallel Worlds: An Anthropologist and a Writer Encounter Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Alma Gottlieb and Philip Graham (2012) *Braided Worlds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Marjorie Wolf. (1992) *A Thrice Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility*. Stanford: Stanford University.**

### More General Research and Writing Guides

Howard S. Becker (1998) *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Wendy Laura Belcher (2009) *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.**

Susan D. Blum (2009) *My Word!: Plagiarism and College Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (*an ethnographic study written by an anthropologist who has visited Carleton*)

**Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. (2008) *The Craft of Research, Third Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.**

Peg Boyle Single Ph.D. (2010) *Demystifying Dissertation Writing: A Streamlined Process from Choice of Topic to Final Text*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

**Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein (2007) *They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing*. New York: W.W. Norton.**

Beth Luey (2002) *Handbook for Academic Authors* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Charles Lipson (2005) *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Walter W. Powell (1985) *Getting into Print: The Decision-Making Process in Scholarly Publishing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (*a sociological study of scholarly publishing, written by a well-known sociologist*)

Kate L. Turabian (2007) *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Seventh Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

#### Style Guides

***Diane Hacker and Nancy Sommers (2012) *A Pocket Style Manual* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.***

**William Strunk and E.B. White (2000) *Elements of Style* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pearson.**

