

Course Syllabus

Course Information

SOC 3306

Professional Writing for Sociology

Section 001

Fall 2009

Professor Contact Information

Bobby C. Alexander, Ph.D.

Office Phone: 972-883-6898

E-mail: bcalex@utdallas.edu. Please use regular UTD e-mail instead of eLearning or any other UTD system to e-mail me.

Office Room Number: GR 2.124

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:30 -2:15 p.m. and by appointment

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

This course has been designated to satisfy the Advanced Writing Requirement for the undergraduate sociology major and to serve as a "capstone" course in sociology. Since it is difficult to write competently about sociological issues without knowledge of sociological concepts, methods, and empirical findings, students should have completed – in most cases – several sociology courses, including SOC 1301, 3303, and 3304, before enrolling in this class. Please ask the instructor if you have questions.

Course Description

The course teaches professional writing and analytic skills used by sociologists by reviewing models of writing in sociology – a literature review, research design, data analysis, and policy memorandum – and by practice writing following the models. Students will develop writing skills for each model, which they then will apply to the assignments.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

The learning objective of the course is to develop writing and analytic skills used by sociologists and to be able to apply professional norms in sociology to a variety of types of writing. This will be accomplished through an iterative series of major assignments: a literature review of peer-reviewed articles published in professional sociology journals, a research proposal that builds upon existing published research, a data analysis, and a policy memorandum that analyzes the policy implications of the literature review and the proposed research. Students will submit drafts of each of the major assignments and revise the drafts based on critiques provided by the instructor and students' writing partners.

Required Textbooks and Materials

The one required text is: A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, by Roseann Giarrusso, Judith Richlin-Klonsky, William G. Roy, and Ellen Strenski, 6th edition, New York: Worth Publishers, 2008 (referred to below as Guide). The text is available both at the UTD Bookstore and Off Campus Books. Students will supplement the required course readings with peer-reviewed journal articles or other scholarly sources they will read in order to write the literature review.

Assignments & Academic Calendar

Students will choose a topic that is of interest to sociology, is important to society, and is relevant to public policy and write and revise a series of four assignments focused on the topic: a literature review of relevant published peer-reviewed articles from professional sociology journals, a research proposal building upon the literature review, a data analysis, and a policy memorandum analyzing the policy implications of the literature review and the proposed research.

Students will submit a draft of each of the four major assignments. Each draft will be critiqued by the instructor as well as by a writing partner. Students will revise each draft based on the critiques, and resubmit it for a final evaluation by the instructor. Students will have the opportunity to discuss the critiques during individual, in-class meetings with the instructor, and during in-class working sessions with their writing partners.

Students must submit hard copies of the assignments; e-mailed electronic files are not accepted, with the exception of emergencies.

The instructor will make available on eLearning instructions for all of the course assignments as well as samples of assignments completed by students who took the course previously. Students will download and print the instructions and samples and bring them to class.

Students will make informal class presentations on their chosen topics building upon the literature review and policy memorandum. The instructor will provide instructions for the presentation.

August 20

Orientation to the Course

August 25 and 27

Sociological Perspectives and Library Research Strategies

Read A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers:

Part One: "Essentials," pages 1-2

Ch. 1: "Getting Started" (Read carefully "What Is Sociology?" and "Framing a Question".)

Part Two: "Writing from Various Data Sources," pages 61-63

Ch. 4: "The General Research Paper Based on Library or Internet Data" (including "Before You Start: Choosing a Topic")

Note: Class on August 25th will be devoted to library research strategies and searching electronic databases for peer-reviewed journal articles needed to complete course assignments. A UTD Reference Librarian will provide a demonstration.

September 1 and 3

Choosing a Topic and Literature Review

Assignment topic due September 3rd

Read Guide:

Ch. 2: "The Writing Process"

Ch. 3: "Working with Sources," read pages 52-58 only

Ch. 6: "The Quantitative Research Paper," read pages 144-top 146 only
("Reviewing the Literature": "Stating the Problem and Choosing a Question" and "Stating Your Hypothesis")

Note: Class on September 3rd will be devoted to the literature review. Students will have individual sessions with the instructor in order for him to approve the topic for the literature review assignment and all other assignments.

September 8 and 10

Literature Review continued

Read Guide:

Ch. 6: "The Quantitative Research Paper," read pages 142-top 157 only (reread pages 144-top 146)

Ch. 3: "Working with Sources," reread pages 52-top 58
Part Three: "Finishing Up"

Draft Literature Review due September 10th

September 15 and 17

Literature Review continued

Read Guide:

Ch. 7: "The Ethnographic Field Research Paper"

Draft Literature Review returned and Critique due September 17th

September 22 and 24

Literature Review continued

Read Guide:

Ch. 5: "The Textual Analysis (or Article Critique) Paper" (skim)

Final Literature Review due September 24th

Note: Class on September 24th will be devoted to Research Design.

Read Guide:

Ch. 6: "The Quantitative Research Paper," review pages 145-top half 151 and bottom 153-first half 155 (methods), and bottom half 151-153 (data analysis). Read 158-179 (student paper in text).

September 29 and October 1

Research Design continued

Draft Research Design due October 1st

October 6 and 8

Research Design continued

Draft Research Design returned and Critique due October 8th

October 13 and 15

Research Design continued

Final Research Design due October 15th

Read Guide:

Ch. 6: "The Quantitative Research Paper," review pages bottom half 151-153 (on quantitative data) and 158-179 (student paper in text)

October 20 and 22

Issues in the Presentation of / Analyzing Data continued

Draft Data Analysis due October 22nd

October 27 and 29

Issues in the Presentation of / Analyzing Data continued

Draft Data Analysis returned and Critique due October 29th

November 3 and 5

Issues in the Presentation / Analysis of Data continued

Final Data Analysis due November 5th

Note: Class on November 5th will be given to Policy Recommendation.

November 10 and 12

Policy Recommendation continued

Draft Policy Recommendation due November 12th

November 17 and 19

Policy Recommendation continued

Draft Policy Recommendation returned and Critique due November 19th

November 24 (No class November 26th: Thanksgiving Holiday)

Class Presentations

December 1 and 3

Class Presentations

Final Policy Recommendation due December 3rd

Grading Policy

The percentage distribution (total equals 100%) for the course grade follows.

65%: the four main writing assignments combined

20%: the four critiques of each student's writing partner combined

5%: class presentation

10%: attendance

Note: Students automatically will be excused from two classes. Students who miss more than two classes will be excused if they have legitimate reasons (for example, illness and death in the family) and provide proper documentation.

The grading scale follows.

A+ = 97-100

A = 94-96

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69

D = 64-66

D- = 60-63

F = 59 and below

Course & Instructor Policies

Students must submit hard copies of all assignments in class on the due dates; late papers will not be accepted without the prior approval of the instructor. This requirement is intended to help keep students on track in submitting written work, to coordinate delivering draft assignments to students' writing partners, and to promote fairness to students who submit work on time.

Class attendance is required. The intent of this policy is to help students keep up with lectures and discussion and perform well on assignments.

Technical Support

If you experience any problems with your UTD account, you may send an email to: assist@utdallas.edu or call the UTD Computer Helpdesk at 972-883-2911.

Field Trip Policies

Off-campus Instruction and Course Activities

Off-campus, out-of-state, and foreign instruction and activities are subject to state law and university policies and procedures regarding travel and risk-related activities. Information regarding these rules and regulations may be found at the website address [http://www.utdallas.edu/BusinessAffairs/Travel Risk Activities.htm](http://www.utdallas.edu/BusinessAffairs/TravelRiskActivities.htm). Additional information is available from the office of the school dean. Below is a description of any travel and/or risk-related activity associated with this course.

Student Conduct & Discipline

The University of Texas System and The University of Texas at Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the UTD printed publication, *A to Z Guide*, which is provided to all registered students each academic year.

The University of Texas at Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the *Rules and Regulations, Series 50000, Board of Regents, The University of Texas System*, and in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities of the university's *Handbook of Operating Procedures*. Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SU 1.602, 972/883-6391) and online at <http://www.utdallas.edu/judicialaffairs/UTDJudicialAffairs-HOPV.html>

A student at the university neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regents' Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating the standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty: Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic Dishonesty, any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a

student or the attempt to commit such acts.

Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details). This course will use the resources of tunitin.com, which searches the web for possible plagiarism and is over 90% effective.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials, including music and software. Copying, displaying, reproducing, or distributing copyrighted works may infringe the copyright owner's rights and such infringement is subject to appropriate disciplinary action as well as criminal penalties provided by federal law. Usage of such material is only appropriate when that usage constitutes "fair use" under the Copyright Act. As a UT Dallas student, you are required to follow the institution's copyright policy (Policy Memorandum 84-1.3-46). For more information about the fair use exemption, see <http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/copyvpo12.htm>

Email Use

The University of Texas at Dallas recognizes the value and efficiency of communication between faculty/staff and students through electronic mail. At the same time, email raises some issues concerning security and the identity of each individual in an email exchange. The university encourages all official student email correspondence be sent only to a student's U.T. Dallas email address and that faculty and staff consider email from students official only if it originates from a UTD student account. This allows the university to maintain a high degree of confidence in the identity of all individual corresponding and the security of the transmitted information. UTD furnishes each student with a free email account that is to be used in all communication with university personnel. The Department of Information Resources at U.T. Dallas provides a method for students to have their U.T. Dallas mail forwarded to other accounts.

Withdrawal from Class

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, I cannot drop or withdraw any student. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in a course if you choose not to attend the class once you are enrolled.

Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities, of the university's *Handbook of Operating Procedures*.

In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding grades, evaluations, or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originates (hereafter called "the respondent"). Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the grievance must be submitted in writing to the respondent with a copy of the respondent's School Dean. If the matter is not resolved by the written response provided by the respondent, the student may submit a written appeal to the School Dean. If the grievance is not resolved by the School Dean's decision, the student may make a written appeal to the Dean of

Graduate or Undergraduate Education, and the dean will appoint and convene an Academic Appeals Panel. The decision of the Academic Appeals Panel is final. The results of the academic appeals process will be distributed to all involved parties.

Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations.

Incomplete Grade Policy

As per university policy, incomplete grades will be granted only for work unavoidably missed at the semester's end and only if 70% of the course work has been completed. An incomplete grade must be resolved within eight (8) weeks from the first day of the subsequent long semester. If the required work to complete the course and to remove the incomplete grade is not submitted by the specified deadline, the incomplete grade is changed automatically to a grade of F.

Disability Services

The goal of Disability Services is to provide students with disabilities educational opportunities equal to those of their non-disabled peers. Disability Services is located in room 1.610 in the Student Union. Office hours are Monday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The contact information for the office of Disability Services is: The University of Texas at Dallas, SU 22
PO Box 830688
Richardson, Texas 75083-0688
(972) 883-2098 (voice or TTY)
disabilityservice@utdallas.edu

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with the Coordinator of Disability Services. The Coordinator is available to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with Disability Services to notify them of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. Disability Services can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

It is the student's responsibility to notify his or her professors of the need for such an accommodation. Disability Services provides students with letters to present to faculty members to verify that the student has a disability and needs accommodations. Individuals requiring special accommodation should contact the professor after class or during office hours.

Religious Holy Days

The University of Texas at Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities for the travel to and observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, Tax Code, Texas Code Annotated.

The student is encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment. The student, so excused, will be allowed to take the exam or complete the assignment within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the chief executive officer of the institution, or his or her designee. The chief executive officer or designee must take into account the legislative intent of TEC 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the chief executive officer or designee.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.