

Graduate School for Social Research

Semester 2, Spring 2022

Empirical Research in the Social Sciences (ERSS): Design, Implementation, and Write-up

Part II: Reading and Writing in the Social Sciences (30 hours, Semester II)

Instructors: Joshua K. Dubrow and Ilona Wysmulek
Place: Hybrid: Room 242 and Online
Time: Wednesdays, 10 am to 12 pm
Course Website: socialinquiry.wordpress.com
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Office Hours: By appointment

Description of ERSS Part II

At the heart of academic social science are theory-informed empirical research articles and constructive criticism on the pre-publication writing of colleagues. Part II of the ‘Empirical Research in the Social Sciences’ (ERSS) course instructs students in how to read and write English language social science empirical research articles. By article, we mean that which is found in the top journals of sociology, e.g. generalist journals such as *American Sociological Review* (Impact Factor 5.39), *Social Forces* (IF 2.29), and *European Sociological Review* (IF 2.76), and specialty journals such as *Qualitative Sociology* (IF 1.23). These articles have ca. 8000-9000 words and tend to follow a similar structure: Title, abstract, introduction, research questions, theory, data and methods, results, conclusion, foot/endnotes, acknowledgements, and references. Other sections depend on the methods and content of the empirical analyses, such as “setting” (for qualitative articles), “hypotheses” and “analytical strategy” (for quantitative articles) and appendices. We will discuss all of it.

As part of this specialized knowledge, ERSS Part II promotes critical thinking and communication skills. By the end of the semester, you should be able to present your written work to a scholarly audience in a clear and logical fashion.

Objectives

ERSS Part II aims to provide students key skills for how to read and write for the top English language social science journals. These skills extend to basic principles of writing grant proposals, as well as the preparation of effective academic presentations and the promotion of research results. At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand and critically assess the structure of empirical research articles & the content of each section;
- Gain experience in writing each section of a theory-informed, empirically-based article;
- Develop useful writing strategies and habits;
- Edit their own writing;
- Provide constructive criticism on the writing of colleagues;
- Understand basic principles of how to write grant applications;
- Understand basic principles of the presentation and promotion research results.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Class Participation (30%): Students are expected to have read the required reading due for that day.

Writing Text for Colleagues to Constructively Critique (30%): Students will write short texts (ca. 500 words) that are to be submitted to a colleague and to the instructors. There will be four of these short writing assignments, and while all of them will be submitted to the instructors, only two of them will also be submitted to a class colleague for critique. The writing assignments are due on the day of the class. Peer review of that assignment is due one week after. Please see Course Outline for which writing assignments will have peer review.

Writing Text for the Instructors to Constructively Critique (40%): At the end of the course, students will submit to the instructors a draft paper based on empirical research (preferably one that they have written and revised throughout the course), of no more and no less than 2000 words, due June 15, 2022. Details on the content and structure of this assignment will be discussed in class and distributed in a separate document.

Readings

Main resources:

Schimmel, Joshua. 2012. *Writing Science: How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded*. Oxford University Press.

Lebrun, J. L. 2011. *Scientific writing 2.0: a reader and writer's guide*. New Jersey: World Scientific

Wallwork, Adrian. 2016. *English for Writing Research Papers*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26094-5>.

NB: Required reading are available in the ERSS Google Drive folder and the GSSR library.

Additional resources:

The Academic Phrasebank, The University of Manchester, <https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Online academic writing courses for non-native speakers of English:

<https://www.edx.org/course/how-to-write-an-essay>

<http://aeo.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/>

Hilary Glasman-Deal (2010) *Science Research Writing For Non-Native Speakers of English*. Imperial College London: UK.

Course Outline

SECTION 1: Reading, Writing, and Critiquing

Class 1

Wednesday, March 2

- A. Writing is personal and professional: Introduction to ERSS Part II
- B. Expectations of Academic Audiences & the General Structure of Empirical Research Articles

Class 2

Wednesday, March 9

- A. What Gets Published in the Top Journals? Topics and Structures of Empirical Articles

This is an in-class discussion in which we examine articles from the top journals in sociology.

- B. Science writing as story telling

Schimel (2012) Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4

Class 3

Wednesday, March 16

- A. Writing Strategies and Writing Habits

Smith, Chris. 2018. "Six academic writing habits that will boost productivity." *LSE Impact Blog*

Peterson, Todd C., Sofie R. Kleppner, and Crystal M. Botham. 2018. "Ten simple rules for scientists: Improving your writing productivity" *Plos*

- B. How to Provide Constructive Criticism

Online book: *Give your students better writing feedback. A practical guide for instructors.*
<http://www.betterwritingfeedback.com/>

SECTION 2: Writing Specific Parts of the Article

Class 4

Wednesday, March 23

A. On The Arcs of Papers & On Paragraphs, Sentences, and Flow

Schimel (2012) Chapters 10 - 13

B. How to Write Titles and Abstracts

Lebrun (2011) Chapters 10 - 12

Class 5

Wednesday, March 30

How to Write the Introduction and Research Questions

Reading: illustrative empirical article

Schimel (2012) Chapters 5 and 6

DUE Writing Assignment 1: Title and Abstract (Title should be clear, short, truthful, and informative; ca. 200 word abstract)

Class 6

Wednesday, April 6

How to Write the Theory and Hypothesis

Schimel (2012) Chapters 7 and 8

Wallwork (2016) Chapter 15. Review of the Literature.

**DUE Writing Assignment 2 (ca. 500 words): Introduction and Research Questions
Peer Review Assignment on Introduction due one week later**

Class 7

Wednesday, April 13

How to Write the Data and Methods

Wallwork (2016) Chapter 16. Methods.

Zigerell, L. J. 2013. "Rookie Mistakes: Preemptive Comments on Graduate Student Empirical Research Manuscripts." *PS: Political Science and Politics* January: 142 – 146.

DUE Writing Assignment 3 (ca. 500 words): Theory and Hypotheses

Class 8

Wednesday, April 20

How to Write the Results, Tables and Figures

Lebrun (2011) Chapter 15

Wallwork (2016) Chapter 17. Results.

Grant, R. (2019). Data visualization: charts, maps, and interactive graphics. Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press: pp. 21-38

DUE Writing Assignment 3 (ca. 500 words): Data and Methods Peer Review Assignment on Data and Methods due one week later

Class 9

Wednesday, April 27

How to Write the Conclusion

Schimmel (2012) Chapters 9 and 18

Class 10

Wednesday, May 4

A. On Appendices, Acknowledgments, Citations, References, and Footnotes

B. On Clear, Simple, and Engaging Writing

Schimmel (2012) Chapters 14-17

SECTION 3: Specialty Topics in Academic Writing

Class 11 Wednesday, May 11

Grant Writing, Part 1

Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon. 1995. *On the Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions*. SSRC.

Henson, Kenneth T. 2003. "Debunking Some Myths about Grant Writing." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 26.

Moffat, Anne Simon. 1994. "Grantsmanship: what makes proposals work?" *Science* 265 (September 23)

Class 12 Wednesday, May 18

Grant Writing, Part 2

In-class exercise: NCN Preludium, described on NCN website

Class 13 Wednesday, May 25

On Writing for Journals

Schimel (2012) Chapter 19

Thunder, David. 2004. "Back to Basics: Twelve Rules for Writing a Publishable Article." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37(3): 493-5

Polsky, Andrew J. 2007. "Seeing Your Name in Print: Unpacking the Mysteries of the Review Process at Political Science Scholarly Journals." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 40 (3): 539-43.

Miller et al. 2013. "How to Be a Peer Reviewer: A Guide for Recent and Soon-to-Be PhDs." *PS: Political Science and Politics* January: 120 – 123.

Class 14
Wednesday, June 1

How to Write Effective Academic Presentations

Gemayel, R., & Martin, S. J. (2019). How to prepare and deliver a great talk. *The FEBS Journal*, 286(1), 39– 45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/febs.14726>

Bennett, G., & Jessani, N. (Eds.). (2011). *The knowledge translation toolkit: bridging the know-do gap: a resource for researchers*. New Delhi, India ; Thousand Oaks, Calif. : Ottawa, ON: Sage Publications ; International Development Research Centre: pp. 205-214

Dahlin, M. (2006) Giving a Conference Talk.
<https://www.cs.utexas.edu/~dahlin/professional/goodTalk.pdf>

Class 15
Wednesday, June 8

A. How to Promote your Results through Writing: Academic Social Networks, Blogs, Podcasts, and Newsletters

Kulczycki, E. (2013). Transformation of Science Communication in the Age of Social Media, *Teorie vědy / Theory of Science*, Vol 35, No 1 (2013), pp. 3-28.

B. The Presentation of Self: CVs, Short Bios, and Publishing as a PhD Student

van Cott, Donna Lee. 2005. "A Graduate Student's Guide to Publishing Scholarly Journal Articles." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 38(4): 741-743.

Rich, Timothy S. "Publishing as a graduate student: A quick and (hopefully) painless guide to establishing yourself as a scholar." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46, no. 2 (2013): 376-379.

Final Paper DUE June 15

Table 1. Harmonogram of the Course, Spring 2022

Class	Class Day	Topic	Sections
1	March 2	On writing and expectations	SECTION 1: Reading, Writing, and Critiquing
2	March 9	What gets published? Writing as story telling	
3	March 16	Writing Habits Constructive Criticism	
4	March 23	Arcs and Flow Titles and Abstracts	SECTION 2: Writing Specific Parts of the Article
5	March 30	Introductions	
6	April 6	Theory and Hypotheses	
7	April 13	Data and Methods	
8	April 20	Results, Tables and Figures	
9	April 27	Conclusions	
10	May 4	Appendices etc.	
11	May 11	Grant Writing, Part 1	SECTION 3: Specialty Topics in Academic Writing
12	May 18	Grant Writing, Part 2	
13	May 25	Writing for Journals	
14	June 1	On Presentations	
15	June 8	Promoting Results	

Final Paper due June 15, 2022