

Graduate School for Social Research

Semester 2, Spring 2023, 30 Hours

Article Finishing Course in the Social Sciences¹

Instructors: Joshua Dubrow (IFiS PAN) and Anastas Vangeli (School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana)
Place: GSSR, Room 232 (Palace Staszic, Nowy Swiat 72, Warsaw)
Time: Tuesdays 10:00 – 12:00 (15 classes, 2 hours per class period)
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Office Hours: By appointment

Description

The Article Finishing Course (AFC) provides a classroom environment to complete an English-language article for submission to an international peer-reviewed academic journal. The AFC is separate from the one-semester course on Academic Writing (ERSS Part 2, or its equivalent). Please note that AFC is not a course to start articles – it is a course to finish articles so that students can submit them for peer review in an appropriate journal.

By journal, we mean an international, English-language, peer-reviewed, academic journal in the social sciences. By article, we mean an English-language article that is either (a) ca. 5000 - 8000 word original article or (b) ca. 4000 – 6000 word original research note that is publishable in a journal defined above. We will accept chapters of a book, i.e. “chapter in an edited book,” so long as there is proof that such a book has been planned (there is a title, editor(s), a book proposal, and publishers interested). The article can be a theory article, a methods article, or substantive, i.e. with data and analysis. An article that has been rejected, or has a Revise & Resubmit status at a journal is welcome. We especially welcome papers that had been presented at an international academic conference and are now in the process of being refitted for a journal publication.

On the first day of class, the student must submit to the instructors via email an advanced draft of an English-language paper of which they are first or second author. The paper may be developed with their supervisor or colleagues. This paper will be the basis of the student’s work for this course.

The AFC course is mandatory for NAWA STER Scholarship recipients, and should ideally be taken in Year Two or Year Three of your doctoral studies. The course is open to all GSSR PhD students.

Method

Good writing habits include multiple revisions and accountability: the writing process involves a series of deadlines that others, including the instructors, expect you to meet. We expect revisions and we foster accountability as follows. First, in every class, each student will verbally report on (a) the problem in their

¹This course is funded by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA, nawa.gov.pl) under the STER SIGro project, administered by the Graduate School for Social Research.

article that they worked on, (b) what actions they took to solve that problem, and (c) another problem that they identified to solve for next week. Second, in every class, one or two students will present their article and identify major and minor problems in framing, concepts and theory, methods, results, or conclusions. Third, each article receives written and oral feedback from course participants. Specifically, each student will write a peer review for a colleague's article (see Course requirements), and all participants provide verbal feedback. Fourth, midway through the course, you will turn in a revised version of your article. Finally, at the end of the course, all students will turn in another revised version that can be reasonably sent to a journal.

In-class didactic exercises, including Writing prompts, Scoping the academic journal environment and Using digital tools to improve our writing are also part of the AFC course. You find their description after the Course Outline.

Objectives

AFC-Social Sciences aims to provide students key skills for how to complete an English language social science article and submit it to a journal. At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Develop useful writing strategies and habits;
- Edit their own writing;
- Understand basic principles of how to write publishable academic articles;
- Provide constructive criticism of colleagues' work;
- Identify realistic international peer review academic outlets for their article;
- Successfully communicate with journals.

Classroom Environment

Writing is a personal process guided as much by emotion as by intellect. Writers develop habits and ways-of-doing, and they develop emotional attachments to their writing. In a writing course, others will read your "unfinished" writing, which will feel even more personal.

We all must cultivate a civil and welcoming classroom environment in which everyone is free to discuss the issues and provide constructive criticism. We, the instructors, pledge to do our part by carefully monitoring the discussions and leading by example. You, the students, must also do your part to create a civil and welcoming classroom environment. Together, we can make every class a useful "writing retreat" that, by the end, will benefit us all.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Class Preparation and Participation (20%): For each class, students are expected to have worked on some significant aspect of their article, and verbally report on their progress.

Peer Review of a Colleague's Article (20%): Students will critique a peer's article with regard to the structure of empirical articles in the social sciences and expected information within each section. Class peer reviewers are to identify any major and obvious flaws in the work and suggest a way to overcome those flaws. The peer reviews are to be submitted to the author and the instructors a week before we will discuss the author's paper.

Draft of Article Submitted Midway through the Course (20%): Students will submit a draft of their article midway through the course. This draft must be a revision of the draft submitted at the beginning of the course.

Finished Article (40%): At the end of the course, students will submit to the instructors a further revised version of their article that is ready to be submitted to a peer reviewed journal. Based on the in-class didactic exercises and peer feedback, the author must indicate three possible peer-reviewed journals that would be realistic outlets for that article.

Readings

There are assigned readings for some classes, but the course does not feature regular readings. Rather, the student authors are to continually revise their work. We suggest additional resources to consult:

- Schimel, Joshua. 2012. *Writing Science: How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded*. Oxford University Press.
- The Academic Phrasebank, The University of Manchester, <https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- Twenty Steps to Writing a Research Article: <https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/connections/twenty-steps-writing-research-article>
- Hoogenboom BJ, Manske RC. How to write a scientific article. *Int J Sports Phys Ther*. 2012 Oct;7(5):512-7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3474301/>
- *Academic Writing in English for Non-Native Speakers* by Carolyn Brimley Norris, University of Helsinki, 2016
<https://writingtogetherbangor.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/academic-writing-in-english-for-non-native-speakers.pdf>

Course Outline

Class 1 **February 21**

Review of the General Structure of Empirical Research Articles

Due: 4000 word draft article (as defined above) that the student will work on throughout the course.

Class 2 **March 7**

- (a) Writing Prompt 1.
- (b) Writing Strategies and Writing Habits. Strategies on how to finish an article.

Class 3 **March 14**

- (a) Writing Prompt 2.
- (b) How to review an article for a journal.

Class 4 **March 16**

Using digital tools to improve your writing and productivity

Required

- Hutson, Matthew. 2022. "Could AI help you to write your next paper?" Nature 31 October.
- Editorial: "Tools such as ChatGPT threaten transparent science; here are our ground rules for their use" Nature 24 January.

Optional

Ippolito, Daphne, Ann Yuan, Andy Coenen, and Sehmon Burnam. 2022. "Creative Writing with an AI-Powered Writing Assistant: Perspectives from Professional Writers." <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2211.05030.pdf>

Class 5 **March 21**

What is a publishable article? General Tips.

Pickett, Steward TA, and Mark J. McDonnell. "The art and science of writing a publishable article." *Journal of Urban Ecology* 3, no. 1 (2017): jux018.

Thunder, David. "Back to basics: twelve rules for writing a publishable article." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37, no. 3 (2004): 493-495.

Class 6
March 28

What is a publishable article? Mixed methods.

Creswell, John W., and Abbas Tashakkori. "Developing publishable mixed methods manuscripts." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1, no. 2 (2007): 107-111.

Writing prompt 3.

Class 7
April 4

Journal scoping exercise. Where to submit an article. Navigating the academic journal environment.

Draft of article due

Class 8
April 11

Dealing with academic stress.

- Tips: Dealing with Stress: <https://gradschool.duke.edu/student-life/health-and-wellbeing/tips-dealing-stress/>
- Preventing and managing stress: <https://phd.tech.au.dk/for-phd-students/preventing-and-managing-stress>
- Dericks, G., Thompson, E., Roberts, M. and Phua, F. (2019) Determinants of PhD student satisfaction: the roles of supervisor, department, and peer qualities. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44 (7). pp. 1053-1068.
[https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/81463/1/Assessment&EvaluationinHigherEducation-Manuscript%20\(final\).pdf](https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/81463/1/Assessment&EvaluationinHigherEducation-Manuscript%20(final).pdf)

Class 9
April 18

Writing Prompt 3.

Class 10
April 25

Writing Prompt 4.

Class 11
May 9

Writing Prompt 5.

Class 12
May 16

Writing Prompt 6.

Class 13
May 23

Journal scoping exercise 2.

Class 14
May 30

Writing Prompt 7.

Class 15
June 6

Writing habits and strategies revisited.

FINISHED ARTICLE DUE JUNE 15

In-Class Didactic Exercises

We will have in-class didactic exercises. They are:

I. Writing prompts

These are short, timed, in-class writing exercises designed for students to succinctly and clearly address core aspects of their article. You are encouraged to bring your laptops for these exercises. The writing prompt lasts 15 minutes, with 15 minutes of discussion about the prompts.

Examples of writing prompts:

- What is the article in your field that has inspired your own article?
- Identify a main concept in your article. Define that concept.
- What is the most important contribution of your article to the field or discipline?
- What is the main take-away message of your article?
- What are the limitations – in data, methods, or theory – of your article?

II. Scoping the academic journal environment

We will ask students to identify three journals to which their article could have a reasonable chance of being accepted for publication. You are to look at the aims of the journal, how often the journal publishes an issue, their most visible abstracting & indexing (e.g. Web of Science, Scopus, etc.), and whether the journal has published something similar to your own article in the last decade. You should justify why these three article outlets are reasonable places for submission of their work. In class, we will discuss your choices. We will conduct this exercise at points during the course.

III. Using digital tools to improve part of their writing

2022 is a watershed year in terms of the proliferation of different digital tools to improve academic writing. Artificial intelligence enthusiasts even argue that, in the not-so-distant future, AI-powered writing tools will replace human writers. During our sessions, we will explore some new generation digital tools that help with proofreading, rephrasing, and brainstorming research ideas, while also getting familiar with the debates on the usage of AI for research and writing, and in particular the ethical risks that it poses.