

Graduate School for Social Research

Semester 2, Spring 2023

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

Part II: Writing in the Social Sciences (30 hours, Semester II)¹

Instructors: Joshua K. Dubrow, Ilona Wysmulek, and Alice Mattoni
Place: Hybrid: Room 232 and Online
Time: Wednesdays, 13:30 – 15:30
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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 grant proposals, and constructive criticism on the drafts that your colleagues wrote. Part II of the ‘Empirical Research in the Social Sciences’ (ERSS) course instructs students in how to write English language empirical articles and grant proposals in the social sciences. 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, theory, data and methods, results, conclusion, footnotes/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. By grant proposals, we mean that which is peer-reviewed and submitted to a government research agency or foundation, e.g. the European Research Council (ERC) grant and Preludium grant of the National Science Center (NCN), Poland, for early-career scholars.

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 write for the top English language social science journals and research grant organizations. At the end of this course, students should be able to:

¹ This 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.

- 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;
- Understand basic principles and critically assess the structure of research grant proposals;
- Gain experience in writing an extended abstract of the research grant proposal;
- Develop useful writing strategies and habits;
- Revise and edit your own writing;
- Provide constructive criticism on the writing of colleagues;

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Class Participation (15%): Students are expected to have read the required reading due for that day.

Writing Text for Colleagues to Constructively Critique (35%): 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 a Short Research Grant Proposal Abstract (5%): Students will write a short (approx. 500 word) research grant proposal idea that clearly defines the main concepts and theories, research question(s), data and methods, and contribution to the scientific literature. The structure will be similar to NCN's Preludium grant: (1) statement of the scientific problem, (2) state of the art, (3) work plan, and (4) methods.

Writing Text for the Instructors to Constructively Critique (45%): At the end of the course, students will submit to the instructors a draft paper based on empirical research (one that they have written and revised throughout the course), of no more and no less than 2000 words, due June 21, 2023. Details on the content and structure of this assignment will be discussed in class and distributed in a separate document.

Learning Materials

Required readings:

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/>

Becker, H. S., & Richards, P. (2007). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article* (2nd ed). University of Chicago Press.

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

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.

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

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

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

Online academic writing courses for non-native speakers of English

"How to Write an Essay: An introduction to academic writing for English Language Learners, focusing on essay development, grammatical correctness, and self-editing" <https://www.edx.org/course/how-to-write-an-essay>

"Academic English Online: A self-access resource for students in higher education"
<http://aeo.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/>

"Writing in the Sciences" Stanford University <https://online.stanford.edu/courses/som-y0010-writing-sciences>

YouTube videos on academic writing

"Scientific Writing: Beyond Tips and Tricks," by Judy Swan, Carnegie Mellon University
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLPCdDp_LE0&t=354s

"Leadership Lab: The Craft of Writing Effectively," by Larry McEnerney, Director of the University of Chicago's Writing Program <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtIzMaLkCaM>

Course Outline

SECTION 1: Structure, Processes, and Constructive Criticism

Class 1, February 22

A. Writing is personal and professional

Becker, H. S., & Richards, P. (2007 [1986]). "Learning to Write as a Professional." Chapter 5 in *Writing for social scientists*.

Watch "Leadership Lab: The Craft of Writing Effectively," by Larry McEnerney, Director of the University of Chicago's Writing Program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtIzMaLkCaM>

B. Expectations of Academic Audiences & the General Structure of Empirical Research Articles

Class 2, March 1

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

In-class exercise 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, March 8

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

Give your students better writing feedback. A practical guide for instructors

SECTION 2: Writing Specific Parts of the Article

Class 4, March 15

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, March 22

How to Write the Introduction and Research Questions

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, March 29

How to Write the Theory and Hypothesis

Schimel (2012) Chapters 7 and 8

DUE Writing Assignment 2: Introduction and Research Questions (ca. 500 words)

Class 7, April 5

How to Write the Data and Methods

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

DUE Peer Review 1: on Introduction and Research Questions

Class 8, April 12

How to Write the Conclusion

Schimel (2012) Chapters 9 and 18

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

Class 9, April 19

How to Write the Results, Tables and Figures

Lebrun (2011) Chapter 15

Unit 5 in Writing in the Sciences. Stanford Online course: <https://online.stanford.edu/courses/som-y0010-writing-sciences>

DUE Writing Assignment 4: Data and Methods (ca. 500 words)

Class 10, April 26

- A. How to prepare References: Zotero and Mendeley
- B. Authorship, Acknowledgments, and Citations
- C. What goes in Appendices and Footnotes

The Nature Portfolio. Chapters: Authorship; Reporting standards and availability of data, materials, code and protocols; Acknowledgments: <https://www.nature.com/nature-portfolio/editorial-policies>

Authorship and Substantial Contributions: <https://thesociology.place/authorship-and-substantial-contributions/>

DUE Peer Review 2: on Data and Methods

Class 11, May 10

Editing: how to revise your own writing, and towards the responsible use of digital tools, e.g. Grammarly & ryr.me and Open AI's ChatGPT

Schimel (2012) Chapters 14-17

Hutson, Matthew. 2022. "Could AI help you to write your next paper?" Nature 31 October.

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>

Classes 12, 13 & 14, May 15 – 17, are led by Dr. Alice Mattoni, Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Bologna. These classes constitute a

Special Workshop on Grant Writing

May 15: Grant Writing, Part 1: Rules, processes, and bureaucracy

Similarities and differences between European Research Council and NCN Preludium and Sonatina schemes

Read: National Science Centre, Poland Preludium call for proposals
<https://www.ncn.gov.pl/en/ogloszenia/konkursy/preludium21>

Read: Section 2 of the ERC information for applicants
https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/information-for-applicants_he-erc-stg-cog_en.pdf

May 16: Grant Writing, Part 2: Some main principles in formulation and writing

- Framing the research problem and its magnitude (problems, solutions, contributions)
- Finding a *fundable* idea: novel topic, novel approach
- Grants: Innovation-centered vs. incremental
 - How to get to innovation? Envisioning the future of your field
 - Finding balance between ground-breaking and feasibility
- Special focus on feasibility: what is a feasible project?
- Time matters: build time into the grant writing process, with lots of revisions

“Secrets to writing a winning grant: Experienced scientists reveal how to avoid application pitfalls to submit successful proposals” by Emily Sohn in *Nature* (Dec. 2019)

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)

May 17: Grant Writing, Part 3: Assessing research proposals and understanding the reviewers' perspective

Read: Successful Preludium and ERC grants; unsuccessful Preludium grants

Read: Section 1 of the ERC information for applicants

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/information-for-applicants_he-erc-stg-cog_en.pdf

DUE: Short Research Grant Proposal Abstract

Class 15, May 24

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.

Final Paper DUE June 14, 2022

Table 1. Harmonogram of the Course, Spring 2023

Class	Class Day	Topic	Sections
1	February 22	Writing, expectations, structure	SECTION 1: Structure, Process, and Constructive Criticism
2	March 1	What gets published? Writing as story telling	
3	March 8	Writing habits; Constructive criticism	
4	March 15	Arcs & Flow; Title and Abstract	SECTION 2: Writing Specific Parts of the Article
5	March 22	Introduction and RQ Deadline W1: Title & Abstract	
6	March 29	Theory and Hypothesis Deadline W2: Intro & RQ	
7	April 5	Data and Methods Deadline Review1: Intro & RQ	
8	April 12	Writing the Discussion and Conclusion Deadline W3: Theory and Hypotheses	
9	April 19	Results, Tables and Figures Deadline W4: Data & Methods	
10	April 26	References, Citation etc. Deadline Review2: Data & Methods	
11	May 10	Editing and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	
12	May 15	Grant writing: Rules, processes, and bureaucracy	SECTION 3: Grant Writing Workshop
13	May 16	Grant writing: Some principles	
14	May 17	Grant writing: The reviewers' perspective	
15	May 24	Writing for the Journals	Section 4: Writing for the Journals

Final Paper due June 14, 2023