

# Graduate School for Social Research

Semester 2, Spring 2024

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

## ERSS Part II: Writing in the Social Sciences (30 hours, Semester II)<sup>1</sup>

Instructors: Joshua Dubrow, Ilona Wysmulek, and Alice Mattoni  
Place: Room 232  
Time: Tuesdays, 11:00 – 13:00  
Course Website: [socialinquiry.wordpress.com](https://socialinquiry.wordpress.com)  
Email: [jdubrow2000@gmail.com](mailto:jdubrow2000@gmail.com) and [ilona.wysmulek@ifispan.edu.pl](mailto:ilona.wysmulek@ifispan.edu.pl)  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Readings: Available in the ERSS Google Drive Folder, link shared in class

### 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 9.1), *Social Forces* (IF 4.8), and *European Sociological Review* (IF 3.2), and specialty journals such as *Qualitative Sociology* (IF 2.3). 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 Preludium grant of the National Science Center (NCN), Poland, for early-career scholars. In addition, the course introduces basic principles on how to write policy papers and briefs.

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.

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## **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:

- Understand and critically assess the structure of empirical research articles & the content of each section;
- Gain experience in writing sections of a theory-informed, empirically-based article;
- Understand basic principles of how to write research grant proposals;
- Gain experience in writing an abstract of the research grant proposal;
- Understand basic principles of how to write a policy paper / brief;
- Revise and edit own writing;
- Provide constructive criticism on the writing of colleagues;
- Develop useful writing strategies and habits.

## **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

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

Short writing assignments (25%): Students will write short texts to be submitted to the instructors. Details will be discussed in class and distributed in a separate document.

Peer review assignments (10%): Students will write two peer reviews, in which they are required to constructively critique assigned short writings of their in-class colleagues. Principles of providing constructive and polite writing feedback will be discussed in class.

Short Research Grant Proposal Abstract (10%): 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.

Final paper (40%): At the end of the course, students will submit to the instructors a paper based on empirical research (one that they have written and revised throughout the course), of no more and no less than 3000 words, due June 11, 2024. Details on the content and structure of this assignment will be discussed in class and distributed in a separate document.

## **Policies on Attendance, Late Materials, and Make-Up**

Attendance is mandatory and counts toward your classroom participation grade. Please notify the instructors in advance if you are unable to attend a given class. As a rule, this course meets in person. Under exceptional circumstances, such as documented participation in a short-term study/research visit or as a presenter at a scientific conference, and after discussing your situation with the instructors at least a day prior to the class session, it may be possible to attend up to two of the fifteen class sessions online.

## 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>.

### 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.

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](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: Processes and Constructive Criticism

### **Class 1, February 20**

#### 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*.

#### B. Science writing as storytelling

Schimel (2012) Chapters 1, 2, 3

### **Class 2, February 27**

#### A. Writing Strategies and Writing Habits

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

#### B. How to Provide Constructive Criticism

Colin Monaghan. 2016. "Give your students better writing feedback. A practical guide for instructors."

### **Class 3, March 5**

#### A. How to use AI assistants (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Bard, and Grammarly) to write a research paper

Ghassemi, Marzyeh, Abeba Birhane, Mushtaq Bilal, Siddharth Kankaria, Claire Malone, Ethan Mollick, and Francisco Tustumi. "[ChatGPT one year on: who is using it, how and why?](#)." *Nature* 624, no. 7990 (2023): 39-41.

[AI can do your homework. Now what?](#) (2023) -- Vox.

Optional: Miao and Holmes. 2023. [Guidance for generative AI in education and research](#) -- Unesco

## SECTION 2: Writing Specific Parts of the Article

### **Class 4, March 12**

#### How to Write Titles and Abstracts

Lebrun (2011) Chapters 10 - 12

## **Class 5, March 19**

### Writing the Introduction

Review of knowledge gap statement and research questions; from literature review to critical literature review; Structure of introductions, with examples

Schimel (2012) Chapters 4, 5 and 6

### **DUE Writing Assignment 1: Literature review (500 words)**

## **Class 6, March 26**

### Writing the Theory (and Hypothesis) section

Schimel (2012) Chapters 7 and 8

### **DUE Writing Assignment 2: Critical literature review (500 words)**

## **Class 7, April 2**

### A. Improving your Data and Methods section

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

Gopaldas, Ahir. "[A front-to-back guide to writing a qualitative research article.](#)" *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 19, no. 1 (2016): 115-121.

### B. How to prepare References: Zotero and Mendel

### **DUE Writing assignment 3: Knowledge gap statement (200 words)**

## **Class 8, April 9**

### A. How to Write the Results

### B. What goes in Appendices and Footnotes

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

### **DUE Writing Assignment 4: Introduction (500 words)**

## **Class 9, April 16**

### A. Tables and Figures for the Whole Article: Theory, Data, Methods, and Results

Lebrun (2011) Chapter 15

Swedberg, R. (2016). Can You Visualize Theory? On the Use of Visual Thinking in Theory Pictures, Theorizing Diagrams, and Visual Sketches. *Sociological Theory*, 34(3), 250–275.

B. In-class peer review discussion

### **DUE - Peer Review 1: Introduction**

**Class 10, April 23**

How to Write the Conclusion

Schimel (2012) Chapters 9 and 18

### **DUE Writing Assignment 5: Data and Methods**

**Class 11, April 30**

A. Authorship, Acknowledgments, and Citations

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

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

B. In-class peer review discussion

### **DUE - Peer Review 2: Data and Methods**

## **SECTION 3: Grant Proposals and Policy Papers**

### **Class 12. May 7**

Grant Writing, Part 1: How to approach grant writing: Applications and processes

Read: National Science Centre, Poland Preludium call for proposals

### **Class 13. May 14**

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

Sohn, Emily. 2019. "Secrets to writing a winning grant: Experienced scientists reveal how to avoid application pitfalls to submit successful proposals" *Nature* (December)

### **Class 14. May 21**

Guest lecture: prof. Alice Mattoni, University of Bologna

Grant Writing, Part 3: Assessing grant proposals and understanding the reviewers' perspective

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

## **DUE: Short Grant Proposal Abstract**

### **Class 15, May 28**

A. Policy writing. Guest Lecture: Dr. Edit Zgut, IFiS PAN

Young, Eoin, and Lisa Quinn. 2002. "Writing effective public policy papers." Open Society Institute, Budapest - Introduction and Chapter 5

B. Publication strategies

Schimel (2012) Chapter 19

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 11, 2024**