

## SOC 797W– Writing for Sociology Journals

**Tue, 1:00-3:30pm – Thompson Hall, Room 919 – Workshop**

**James A. Kitts**

**Thu, 1:00-3:00pm – Thompson Hall, Room 940 – Office Hours**

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This workshop will help you refine a research paper that you have *already* written, aiming to submit to a sociology journal after the end of the Spring 2019 semester. We will focus on writing for generalist sociology journals here, but our practice in professional writing may help you in other domains, such as grant or fellowship proposals, book proposals, policy papers, op-eds, or blogs.

We will work through the sections of a typical research article, learning how each section – from the title and abstract through the references and appendices – should explain (and ‘sell’) your contribution to reviewers, editors, and readers. Although I may recommend texts for you to use as references on the craft of writing, we will not read and discuss books about writing. Instead, we will inform and motivate our revisions by reviewing examples of published articles, guidelines and feedback letters from editors, questions and requests by reviewers, and similar materials.

You will workshop your papers with classmates, giving and receiving feedback according to assigned rubrics as well as evaluation forms used by sociology journals. Participating in this process will not only give you essential guidance on your writing but will give you practice in reviewing for journals and crucially help you see the writing process from the reader’s perspective. Each of you will have multiple opportunities to serve as lead critic/discussant for your peers’ work.

Due to the workshop format, it is essential that you **enter the course with a complete draft of a paper** that is under ~7,500 words. This means you have already analyzed your data (quantitative or qualitative) and written up your key results and analytical methods. It is not merely an essay, term paper, or research proposal. Depending on your stage of writing, parts of your draft may be rough, but all the pieces should be there.

### REQUIREMENTS

By department policy, to earn a Master’s in Sociology you **MUST** earn a B+ or above in this course. This means you must be actively engaged at all levels. You need to complete all required readings, attend all class sessions on time (unless you have an awfully compelling pre-approved excuse), submit all writing assignments on time, and provide timely constructive feedback to your classmates as part of peer-reviews. Everyone’s learning depends on this level of performance among peers.

The elements of the grade for this course include:

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| • Attendance/General Discussion                      | 20% |
| • Written Comments on Peers’ Papers                  | 15% |
| • Lead Discussant Role                               | 10% |
| • Front End (Abstract/Intro/Lit Review/Theory) Draft | 10% |
| • Methods/Results/Discussion Draft                   | 10% |
| • Both Ends (Abstract/Intro/Discussion/Conclusion)   | 10% |
| • Full Paper Draft                                   | 15% |
| • Revised Final Draft                                | 10% |

There is no flexibility on due dates for drafts and peer reviews; you will need to have drafts ready for review on particular dates and you will need to review peers’ materials on particular dates. If you have a time conflict, you can submit early. I will evaluate the depth, incisiveness, and constructiveness of your written and oral reviews. Your attendance and participation should be spotless. I will evaluate the final paper with an eye on the effort you put into revising it after receiving workshop feedback.

## **Electronic Device Policy**

Our class sessions rely on mutual attention, undistracted presentation/listening, and continuous open dialog. There is no reason to read or write during class and no purpose for consulting electronic documents. Students (and the professor!) will not use internet-connected devices at all during class sessions, including cell phones, tablets, and laptops. Any person at the head of the room – playing a *lead discussant* (or professor) role – may find it necessary to use a device for demonstrations or presentation notes. An *author* receiving feedback may find it necessary to take quick notes on a laptop. In either case, the device will be open only for the time when the device is actively used for that purpose and the device will be in airplane mode. If you need a device for accessibility in light of a recognized disability, see below and talk with me at the beginning of the term.

## **Policy on Co-authored or Collaborative Work**

A key learning goal of this class is for you to develop your skills and intuitions in scholarly writing through direct experience in revising your own writing. Thus, submitting text written by someone else would be counterproductive. That said, I want the course to be professionally useful; depending on your own situation this may mean working on a paper that reports on your collaborations with others. Here I am evaluating your effort in the workshopping process, not the merit of your ideas, methods, or contribution, so submitting collaborative research need not undermine learning or raise fairness concerns. More specifically:

1. It is fine to workshop a paper in this class that will later become a co-written/co-authored article after the course is over.
2. It is fine to work closely with a collaborator (student or faculty, at UMass or elsewhere) who gives guidance or input on scholarly aspects of your paper. In fact, I will encourage you all to work closely with research mentors for intellectual feedback.
3. In fact, it is probably fine to work with a collaborator who gives guidance on writing issues, but keep me in the loop. I will coordinate with you and your collaborator to ensure that you have sufficient independent experience to develop and practice your writing skills.
4. It is *not* acceptable to submit a paper containing text written by anyone other than you. This would raise issues of fairness across students and would interfere with your learning.

If you intend to workshop a paper related to collaborative work, let me know at (or before) the start of the course, so we can discuss these issues and expectations.

## **Disability Accommodations**

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to making reasonable, effective and appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and help create a barrier-free campus. I share this commitment. If you have a documented disability on file with Disability Services ([www.umass.edu/disability](http://www.umass.edu/disability)), you may be eligible for accommodations in this class. If your disability requires an accommodation, please notify me as early as possible so that I may make arrangements in a timely manner.

## SCHEDULE

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WEEK 1</b></p> <p>Tuesday January 22</p>	<p>Come prepared to briefly describe your paper topic, your publication goals, and what you hope to get out of this class.</p> <p>In this session, I will give you a document of compiled titles and abstracts from 26 recent articles by UMass grad students and faculty. (Full articles will be available on Moodle for your reference, and I am arranging with the authors to provide materials from their journal review process, including editor and reviewer feedback.)</p>
<p>Sunday January 27 (by 11:59pm)</p>	<p><b>Post</b> your draft <b>abstract</b> to Moodle. (You may want to revise it after the reading assignment for this week.)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WEEK 2</b></p> <p>Tuesday January 29 <i>Titles &amp; Abstracts</i></p> <p>Lead Discussant: <i>Aaron Yates</i></p>	<p>Read the full set of UMass titles and abstracts in advance. On the hardcopy, take notes of basic blueprints for titles and abstracts, and bring that hardcopy to class. Your aim in these notes is to analyze the range of different templates and styles that appear in abstracts for mainstream sociology journals. This will inform your abstract revisions.</p> <p>The <i>Lead Discussant</i> will play a special role in facilitating our session. (I encourage you to check in with me ahead of time about this role.)</p> <p>Students will nominate a set of articles from the list above to serve as examples in our study of introductions next week.</p>
<p>Wednesday January 30</p>	<p><b>Receive</b> (on Moodle) your list of assigned article introductions.</p>
<p>Sunday February 3 (by 11:59pm) <i>Titles, Abstracts, &amp; Introductions</i></p> <p>Lead Discussant: <i>Tannuja Rozario</i></p>	<p><b>Read abstracts/introductions</b> of selected articles in advance.</p> <p><i>All those who are not Lead Discussant:</i> Write up notes on basic ingredients for introductions, including a brief outline showing whether/how these ingredients are presented in each introduction you read. Your aim is to analyze the range of different templates and styles that appear in sociology article introductions. How may it depend on the goals of the article? <b>Post your notes on Moodle.</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WEEK 3</b></p> <p>Tuesday February 5 <i>Titles, Abstracts, &amp; Introductions</i></p>	<p>In preparation for today, the <i>Lead Discussant</i> will read others' notes (as well as the regular readings) and prepare to facilitate discussion. (I encourage you to check in with me ahead of time about this role.)</p> <p>All those who are not lead discussant will come prepared to discuss the front end (title, abstract, introduction).</p>

<p>Sunday February 10 (by 11:59pm) <i>Literature Review &amp; Theory</i></p> <p>Lead Discussant: <i>Matt Mendoza</i></p>	<p>Read literature review / theoretical framing of selected articles in advance.</p> <p><i>All those who are not lead discussant:</i> Write up notes on basic ingredients for literature reviews/theoretical framings, including a brief outline showing whether/how these ingredients are presented in each document you read. Your aim is to analyze the range of different templates and styles that appear in literature reviews / theoretical framings. How may it depend on the goals of the article? <b>Post your notes on Moodle.</b></p>
<p><b>WEEK 4</b> Tuesday February 12 <i>Literature Review &amp; Theory</i></p>	<p>In preparation for today, the lead discussant will read others' notes (as well as the regular readings) and prepare to facilitate discussion. (I encourage you to check in with me ahead of time about this role.) All those who are not lead discussant will come prepared to discuss the assigned readings.</p>
<p><b>WEEK 5</b> Tuesday February 19 <i>Title, Abstract, Introduction, Lit Review, &amp; Theory</i></p>	<p>NO CLASS (President's Day)</p> <p><b>Post your Front End</b> (Title/Abstract/Intro/Literature Review/Theory) <b>on Moodle.</b></p>
<p>Sunday February 24 (by 11:59pm) <i>Title, Abstract, Introduction, Lit Review, &amp; Theory</i></p>	<p><b>Read</b> Front Ends for all students by today.</p> <p><b>Post</b> comments on assigned peers' Front Ends on Moodle.</p>
<p><b>WEEK 6</b> Tuesday February 26 <i>Title, Abstract, Introduction, Lit Review, &amp; Theory</i></p>	<p>Workshopping Front Ends</p>
<p>Sunday March 3 (by 11:59pm) <i>Data, Methods, &amp; Findings</i></p> <p>Lead Discussant: <i>Choonhee Woo</i></p>	<p>Read Data / Methods / Findings of selected articles in advance.</p> <p><i>All those who are not lead discussant:</i> Write up notes on basic ingredients for these sections, including a brief outline showing whether/how these ingredients are presented in each text you read. Your aim is to analyze the range of different templates and styles that appear in Data / Methods / Findings sections. How may it depend on the goals of the article? Post your notes on Moodle.</p>

<p><b>WEEK 7</b> Tuesday, March 5 <i>Data, Methods, &amp; Findings</i></p>	<p>In preparation for today, the lead discussant will read others' notes (as well as the regular readings) and prepare to facilitate discussion. (I encourage you to check in with me ahead of time about this role.) All those who are not lead discussant will come prepared to discuss the empirical sections of the articles.</p>
<p><b>WEEK 8</b> Tuesday March 12 <i>Data, Methods, &amp; Findings</i></p>	<p>SPRING BREAK</p> <p><b>Post your Empirical Section (Data/Methods/Findings) on Moodle.</b></p>
<p>Sunday March 17 (by 11:59pm) <i>Workshopping Data, Methods, &amp; Findings</i></p>	<p><b>Read</b> Empirical Sections for all students by today.</p> <p><b>Post</b> comments on all assigned peers' Empirical Sections on Moodle.</p>
<p><b>WEEK 9</b> Tuesday March 19 <i>Workshopping Data, Methods, &amp; Findings</i></p>	<p>Workshopping Empirical Sections</p>
<p>Sunday March 24 (by 11:59pm) <i>Title, Abstract, Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion</i></p> <p>Lead Discussant: <i>Abdus Sabur</i></p>	<p><b>Read</b> End Sections (Title / Abstract / Introduction / Discussion / Conclusion) of selected articles in advance.</p> <p><i>All those who are not lead discussant:</i> Write up notes on basic ingredients for these sections, including a brief outline showing whether/how these ingredients are presented in each text you read. Your aim is to analyze the range of different templates and styles that appear in Introduction / Discussion / Conclusion sections. Consider the link between the front end and rear end. Post your notes on Moodle.</p>
<p><b>WEEK 10</b> Tuesday March 26 <i>Title, Abstract, Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion</i></p>	<p>In preparation for today, the <i>lead discussant</i> will read others' notes (as well as the regular readings) and prepare to facilitate discussion. (I encourage you to check in with me ahead of time about this role.) All those who are not lead discussant will come prepared to discuss the Introduction, Discussion, and Conclusion.</p>

Sunday March 31 (by 11:59pm) <i>Title, Abstract, Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion</i>	<b>Submit</b> End Sections (Title, Abstract, Introduction / Discussion / Conclusion) on Moodle.
<b>WEEK 11</b> Tuesday April 2 <i>Workshopping Title, Abstract, Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion</i>	<b>Read</b> all peer End Sections (Title, Abstract, Introduction / Discussion / Conclusion))  <b>Post</b> comments on all peers' End Sections on Moodle.
<b>WEEK 12</b> Tuesday April 9	<b>Special Topics</b> (to be specified to meet the needs and interests of the class; e.g., targeting a journal audience / editorial board)
Sunday April 14 (by 11:59pm) <i>Full Draft</i>	<b>Selected Students Submit Full Draft</b> on Moodle.
<b>WEEK 13</b> Tuesday April 16 <i>Workshopping Full Drafts</i>	<b>Read</b> selected peers' full draft  <b>Bring</b> typed (printed) comments for all assigned peers
Sunday April 21 (by 11:59pm) <i>Full Draft</i>	<b>Selected Students Submit Full Draft</b> on Moodle.
<b>WEEK 14</b> Tuesday April 23 <i>Workshopping Full Drafts</i>	<b>Read</b> selected peers' full draft  <b>Bring</b> typed (printed) comments for all assigned peers
Tuesday, April 30 <i>Special Topics TBA</i>	<b>Special Topics</b> (to be specified to meet the needs and interests of the class; e.g., we can focus on the editorial review and revision process)

**Final Paper Due Thursday May 9**