

WAC Plan
Sociology Department
Submitted by Regina Smardon January 7, 2015

1. Writing Excellence in Sociology:

Writing excellence in sociology is characterized by analytic precision and clarity as well as thick description. Statement and restatement of a thesis are expected and encouraged. Sociology is a social science and therefore clarity of expression and organization of argumentation are the measure of good writing. In addition to general standards of good writing it is important that students learn to communicate data analysis, findings and evidence for claims clearly. It is also important that they organize their writing around a research question (thesis). Therefore the primary standards for student writing include: 1.) Organizing one's writing around a debatable thesis , 2.) Analysis, 3.) Originality, 4.) Organization of Writing and Grammar 5.) Use of Evidence and 6.) Application of Sociological Concepts. Good analysis means good argumentation organized around a thesis and the most skillful form of argumentation is anticipating the opposing viewpoint. All of this is only possible when students learn to identify a debatable thesis. This is a skill that often takes more than one semester to master.

2. Writing Courses

A. Required Courses. SOC1510 is a requirement for all Justice Studies majors and fills the social science and liberal arts elective; it is also required for the sociology minor. It is the only 100 level course offered by the department. SOC 2530 fills the global perspectives elective, social science elective or liberal arts elective.

SOC 1510 Principles of Sociology, 5 page paper, 30% of course grade (various instructors)

SOC 2530 Global Social Problems, 8 page paper, 30% of course grade (various instructors)

SOC 4500 Research Seminar, minimum 10 page report, 50% of course grade (Regina Smardon)

In their major courses sociology students must develop an original research question and follow an outline when producing a research report in SOC4500, Research Seminar. The mechanics of formulating a research question and doing a research literature review are taught as part of writing a research proposal in SOC 33200 Methods of Social Research, which precedes SOC4500 Research Seminar in the sequence. This course cannot serve as a WAC course because it is cross-listed with SWK3320/JUS3320. All sociology courses are designed to build the skills to produce a research report at the end of the sociology major.

3. Rubrics

Attached is a rubric that is adapted for a 5 page field report assignment in SOC1510 Principles of Sociology. The field report is an assignment meant to eliminate the temptation to plagiarize while developing writing skills in inductive description and deductive analysis. SOC2530 Global Social Problems will develop a writing assignment that requires students to write about a global social problem and

adapt the grading rubric used in SOC1510. This rubric has already been adapted for take home essay exams (2 questions, 5 pages) in SOC3880 Medical Sociology, SOC3720 Marriage and Family and SOC 3830 Gender and Society and SOC3820 Sociology of Childhood. The rubric will be used as a template for grading other writing assignments in sociology courses. For sociology majors the writing assignments are building the most important measure of their learning, the research report.

In the future, the syllabi and rubrics for WAC courses will be submitted to the WAC Coordinator and the Writing Center. Rewrites or drafts will be built into the syllabus. SOC2560 Global Social Problems will be capped at 25 students.

Grading Rubric Field Report Adapted from: Teaching and Resource Center, UC Berkeley. "Systematic Improvement of Undergraduate Education in Research Universities" Professor Kim Voss, project lead, Department of Sociology, 2011.

TOTAL 100 points	Excellent	Proficient	Fair	Inadequate
Thesis (major pattern) (20 points)	Major pattern is clearly presented in the opening and concluding sections of the paper.	Major pattern is evident in the argument, but is not clearly stated.	Major pattern is unclear, and it takes work for the reader to fish it out of the text.	There is no evident major pattern.
Analysis (20 points)	Analysis is presented clearly and logically. Logical points build directly upon the major pattern. Exceptions to the pattern are addressed, dismantled, and folded into the main argument of the essay.	Analysis is presented clearly and logically, but points do not necessarily build on each other. Exceptions are addressed, but many are left hanging or are dealt with inadequately.	Analysis is rambling, and the major pattern is left unaddressed. Exceptions may be presented, but are left unaddressed.	There is no discernable major pattern analyzed and no alternative interpretation is presented.
Originality (10 points)	Analysis is original and creative. Goes substantially beyond points raised in lecture and readings. Concepts are related to each other in interesting and creative ways.	Analysis is strong and interesting, but plays it safe and does not push boundaries. Concepts are put in conversation with each other.	Analysis is expository rather than analytical. Concepts are described, but dealt with separately and not explicitly Applied to field notes.	Analysis is boring, weak and incoherent.
Organization of writing and grammar (20 points)	Clear organization with a natural flow. Paper has a title and pages are numbered.	Clear organization, with introduction, transitions and conclusion, but writing is not	Organization is unclear or without necessary component parts. Significant	Little discernable organization. Significant grammar and spelling errors.

	Includes an introduction, transition sentences to connect major ideas, and conclusion. There are few or no grammar or spelling errors. Ideas and evidence are correctly cited.	always fluid. There are several grammar or spelling errors. Ideas and evidence are correctly cited.	grammar or spelling errors (but not both). Ideas and evidence are correctly cited.	Ideas and evidence are not correctly cited, or not cited at all.
Use of evidence (field notes) (20 points)	Each logical point is backed up by one or more examples from field notes. Evidence is strong and sufficient to advance the major pattern identified. Exceptions to the pattern are accounted for and addressed with evidence (field note examples). Original field notes are stapled to the back of the report.	Each logical point is backed up by one or more examples. Evidence advances the argument, but it may not be sufficient. Exceptions to the major pattern are accounted for, but may not be sufficiently addressed with field notes)	Several points of the main pattern are left without evidence (field note examples). Evidence is insufficient.	A few field notes are thrown in here or there, but not used to defend the main argument.
Application of Concepts/Reading (10 points)	Demonstrates solid understanding of the major themes of the course, using readings and lectures to define concepts. Argument is placed within a broad discussion of the sociological imagination.	Concepts are defined, but the author does not demonstrate a solid understanding of the major themes of the course relevant to the argument.	Course readings are used. Concepts are left undefined, or poorly defined. Little broader framework is used.	Paper mentions course readings, but there is little demonstration of how the paper relates to the course.

This is a guideline for how you should organize your final research report for SOC450. It is a good idea to use these subheadings and fill in each section in the order presented here.

I. Statement of the problem

This is simply an introduction to explain why the reader might be interested in this study. We call this the "so what?" question.

II. Research Question

Your research question should be something narrow that can shed light on the so what question. Please use the format: I am studying X to find out Y to better understand Z.

III. Methods

1. Operationalizing concepts:

- a. For quantitative studies: Explain how you worded your questions and research hypothesis, explain how you chose your dependent and independent variables. It may also be a place to talk about how you eliminated some variables to shorten and focus your survey.
- b. For qualitative studies: How you constructed your interview guide, what are the key themes, how do they relate to your research question. What was the first question you asked each interviewee?

2. Sampling Strategy

- a. For quantitative studies: How you distributed the surveys (in person, on the internet) describe response rate, missing data and how representative or random your sample was. You may need to say that you used a sample of convenience but you can still describe the outcome using demographics (how many men/women etc.)
- b. For qualitative studies: For ethnography, describe how you chose your site and developed rapport. For qualitative interviews how you obtained the interviews (on the phone, in person etc.) How long the interview lasted. Did you take fieldnotes? tape record? Use demographics to describe how many men/women you interviewed etc.

IV. Findings

If your project is qualitative this section will include quotes from transcripts or fieldnotes that illustrate the patterns that you discovered. If your project is quantitative you will supply tables and descriptive statistics that support the patterns that you have discovered. Whether you present quotes or statistics it is important to *explain* in words how these illustrate the pattern that you are discussing.

V. Discussion

This is where you discuss the limitation and implications of your findings. All research methods have limitations and it is important to show that you understand this.

VI. Conclusion

This is where you discuss ideas for future research and policy and/or practice implications. For example, maybe your findings suggest that future research on parent attitudes about child obesity is needed.

VII. Works Cited

Only include this section if you have paraphrased or quoted outside sources. References should always be in alphabetic order of author's last name and follow ASA guidelines for citation format.