

Writing in Sociology
SOCIOL 301 Summer Session 1 2025
Instructor: Skylar Davidson
Email: send a message using Canvas or to sdavidson@umass.edu

Catalog Course Description

What should sociologists write and how? This course looks at writing in sociology, and investigates how writers move from an interest or a hunch to a finished piece of research-based writing. We'll practice various writing skills such as posing questions, crafting thesis statements, and organizing paragraphs into effective arguments. As we do, you will see how our choices as writers can shift the tone and impact of a sociological argument to say more meaningful and specific things about an urgent issue.

Course Format

Due to exponential growth trends, social life and technology usage are rapidly changing, meaning that it is more important now than ever before to consider what we want out of the future and how to achieve it. Part of creating social change involves how we research, frame, and share information on issues we care about. To this end, our SOCIOL 301 course is project-based, meaning that you will build your writing skills by doing. Each unit will introduce you to new techniques and thinking tools to support you in writing about sociological topics. In addition, you will have the opportunity to create a future-oriented project on a sociological topic of your own choice.

Our reading skills develop alongside our writing skills. This course includes a variety of reading materials, both recent research and classic articles that still have relevance to sociology today and in the future. Utilize active reading techniques, such as using the abstract and headings to direct yourself to the portions of a reading most useful to each project, as well as skimming over jargon and complex statistics, in order to focus your attention on what matters most for the project at hand. You are not responsible for memorizing information from the readings or feeling as if you comprehend every word.

Assignments and Grading

You will be graded on two types of assignments: Individual Assignments (which you turn in to the instructor only) and Discussion Assignments (where you post your work to a forum and comment on other students' work). Each assignment prompt is different; specific details of all assignments for the entire semester are in the corresponding sections on Canvas, along with grading criteria attached to each assignment. All assignments receive a grade from 0 to 100, and your final grade will be the mean of all assignments.

In this accelerated session, there will be two assignments per week. All assignments are approximately the same length with the exception of the three steps for the Future-Oriented Sociology Exercise, in which you will select a writing tool from the semester, apply it to the

sociological topic of your choosing, and revise your work based on peers' feedback.

Final letter grades will be determined as follows.

Percentage Values	Corresponding Letter Grade
90.00-100.00	A
87.00-89.99	B+
84.00-86.99	B
80.00-83.99	B-
77.00-79.99	C+
74.00-76.99	C
70.00-73.99	C-
60.00-69.99	D
0.00-59.99	F

Expectations for Students

Missed Assignments

Because this writing course incorporates peer review of classmates' work and revision of one's own work, turning in assignments on time is essential to successfully completing the course during this accelerated summer term. If you anticipate a challenge completing work on time due to health-related or work-related challenges, please reach out as soon as possible.

Data Management

To avoid losing your work (in case of technology failure, hacking, theft, misplacing a device, or other problems), ensure to save your work to at least two different sources in two different physical locations. For example, save a copy of each assignment to both your computer and a cloud drive. Good data management also means saving your work every 10 minutes as you're working, or using a service that periodically saves your work automatically.

Turning in Assignments

Submit assignments to Canvas in a readily compatible filetype (.doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf, or .odt). Assignments will receive a zero with no opportunity to resubmit if they are submitted in Apple Pages format or as links to cloud storage, or if a blank document/discussion post, corrupted file, or incorrect file is submitted.

Academic Honesty

Students must comply with the university's [academic honesty policy](#).

Resources for Students

Students with Disabilities

Students who require accommodations for this course should register with [Disability Services](#) and should notify me as soon as possible. All documentation about your disability will remain confidential.

Writing Guidelines

Use [ASA format](#) in each assignment this semester for all in-text citations and references page citations. Document formatting (e.g., margins, spacing, headings) will not be calculated into the

grade for any assignment.

Instructor Responsiveness

You are welcome to communicate with me about any assignment in the course, including to ask questions about the assignment prompt or reading material, as well as to let me check your work (or even portions of your work, like notes or a topic sentence) before you turn it in. I generally respond to emails within 24 hours and grade assignments within a week from the due date.

Calendar and Readings

Introductions

Assignment: Introduction Discussion Due 05/20

How does the framing of an issue matter?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 1 Due 05/23

Articles

- Kizer, Megan, and Jesse Hinueber. 2023. "When Confronting Poverty, Think Abundance, Not Scarcity." *Educational Leadership* 80(4):47-51.
<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/when-confronting-poverty-think-abundance-not-scarcity>
- Manville, Michael, Paavo Monkkonen, and Michael Lens. 2020. "It's Time to End Single-Family Zoning." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 86(1):106-112.

What mindsets support planning for the future?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 1 Due 05/25 and 05/27

Articles

- Pouru-Mikkola, Laura, and Markku Wilenius. 2021. "Building Individual Futures Capacity Through Transformative Futures Learning." *Futures*, 132.
- Inayatullah, Sohail. 2008. "Six Pillars: Futures Thinking for Transforming." *Foresight* 10(1):4-21.

How do social scientists respond to challenges in conducting research?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 1 Due 05/30

Articles

- Stouten, Elien, Sidra Idrees, Antje Jacobs, and Karin Hannes. 2025. "From Risk-Averse to Opportunity-Led Ethics: Renegotiating Institutional Ethical Guidelines for Co-Creative Types of Research." Forthcoming in *Qualitative Inquiry*.
- Lahman, Maria K. E., Eric D. Teman, and Veronica M. Richard. 2017. "IRB as Poetry." *Qualitative Inquiry* 25(2):200-214.

Future-Oriented Sociology Exercise Part 1

- Brainstorming activity due 06/01 and 06/03 in discussion forum

How can sociologists share their knowledge with the public?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 3 Due 06/06

Article

- Hartmann, Douglas, Christopher Uggen, and Mahala Miller. 2023. "There's Research on That: Translating and Sharing Sociology for Public Audiences." *Sociological Forum* 38:1106-1123.

What makes an author?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 2 Due 06/08 and 06/10

Article

- Sharifzadeh, Rahman. 2024. "ChatGPT as Co-Author? AI and Research Ethics." *Ethics in Progress* 15(1):155-173.

How do patents and copyrights influence our lives?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 4 Due 06/13

Article

- Baker, Dean. 2023. "Is Intellectual Property the Root of All Evil? Patents, Copyrights, and Inequality." Pp. 275-296 in *The Great Polarization*, edited by Rudiger von Arnim and Joseph E. Stiglitz. Columbia University Press.

Future-Oriented Sociology Exercise Part 2

- Draft due 06/15 and 06/17 in discussion forum

What rhetorical tools can help us make a point?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 5 Due 06/20

Article

- Cotton, Debby RE, Peter A. Cotton, and J. Reuben Shipway. 2024. "Chatting and Cheating: Ensuring Academic Integrity in the Era of ChatGPT." *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 61(2):228-239.

How can metaphors captivate an audience?

Assignment

- Discussion Assignment 3 Due 06/22 and 06/24

Article

- Bostrom, Nick. 2005. "The Fable of the Dragon-Tyrant." *Journal of Medical Ethics* 31(5):273-277.

What is the state of social science research going forward?

Assignment

- Individual Assignment 6 Due 06/27

Article

- Sarpong, Joshua. 2025. "Funding Cut for the Humanities in Neoliberal Higher Education Systems: A Case of New Zealand's Marsden Fund." *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*.

Future-Oriented Sociology Exercise

- Final draft due 06/29 and 07/01 in discussion forum