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Writing for the Social Sciences

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CUNY City College

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English 21002: Writing for the Social Sciences

<https://writesocsci.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>

The City College of New York, Spring 2020

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 3:30 PM-4:45 PM

Classroom: 5/123

Instructor: Shana Creaney

Contact: screaney@ccny.cuny.edu

Office: 6/332C

Hours: Tuesday 5PM - 6PM & by appointment

Course Description:

The social sciences are the branch of science devoted to the study of human societies and the relationships among individuals within those societies. Students will be introduced to the various social science disciplines and their approaches. During this course we will focus on and examine human culture through research and observation. We will confront the challenges of writing about culture from the perspective of an outsider. Students will learn to conduct research independently and in groups. During the extended fieldwork project students will choose their research site, interact with others via interviews and documentation, and reflect on the wider implications of what they have learned.

Course Learning Outcomes

Over the course of the semester, you will...

- Acknowledge your and others' range of linguistic differences as resources, and draw on those resources to develop rhetorical sensibility.
- Enhance strategies for reading, drafting, revising, editing, and self-assessment.
- Negotiate your own writing goals and audience expectations regarding conventions of genre, medium, and rhetorical situation.
- Develop and engage in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Engage in genre analysis and multimodal composing to explore effective writing across disciplinary contexts and beyond.
- Formulate and articulate a stance through and in your writing.
- Practice using various library resources, online databases, and the Internet to locate sources appropriate to your writing projects.
- Strengthen your source use practices (including evaluating, integrating, quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, synthesizing, analyzing, and citing sources).

Course Policies

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

Copying and using other people's words and original ideas without acknowledgment or citation is plagiarism. If academic dishonesty is detected there will be serious consequences; you will fail the assignment and the participation grade, and depending on the situation you can be put on academic probation or be expelled. Please see CCNY's Policy on Academic Integrity: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/academicaffairs/integrity-policies>

Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class session of this course and to be on time. Due to the collaborative nature of the course absences, lateness, and lack of preparation for class will affect your classmates' work as well as your own and so attendance will be enforced. You are allowed four absences in total. This amounts to two weeks of class. If you miss more than these classes, your final grade will be lowered by one-half of a letter grade (an A to a B+, for example) for every additional absence. If you miss more than six classes, you will not be able to pass the course. Consistent late arrivals and early departures will be converted into absences as appropriate. I will notify you by email if course absences are having an impact on your grade. If you have special circumstances, please contact me.

Late Assignments

Late assignments are not allowed. For every day that your assignment is late it is lowered one full letter grade.

Formatting

All written assignments must be word-processed using Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Use Times New Roman, size 12 font, and be double-spaced. Include one-inch margins and follow the page layout used in MLA. All written assignments will be submitted to Blackboard with a printed out copy brought to class for me. If you have not done both parts of this then your work is considered late until you do.

Digital Devices

Laptops, tablets, and other devices are not allowed to be used in class unless otherwise stated. If I see you using something I will ask you to put it away.

Food & Drink

Eating and drinking is allowed in class so long as it is not a distraction to you, the other students, or myself.

Blackboard

Assignments will be turned in via Blackboard (as well as hard copies being brought to class). The syllabus and any updates to the course will be posted to Blackboard. I will be using Blackboard to email you all so be sure that you have access to your Blackboard and that your email within is correct. "I didn't see the update/email" is not an excuse.

Resources

The Writing Center: <http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/writing/>

The CCNY Writing Center offers a supportive learning environment where students can have one-on-one tutoring sessions with writing consultants. To set up an appointment or semester-long sessions, contact them in person at the Writing Center, which is located in the NAC, 3rd floor plaza (off of Amsterdam Ave). Or call (212) 650-8104

Gateway Advising Center: <http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/gateway/>

Students without a declared major can receive academic advising. NAC, 1/220

AccessAbility Center: <http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/accessability/>

The AccessAbility Center/Student Disability Services (AAC/SDS) ensures full participation and meaningful access to all of City College's services, programs, and activities. NAC, 1/218

SEEK Peer Academic Learning Center: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/seek>

Offers counseling and peer tutoring for students in need of academic and financial support who have registered for the SEEK Program. NAC, 4/224

The Counseling Center: <https://ccny.cuny.edu/counseling>

The Counseling Center at CCNY offers individual and group counseling and crisis intervention to students. Students will meet with a counselor for an intake appointment during which time the counselor will discuss the student's concerns and help to identify an appropriate plan for treatment.

Grading

Weekly Assignments (20%)

Major Assignments (50%)

Final Portfolio & Self-Assessment (20%)

Quizzes (10%)

Assignments

Weekly Work

This grade is an average of your completed "ungraded" assignments. This consists of: reading responses, selecting a field site, rough drafts, in-class participation.

Major Assignment—Letter of Introduction

Use your notes from our in-class diagnostic writing and your homework journaling to write a letter of introduction to you as a person, writer, and researcher. 3 pages minimum. Due: 2/4

Major Assignment—Peer Interview

Develop a portrait of your classmate. Include physical description, what you noticed about your partner's mannerisms, body language, their choice of words. Include significant details. Write about your reaction, how you felt conducting this interview. 3 pages minimum. Draft: 2/11. Due: 2/18

Major Assignment—CCNY Class Observation

Practice taking field notes by observing a CCNY class. Take double entry notes and record your observations and personal reactions. Submit both your notes and essay. 3 pages minimum. Draft: 2/27. Due: 3/10

Major Assignment—Research Proposal

Create a brief research design about the group you want to study. Write a letter to a grant organization requesting funding for your study. How can you describe a project in a convincing, yet realistic way? Explain how the results of your study will be a relevant contribution to the work already in existence. 3 pages minimum. Draft: 3/24. Due: 3/26

Major Assignment—Field Notes

Note date, time, and place of observation as well as any and all specific facts and details. Include sensory impressions and personal responses. Pay attention to specific words and insider language. Record questions about people or behaviors at the site for future investigation. 3 pages minimum. Draft: 4/7. Due: 4/21

Major Assignment—Interview

This will not be a mere transcript. Include a description of the setting, your interview partner's appearance, body language, facial expressions, unique word choices. Summarize parts, quote the most important parts. Include a reflection about your part in the interview, your feelings, comfort, etc. Add at least one page of transcript. 3 pages minimum. Draft: 4/30. Due: 5/7

Final Portfolio & Self-Assessment

Assembling the portfolio will help you see your progress as a writer over the course of the semester. The self-assessment will give you the chance to evaluate that work based on your own criteria as well as the course learning outcomes. Draft: 5/5. Due: 5/14

Quizzes

Periodically I will give pop quizzes in order to ensure that readings are being done and that everyone is on the same page.

Course Schedule*

*(*subject to change, be aware!)*

Tuesday January 28th

In class: Overview of class and expectations; syllabus review; diagnostic writing exercise

Homework: Read [The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement](#) by Dr. Martin Luther King and record in your journal what this piece stirs up in you. What does it make you think about entering the role of the social scientist?

Thursday January 30th

In class: Discussion of reading; Overview of the Social Scientist's Toolbox

Homework: Read [Tell Me More: On The Fine Art of Listening](#) by Brenda Ueland and record a journal entry on it what this makes you feel. Why might I have assigned this reading?

Write your Introduction Letter. Post it on Blackboard before next class and bring a printed copy to class.

Tuesday February 4th

In class: Discussion of reading; Overview of culture and ethnography; Peer interviews

Homework: Read [Research Methods: The Ethnographic Interview](#) by Dawn Pankonien; Read [Language of Difference](#) (compiled by Hamilton College). Record in your journal how these readings might have changed or influenced your interview strategies.

Referring to the interview tips handout and the reading on interviews, write a series of focused questions for the second stage of your peer interview.

Thursday February 6th

In class: Discussion of readings; Review of Peer Interview assignment; Peer interview continued

Homework: Read [Stuck with Ex-Husband's Debt](#) by Amber Wang & Chris Buckley; Read [The Whole Truth About Mother Teresa](#) by Kai Schultz; Read [Trees Have Social Networks, Too](#) by Sally McGrane.

Choose one of the NY Times articles, and write about what you think the writer did to make a compelling profile. How did they dole out the information to the reader? Was their suspense? What parts did you find intriguing? Why was the background information chosen helpful to understanding the story? How did they describe the subject to make them come to life? Have it posted to Discussion Board before next class.

Write your Peer Interview draft. Post it to Discussion Board before next class and bring in 3 hard copies.

Tuesday February 11th

In class: Peer Interview workshop

Homework: Read [How To Write With Style](#) by Kurt Vonnegut. Read "Friday Night at Iowa 80" by Rick Zollo (will be handed out in class) and post a response to the reading on Discussion Board before the next class. What did you notice about the field study? What intrigued you (or what didn't)? What surprised you? What did you notice about his writing style and voice and the story he tells? Remember that I have read this as well so don't simply summarize the text. Tell me what you think.

Thursday February 13th

In class: Discussion of readings; Peer Interview notes; Lecture on voice; Select a field site activity

Homework: Read [House for the Homeless](#) by Ivana Nikolic. Post on Discussion Board before the next class your list of potential field sites. Include how you would approach each site you have suggested: as an insider? An outsider? Both?

Write final version of Peer Interview. Post on Blackboard before next class. Bring a hard copy to class.

Tuesday February 18th

In class: Discussion of reading; Discussion of field sites; Exploratory writing activity

Homework: Read [Field Notes and Participant Observation](#) by Nicole Delabrer & [On Keeping a Notebook](#) by Joan Didion. Record in your journal your thoughts.

Being making arrangements to visit and observe a CCNY class. (This must be done by the 27th).

Thursday February 20th

In Class: Discussion of reading; Discussion of observations; Observation activity

Homework: Read [The Anthropology of Online Communities](#) by Samuel M. Wilson and Leighton C. Peterson. Write a one page (double spaced) response to this reading and post in on Blackboard before the next class.

Tuesday February 25th

In class: Discussion of reading; Discussion of research techniques

Homework: Read [Shitty First Drafts](#) by Anne Lamott. Write up a full observation of CCNY class in essay format. Post on Blackboard and bring in hard copy to class. 3 pages minimum.

Thursday February 27th

In class: Draft exercise; Creative style exercise; Peer review

Homework: Read Mama Day by Gloria Naylor excerpt (provided by me) and write a journal reflection what goes on in the text.

Email me your site selection and the dates you have set up for field work observation and interviews.

Tuesday March 3rd

Library visit.

Homework: Bring an object that has meaning for you or your family to the next class. Post a paragraph describing the object and its significance to Blackboard before the next class.

Thursday March 5th

In class: Discussion of reading; Discussion of artifacts; Artifacts activity

Homework: Final version of classroom observation report is due alongside a creative self assessment. The assessment should be a page long describing two elements that you think you feel you improved the most between rough draft and final version. Give advice on how you accomplished that improvement, how you go about doing it well, and how you came to the conclusions to alter whatever it is you did. Make this interesting to read, not stodgy. Lean on the lessons in the Vonnegut essay. Post both on Blackboard and bring in a hard copy to class.

Tuesday March 10th

In class: Discussion of privilege and ethics; Privilege activity and reflection; Class code of conduct

Homework: Create your own consent form and post to Blackboard before the next class. Record a journal entry about privilege.

Thursday March 12th

In class: Discussion of researching spaces;

Homework: Read [On Seeing England for the First Time](#) by Jamaica Kincaid & [The Ethnographer's Gaze](#) by Maria Kakavoulia. Journal about the importance and connection between these two readings. Begin brainstorming research proposal.

Tuesday March 17th

In class: Discussion of readings; Space activities; Overview of research proposals

Homework: Write an outline for your research proposal. Post on Blackboard before the 19th and bring a hardcopy to our meeting.

Thursday March 19th

Mid-semester meetings. You must sign up for this on your own. There is no class.

Homework: Read [Ralph's Sports Bar](#) by Cindie Marshall & [An Anthropologist on Mars](#) by Oliver Sacks. Choose one of the readings to write a Blackboard post about. One paragraph discussing what intrigued you? What surprised you? What disturbed you?

Write a full research proposal and post it on Blackboard before the next class. Bring a hard copy to the next class.

Tuesday March 24th

In class: Discussion of readings; Discussion of interviews ; Peer review

Homework: Read [The Ethnographic Interview](#) by James Spradley. Come up with 3 interview questions. Post them on Blackboard before the next class. Bring in 3 hard copies. Final research proposal due. Post on Blackboard before the next class. Bring in 1 hard copy.

You will need to have done your first site visit by this point. Bring in your field notes to the next class.

Thursday March 26th

In class: Discussion of “character” and “story”; Discussion of researching online; Annotated bibliography explanation; Interview question workshop

Homework: Read [Quick Tips for Ethnographic Interviewing](#) & [Asking the Right Questions in the Right Ways](#) by Carol Westby, Angela Burda, and Zarin Mehta Write up final interview questions. Post to Blackboard before next class and bring a hard copy.

Tuesday March 31st

No class today. Use this time to develop research questions and find research materials.

Homework: Annotated bibliography for minimum 5 potential sources for your study is to be posted on Blackboard before the next class with a paper copy brought to class. Type up your informal field notes, post on Blackboard before the next class, and bring a paper copy to class.

Thursday April 2nd

In class: APA style workshop; Field notes workshop

Homework: Read [Making Meaning Clear](#) by Donal M. Murray. Write field notes essay draft. Post on Blackboard by April 7th.

Write final version of field notes essay. Post on Blackboard before next class and bring in paper copy.

Tuesday April 7th

No Class. Monday Schedule

Thursday April 9th

No Class. Spring Break

Tuesday April 14th

No Class. Spring Break

Thursday April 16th

No Class. Spring Break

Tuesday April 21st

No class today. End of semester meetings. You must reach out to me to schedule this.

Thursday April 23rd

In class: Portfolio workshop. Please bring a laptop to class or borrow one from the iMedia desk on the 1st floor.

Homework: Post a link to the draft of your portfolio on Blackboard before the next class.

Tuesday April 28th

In class: Discussion

Homework: Read Write the first draft of your interview. Post on Blackboard before the next class and bring 3 paper copies to class.

Thursday April 30th

In class: Discussion of self-assessment; Interview workshop

Homework: Write draft of your self-assessment. Post on Blackboard before the next class. Bring 3 hard copies to class.

Tuesday May 5th

In class: Self-assessment workshop

Homework: Write up final interview. Post on Blackboard before next class and bring in a paper copy.

Thursday May 7th

In class: Presentations

Tuesday May 12th

In class: Presentations

Homework: Portfolio and self-assessment are due. Post assessment on Blackboard before next class and bring in a hard copy.

Thursday May 14th

In class: End of semester wrap up.

Friday May 22nd

Last day to hand in grades. Anything handed in after this point will not be graded.