

SOCIOLOGY 503/703
Writing Seminar, Fall 2019
Monday 1:00pm-3:40pm

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Course Description, Goals, and Outcomes:

This graduate seminar is an introduction to the complex world of academic publishing and is designed to give sociology graduate students practical experience in getting their work published in peer-reviewed journals. Drawing on Wendy Laura Belcher's best-selling *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*, this course explains the publication process and shares strategies for achieving success in the academic writing arena, including setting up a work schedule, identifying appropriate journals for submission, working with editors, clarifying arguments, making claims for significance, and organizing material.

More practically, this course is designed to help you turn a draft of a paper into something much better. You may have a course paper that you want to turn into a QP, or a QP you want to turn into a publishable paper, or a dissertation chapter you want to be better still.* Together, in a supportive environment, we will each spend 12-13 weeks revising a working draft into a finished product.

*Pre-requisite: You must have a draft in hand to take this course.

Learning Goals:

- Learn how to create and enact an effective, daily writing practice
- Learn how academic publishing works
- Learn how to turn a working paper into a paper that is ready for journal submission
- Learn how to accept and interpret feedback, especially from multiple, sometimes conflicting sources
- Learn how to provide constructive feedback to peers on their own work
- Identify techniques to maximize the clarity of arguments and writing
- Identify methods for writing that work best for each individual, including how to break a project down into manageable steps

Some course details.

- Many scholars recommend Belcher's process for publication. She estimates that it will take about 60 hours, beyond class time, to revise an already existing draft for publication. Let's see where her process gets us.

- Belcher provides a system. You cannot wait to read the workbook until the night before class, because it has daily tasks you must complete.
- The class is part lecture, part workshop, that is, a combination of learning and doing. Thus, bring the required printouts and Belcher's workbook to every class. If you are opposed to printing, you will need to bring your documents in some locked form where you can edit the document with a stylus (not typing) and can easily share it with someone else in the class. Marking up these documents by hand is an essential part of the process.
- If you ever finish a group exercise in class early, turn to revising your article. You should use some of every class time to push your article forward.
- You can download and print out some of the forms in the book, such as the weekly calendars, at <https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/workbook-forms/>.
- This class is a confidential place; do not discuss outside of class the comments and work you hear and see in class. People are bringing writing at every stage; they need to feel safe in sharing rough work.
- Should you wish to comment on your journey through the workbook on social media, the hashtags are #WYJA and #12WeekArticle and @WendyLBelcher. Belcher usually responds.

Required Text

Belcher, Wendy Laura. 2019. *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (You need this edition, not the previous one, from 2009.) If you want to keep your workbook clean, you can print out the forms at <https://wendybelcher.com/writing-advice/workbook-forms/> and use those instead of writing in the book.

The Department has provided graduate students with three copies of Belcher's book, which you can find in the library. Please photocopy the worksheets, rather than marking the books up themselves.

Recommended:

University of Chicago Press. 2010. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Grading Policy

This class will operate as a workshop. Attendance and participation are expected in every class. To receive an A, I expect you to attend and participate in every class, to complete Belcher's recommended assignments on-time, to contribute constructive feedback to your peers, and to submit revisions to your paper as required.

***This class is designed to support your progress in the program. Please come talk to me if you feel like the course content or structure isn't helpful.**

Course Schedule

September 9th: Introduction

Introduction to the Course

Group Discussion: Developing a Writing Practice

Group Exercise: Hammering out your topic

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Belcher's workbook Introduction and Week 1: Designing Your Plan for Writing (pages 1-59), fill out the boxes and forms, and doing all the tasks, day by day. Pay close attention to the "Selecting a Paper for Revision" section to make sure that your paper is appropriate.*
- *Fill out your "Week 1 Calendar for Actual (Not Planned) Writing" each day.*
- *Please also read p. 191, on the linear structure of this book.*

September 16th: Designing Your Plan for Writing

Bring your filled-out worksheets

Discussion: Positive writing experiences, obstacles to writing, and designing a writing schedule

Individual Exercise: The Reverse-Outline

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 2: Advancing Your Argument, filling out the boxes and forms and doing the tasks through the Day 1 tasks (pages 60-83). Do not do the Day 2-5 tasks; you will do them in class.*
- *Fill out your "Week 1 Calendar for Actual (Not Planned) Writing" each day.*
- *Prepare a one-minute elevator talk on the argument of your article.*

September 23rd: Advancing Your Argument

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook, your filled out calendar, and a print out of your article.

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 1 and Week 2

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's argument

Bring pp 83-88 to class.

Individual Exercise: Revising your article for argument

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Revise your article around your argument, using Week 2.*
- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 3: Abstracting Your Article (pages 90-110), doing the tasks of reading published abstracts and journal articles, drafting an abstract, and filling out the forms and checklists. You don't need to do the social tasks, the ones that require you to talk with or work with someone else, as you will be doing those in class.*
- *Be prepared to report on the published abstracts and journal articles you read.*

September 30th: Abstracting Your Article

Bring to class: Your filled out workbook and two printouts of your abstract.

Discussion of reading and exercises

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's abstracts

Group Exercise: Presenting on published journal articles

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 4: Selecting a Journal, doing the tasks of searching for and studying journals. Make sure to fill out the Journal Evaluation Report on at least one journal.*
- *Email me your top three journal choices and be prepared to present on them in class.*
- ***Please do a reverse outline of a journal article that you especially admire from one of your target journals.***
- *Belcher recommends that students review five years of one journal that interests them, reading all the titles, most of the abstracts, and at least four articles. She promises that this assignment transforms students' writing. I believe her and encourage you to take her up on her challenge—at least partially: perhaps reading a single year of a journal.*

October 7th: Selecting a Journal

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and a printout of at least one journal evaluation report and a reverse outline from a target journal.

Discussion of reading and exercises

Group Exercise: Presenting journal evaluation reports

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's journal lists

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Read Belcher's workbook Chapter 5, pp 150-189: Refining Your Works Cited.*
- *Evaluate your citations, identifying any needed other works, identifying your entry point, and revising your related secondary literature review*
- *Bring two printouts of your revised related **literature review and methods section**.*

October 14th: Refining Your Works Cited **and Methods Section**

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and two printouts of your related literature review

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 5

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's literature reviews and methods

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Revise your literature review, based on class feedback.*
- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 6: Crafting Your Claims for Significance, doing all the tasks except the So What? Exercise, which you will do in class.*

- *Email me three claims for significance by Sunday night.*
- *Did the class suggest you need to tighten up your methods? If you need sources for how to do so, please dig up a couple of references.*

October 21st: Crafting Your Claims for Significance

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 6

Group Exercise: Do the So What? Exercise

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Insert your new claims for significance into your article.*
- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 7: Analyzing Your Evidence, doing the tasks of highlighting the evidence in your article with various colors, analyzing the quality of evidence, and beginning to collect more if needed and possible*
- *Create and bring a seven-slide PowerPoint presentation overview of your article, with one slide per the following: title, research context (lit. review), methods, argument, claim(s) for significance, research design/method, evidence/findings, and conclusion. Be prepared to make a ten-minute presentation with it.*

October 28th: Analyzing Your Evidence

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and your PowerPoint presentation on your article

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 7

Group Exercise: Presenting your article in seven slides

Group Discussion: How to use the slides to help restructure your evidence.

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Revise article based on class discussion about your evidence and argument*
- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 8: Presenting Your Evidence, doing the tasks of filling out the forms and revising your evidence*
- *Email me a draft of your entire article by Sunday night.*
- *Bring a print out to class for the exchange exercise*

November 4th: Presenting Your Evidence

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and a print out of your entire article as it stands

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's articles

Discussion of reading and exercises

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Revise article based on class discussion about your presentation of evidence.*

- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 9: Strengthening Your Structure. We already reverse outlined a target journal article and our own working papers. But now is a good time to revisit these outlines. How does your reverse outline look now? Make a post-draft outline of your article and starting to restructure your article as needed.*
- *Rather than preparing a Powerpoint Presentation of the post-draft outline of your article, bring your outline to class as a print out, which we will exchange with each other in class.*

November 11th: Strengthening Your Structure

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and your presentation of your outline

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 9

Group Exercise: Reviewing each other's outlines

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Continue to revise article based on class discussion about your outline and structure*
- *Belcher doesn't discuss methods, but we should. Next week, let's focus on whether your methods section adequately explains your research.*
- *Next class: Bring your research question, hypotheses (if applicable) and methods sections to class.*

November 18th: Opening and Concluding Your Article

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and your title.

Group Exercise: Revising titles together

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 10

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Insert revised title into article*
- *Read Belcher's workbook Week 11: Editing Your Sentences, and do the tasks, including running the Belcher Diagnostic Test on your article, highlighting it with various colors, and beginning to revise your article accordingly*
- *Email me a sentence from your article with a lot of highlighting in different colors (at least three colors, the more the better) by the Sunday night before class.*

November 25th Class Canceled

December 2nd: Editing Your Sentences

Bring to class: Your filled-out workbook and a printout of one highlighted page from your article

Discussion of reading and exercises in Week 11

Group Exercise: Editing sentences together

Next Week's Assignment:

- *Last class, let's split the class's work and give each paper a last read. Please distribute your most complete draft to our class list-serve and review each other's papers.*

December 9: Final workshop

Group Discussion: What's helpful? What obstacles remain? How to find the help and structure we need.

Group exercise: Last chance to give feedback

Recommended Readings:

Zerubavel, Eviatar. Clockwork Muse.

Hayot, Eric, The Elements of Academic Style

Cameron, Julie, The Artist's Way

Thomas and Turner, Clear and Simple as the Truth

Becker, Howard, Writing for Social Scientists

White, Lynn, Writes of Passage: Writing an Empirical Journal Article

For ethnographic notes:

Ghodsee, From Notes to Narratives

Narayan, Alive in the Writing

Helpful Blogs:

Thesociologyphdandme.wordpress.com

Getalife.blogspot.com