

B. A. (H) Sociology
Skill Enhancement Course 01
Reading, Writing and Reasoning for Sociology

Course Objectives:

...an institution officially entrusted with the transmission of the instruments of appropriation of the dominant culture which neglects methodically to transmit the instruments indispensable to the success of its undertaking is bound to become the monopoly of those social classes capable of transmitting by their own means... the instruments necessary for the reception of messages...

- Pierre Bourdieu

1. To enhance the skills of Reading, Writing and Reasoning for Sociology so that students may have the means to realize learning outcomes of all the other courses in the program optimally.
2. To bring about a realization among the students that reading, writing, reasoning and critical thinking are interrelated skills.
3. To teach students to harness the creative tension in the process of reading, writing and reasoning.
4. The course seeks to teach elements of good academic writing and form habits that go with it.
5. An ability to avoid and spot plagiarism.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Reading:

- (a) At the end of the course, students will be equipped to move from reading rudimentarily to advanced reading of texts extensively
- (b) Read academic texts and identify the central argument(s) and grasp the content of the texts
- (c) Read texts to identify the organization of ideas, structure of the arguments, style and tone of the author and author biases
- (d) Identify general conclusions from specific details in texts

2. Writing:

- (a) Identify standard elements of writing and different genres of writing from personal essay to academic writing.
- (b) Be equipped to express in different genres of writing such as summaries, critical reviews and essays, using:
 - (i) Multi-draft approach: pre-writing, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing

- (ii) Formal academic style
- (iii) Information from several sources and synthesizing into their own writing
- (iv) Internationally accepted methods of citation and referencing
- (c) Be able to treat reading and writing as complementary and synergistic
- (d) Be able to conceptualize and plan a research paper

3. Reasoning:

- (a) Students should be able to approach writing as a form of reasoning, with specific organization of ideas, style and perspective
- (b) Be able to develop critical thinking through reflecting on various texts consciously and not take anything for granted in the analyses of the social world
- (c) Be able to develop scientific reasoning by reading texts for consistency and logic
- (d) As multicultural classrooms, students should be able to relate specific experiences with specific groups and generate multi-cultural competence in understanding social issues. By reading texts from cross-cultural contexts, students will be able to approach a creative synthesis in the classroom and grasp the various ways of sociological reasoning.

Course Content:

Unit 1 Introduction: The virtues of repetition [Week 1]

Unit 2 Techniques for reading academic texts [Weeks 2–7]

- 2.1 Grasping the whole: How to get an overview
- 2.2 Divide and conquer: Taking texts apart
- 2.3 Getting outside help: Recruiting extra resources

Unit 3 How to begin writing academic prose [Weeks 8–13]

- 3.1 Building a structure: What do you want to say?
- 3.2 Working with blocks: Sections, paragraphs, sentences
- 3.3 Borrowing material: Paraphrasing, quoting, citing

Unit 4 Final sessions: peer reviewing [Week 14]

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Unit 1: Introduction: The virtues of repetition [Week 1]

Academic reading and writing is really all about re-reading and rewriting – about repeatedly re-working a text until some provisional goal is achieved.

1.1 Assignment, Day 1: Read a short (1-2 page) academic text of moderate difficulty and summarize it in one paragraph (3-4 sentences). (This is without prior guidance by the instructor).

1.2 Assignment, Day 2: Re-read the same text and re-write the summary after a brief discussion of CONTENT (does the summary contain most of the most important points made in the text?)

1.3 Assignment, Day 3: Re-read the same text and re-write the summary again after a brief discussion of FORM (is the summary well structured, clear and effective?)

Unit 2 Techniques for reading academic texts [Weeks 2–7]

2.1 Grasping the whole: How to get an overview

2.1.2 Titles as the shortest summary of a text

2.1.3 Good and bad titles

2.1.4 Section headings (where present)

2.1.5 Introductions and Conclusions

2.1.6 Identifying important passages and sentences

2.2 Divide and conquer: Taking texts apart

2.2.1 Beginning, middle and conclusion – stages of argument

2.2.2 The architecture of arguments: main, subsidiary, minor

2.2.3 Everything is not equally important: Distribution of emphasis

2.3 Getting outside help: Recruiting extra resources

2.3.1 Isolating words & terms: Dictionaries, Encyclopedias

2.3.2 Contextualising texts with quick background research

2.3.3 Productive ways of asking for help from teachers/tutors

Unit 3: Techniques for writing academic prose [Weeks 8–13]

3.1 Building a structure: What do you want to say?

3.1.1 Beginning, middle and conclusion – stages of argument

- 3.1.2 The architecture of arguments: main, subsidiary, minor
- 3.1.3 Everything is not equally important: Distribution of emphasis

3.2 Working with blocks: Sections, Paragraphs, Sentences

- 3.2.1 How many sections? Job descriptions for each section
- 3.2.2 Paragraphs as key building blocks of academic prose
- 3.2.3 Sentences and punctuation; length, balance, continuity

3.3 Borrowing material: Paraphrasing, Quoting, Citing

- 3.3.1 The difference between paraphrasing and plagiarism
- 3.3.2 Quotations: When? Why? How?
- 3.3.3 Citation styles
- 3.3.4 Productive ways of asking for help from teachers/tutors

Unit 4: Final sessions: peer reviewing [Week 14]

The ability to judge and evaluate is a crucial skill, particularly when applied to oneself. Students will practice evaluating each other's work throughout the semester, but the last week can be formalized and stepped up into a more elaborate exercise.

4.1 Assignment, Day 1: The whole class does an individualized, two-part composite reading and writing exercise designed by the instructor based on semester long experience of student abilities and interests.

4.2 Assignment, Day 2: The reading part of the individual assignment is randomly distributed for students to evaluate and comment on their peers' work. The instructor moderates discussion of strengths and weaknesses, highlighting techniques for recognizing quality (or its lack).

4.3 Assignment, Day 3: The writing part of the assignment is similarly distributed and evaluated through interactive, moderated discussion.

References

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- Becker, Howard Saul and Pamela Richards. *Writing For Social Scientists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007
- Crene, P. and Lea, M. (2006). *Writing at University*. Berkshire: Open University Press
- Dillard, A. (1995). *The writing life*. New York, NY: HarperPerennial
- Fairbairn, G. and Fairbairn, S. (2010). *Reading at University*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Graff, Gerald, (2014) "They Say / I Say" – The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing 3e , New York: W. W. Norton & Company
- Johnson, William A. Et. Al. *The Sociology Student Writer's Manual*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000.
- Thomson, A. Et. Al. *Critical Reasoning*. London: Routledge. 2001

Additional Resources:

- Axelrod Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1991.
- Shrodes, Caroline. Et. Al (Eds.) *The Conscious Reader*. New York: Macmillan, 1988.

Teaching Learning Process:

Reading, Writing and reasoning for sociology classroom by definition has to be interactive, participatory and practice intensive that places huge emphasis on peer learning. The students need to appreciate the virtues of grasping as well as creating structure while at the same time learning to innovate and improvise. Hence the teaching learning tries to generate similar tension. Teaching involves sessions of active reading that breaks the habitual reading that seeks word to word absorption. Exercises of translating, applying, analysing, synthesizing and evaluating concepts encountered in academic texts and practice of comprehension, summary writing, and studying texts for their central argument would be integral to the class room. Teaching also involves teaching rhetoric, ethics and aesthetics of writing through the use of both specialized texts on writing as well as social science texts. Reading and writing are ultimately taught as

modes of reasoning. Virtues of patience and attention to detail are taught through making students produce multiple drafts with variations of intent, content and emphasis on the same theme, and also training them to revise and teaching them to produce better drafts.

Assessment Methods:

Class participation, Class exercises, take home assignments, Class assignments, tasks of essay writing texts of various lengths and intent including a long essay to come at the end of the semester.

Key words:

Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking, Sociological Imagination, Public Sociology