

Writing and Professional Development in Political Science
Political Science 597C
Fall 2004

Friday 1:30-3:00, Room 236 Pond Laboratory
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The Purpose.

This course is designed to complement the first course on Teaching and Professional Norms in Political Science that welcomed you to graduate school at Penn State and to the profession of political science. That course was designed to introduce you to the many roles graduate students assume in the first two years of academic life, helping you to succeed both in graduate school and in the profession more widely. That hurdle is well behind you and a new and exciting set of challenges lies ahead! This course is designed to help you surmount these challenges: comprehensive exams, the dissertation, publishing and the job market.

The Plan.

We will cover a variety of topics over the course of the semester including writing for publication, criticizing as a professional, writing reviews, writing the dissertation, finding grant opportunities, writing grant proposals, preparing for comprehensive exams, responding to anonymous reviews and editor letters, creating posters, presenting your research, networking/presenting yourself to the profession, and preparing dossiers. Topics will vary from week to week, however, over the course of the semester you will work with a single manuscript that you have written for a previous course, a conference, or perhaps your MA essay, redrafting the paper and preparing to send it out for publication. We will return to this paper each (or nearly each) week, turning in sections of the paper, writing and rewriting, and reading/reviewing one another's drafts.

Evaluation.

The course is pass/fail. The profession is in many ways also pass/fail. Tenure obviously has that flavor, but so does publishing. Your paper proposals are either selected or not selected for presentation at conferences, you either get the interview/job or you don't, the examples go on. In this class successfully passing the course will require submitting an approved draft of the paper to a journal by the last class period! Most weeks I will ask you to read or write in preparation for the following week and to get us closer to this goal.

Passing in the profession requires publishing your work, it requires presenting yourself successfully to the profession in a variety of ways. The topics covered in this course were selected specifically to help get you on the road to successful solo authored publications, to provide a sense of how to write and use reviews, to find resources for funding your research and to go about getting that funding, to go about studying for and passing exams, and to be professional political scientists more quickly and more comfortably than

you might otherwise. This makes everything from publishing to getting a job easier and more fun. In short, it's designed to help you to "pass" the profession more generally and to feel good about it on the way.

The texts.

I've assigned one text for purchase and will make copies of a small number of additional readings available for you as well. Mostly we will be reading each other's work and sharing our collective wisdom.

Howard S. Becker. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start, and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. The University of Chicago Press.

The Weekly Plan

August 31 **Introduction---The Tuesday that is a Friday.**

Today we will talk about a set of things. First we'll go through an overview of the course, focusing on the process of writing for journal submission and how this process will permeate much of what we do over the course of the semester. Then we'll discuss selecting a journal and learning about the logistics of the submission/review process. I'll ask each of you to tell the class a little bit about your current research interests and to identify the likely subject matter of the research project likely to serve as the basis for your course manuscript this semester.

Assignment: Identify 2-3 potential journals to submit your manuscript and their submission guidelines. Write me an email listing these instructions *in your own words*. Be complete. Be sure that you understand these instructions. Include any questions you have about the instructions in your emails to me. These emails are due to me before next class period.

Read Becker chapters 1-6.

September 3 **Writing and rewriting.**

Today we'll discuss Becker and begin to talk seriously about the process of revising a paper. We will talk about elements of successful manuscript. What does it take to get a manuscript accepted for publication and how do we take a draft paper and get it to that stage?

Assignment: Read "Giving Talks" chapter 2 in Thomson, William. 2001. *A Guide for the Young Economist: Writing and Speaking Effectively about Economics*, William Thomson, MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.

Begin (continue) editing your manuscript.

September 10 **Giving a Research Presentation.**

You'll be asked countless numbers of times throughout your professional life: "What sort of research do you do?" or "What are you working on?" We'll talk about how to answer that question and how to give formal research presentations that highlight your research. What goes into a conference presentation? A job talk? Your talk next week? Should you use overheads? Powerpoint?

Assignment: Prepare your research presentation for next week.

Continue editing your manuscript.

September 17 **Research Presentations.**

Each student will give a 10-12 minute presentation of the research that will serve as the basis of the paper being drafted for submission this semester. These time limits are strict!

Assignment: Divide a piece of paper into 3 columns, positive, negative, questions. List something in each column for each speaker (a new piece of paper for each speaker!). I'll collect these comments and distribute them to your classmates at the end of class.

Continue editing your manuscript.

September 24 **Criticizing as a Professional--Writing Reviews.**

Today we will talk about how to be a professional critic in all our professional writings, e.g., our papers and blind reviews.

Assignment: Bring a printed copy of your paper to class to give to a classmate. Each of you will write an anonymous review of a peer's paper. Email to De Boef by Thursday September 30th.

Evaluate your own draft (see St. Martin's Guide, pages 47-50).

October 1 **Responding to Anonymous Reviews and Editor Letters**

We will discuss how to deal with the inevitable disappointment and frustration that comes with the reviews of our peers! How do we use constructive (and not so constructive) criticism? What if reviewers misunderstood something? The whole point? What if they suggest a fundamental shift in analysis or data?

Assignment: Incorporate comments in your draft, include a response memo with your revisions and return to De Boef. Due by next class period.

Readings NSF web page guidelines for dissertation research grants.

- October 8 **Finding Grant Opportunities and Writing Grant Proposals.**
Grants are a wonderful opportunity to make your life easier and send a signal to perspective employers that your research is innovative and compelling. Grants may also be essential for completing your dissertation research. So how do you go about finding sources for funds to carry out your research? Once you find sources how do you maximize the odds that you are a recipient of the money? We'll talk about answers to these questions today.
- Students who've taken comps: Prepare and bring a tip sheet with your 10 best suggestions for your peers preparing for comps.
Students who haven't taken comps: Prepare and bring a list of 5 questions/concerns about comps.
- October 15 **Fall Break – No Class**
- Continue editing your manuscript.
- October 22 **Preparing for Comprehensive Exams.**
Students who have recently taken comprehensive exams should be prepared to carry some extra weight in the discussion today. We will talk about the purpose of comprehensive exams, the format, the content, the reading lists, how to prepare, the orals, etc.
- Assignment:** Bring a copy of your paper to class for anonymous review round 2.
Reviewers, email reviews to De Boef by Thursday October 28th.
- October 29 **The Publishing Process. Lee Sigleman, Editor of the APSR will be our guest**
Professor Sigelman will talk with us today about all aspects of the review process.
- Assignment:** Incorporate comments in your draft, include a response memo with your revisions and return to De Boef. Due by next class period.
- November 5 **Writing for Publication.**
Group Editing.
- November 12 **Selecting a Dissertation Topic and Writing the Dissertation**
Selecting a dissertation topic can come naturally or be a bit ominous (I was one of those for whom the later was true). And it's a big deal, you spend a lot of time working on it, you need to pick something you enjoy, that's doable, and that other's find interesting. All are important. We'll

talk about recipes to help increase the probability that you select a topic that passes these tests.

My advisor told me that dissertations could be written in 6 weeks. While that still seems a stretch to me. No doubt virtually all dissertations could be written more quickly than they are. Discipline, or lack thereof, is partly to blame. But dissertations are unlike anything we've ever written and require some different organization and thinking. We'll talk about how to write a dissertation and strategies for writing that help keep the end goal in sight.

Assignment: Semi-free writing on a) dissertation topic, b) advisor/committee composition, c) how you'll approach doing the dissertation.

Who's done a poster? If you have, bring your poster next week and be prepared to talk about the kind of feedback you received, exchanges you had, and how it helped spur manuscript revisions.

Anonymous review round 3.
Email reviews to De Boef by Thursday November 18th.

November 19 **Presenting yourself to the profession.**

LeeAnn Banaszak will visit class today and discuss preparing a dossier, networking and other aspects of job placement.

Incorporate anonymous reviewer comments in your draft, a response memo and revisions are due to De Boef by break.

November 26 **Thanksgiving Break**

December 3 **Creating a Poster.**

Increasingly professional conferences in all disciplines are relying on posters as a way for attendees to present research. You likely will present or have already presented your research as a poster. We will talk about good (and inexpensive) ways to put together a poster.

Attend the poster session for the methods class and write up a brief review of the posters; email your review to De Boef.

Please reread about the submission process for the journal you plan to submit your paper to next week. Send me any questions prior to class so that there are no hitches next week!

Continue with final manuscript edits. Be sure that your manuscript conforms to the journal specifications.

December 10 **The Submission Process.** Ceremony and Celebration!

Most of the major journals now have online submissions (or at least email submission). We will talk about the submission process and do the actual submission today.

If everyone is free, I will treat all to ice cream after we all hit the submit button (or mail the documents)!

Resources

Boice, Robert. 2000. *Advise for New Faculty Members: Nihil Nimus*. Allyn and Bacon. Boice's *Advise for New Faculty Members*, offers a philosophical approach to teaching, research, and the profession. It is designed for assistant professors but is widely applicable to us all. It is an easy read and offers some good general advice.

Morris, Mary, Julia Heilberger, and Vick Miller. 2000. *The Academic Job Search Handbook*. The University of Pennsylvania Press.

There really is no better time to plan for getting a job than now. It is not as simple as applying for jobs the year before you leave PSU. Getting a job requires you to take on tasks and set goals now. This book is designed to help you to do this well. While teaching is one part of the preparation for an academic job, this book considers your preparation for the job search in all areas.

Bolker, Joan. 1998. *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis*. Owl Books.

*Rudestam, Kjell Erik and Rae R. Newton. 2001. *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*, 2nd edition. Sage Publications.

This book discusses everything from selecting a topic, to conducting a literature review, writing an argument, presenting data and results, writing, dealing with your committee, and writer's block.

Whitely, Sandra. 1994. *The Essential Writer's Companion: A Concise Guide to Writing Effectively for School, Home, or Office*. Houghton Mifflin.

Becker, Howard. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing)*. University of Chicago Press.

Booth, Wayne C., Joseph M. Williams, Gregory G. Colomb. 2003. *The Craft of Research*, 2nd edition (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing). University of Chicago Press.

Academic Dishonesty¹

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist of any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids,

or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Other violations include, but are not limited to, any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in regard to an examination, such as tampering with a graded exam or claiming another's work to be one's own. Violations shall also consist of obtaining or attempting to obtain, previous to any examinations, copies of the examination papers or the questions to appear thereon, or to obtain any illegal knowledge of these questions. Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of a violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to impose appropriate penalties that are consistent with University guidelines.

¹Much of the text above has been directly obtained from the sections of the Princeton University website <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/rrr/99/pages/OI.htm> concerning academic integrity (Rights, Rules, Responsibilities introductory text as well as pages 55-69) as well as from the website of the Department of Economics at The Pennsylvania State University.

Disabilities

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.

Visit our web site

The Political Science Department is in the process of upgrading its web site and will continue to do so during this and future academic years. In the undergraduate section you will find a wealth of information including course schedules, faculty office hours, faculty home pages describing their areas of teaching and research activities, answers to questions about advising, internship opportunities, announcements, and much, much, more. Check back often: we will continuously update our information about internships and career opportunities: <http://polisci.la.psu.edu/>