

WRITING GUIDELINES

Dr. Susan L. Caulfield
Department of Sociology
Western Michigan University

Written for:

SOC 260/SOC 454

July 1991

Revised, for SOC 562, August 1993, 1994, 1996

Revised, for SOC 606, August 2006

INTRODUCTION

Writing papers is important for a number of reasons which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- They are necessary processes by which people can learn more about their field of study.
- They are a necessary part of research in any endeavor to learn more about what others have done in a particular field of study.
- They are a forum in which the writer can demonstrate an ability to integrate a variety of materials and write information that surpasses basic exam writing.
- They are a training exercise in communicating a point to others and substantiating that point.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS IN THIS COURSE

The various writing assignments in SOC 6060 relate to at least one of the reasons listed above. The research proposal in SOC 6060 is a combination of all four reasons listed above. That is, this assignment serves as a mechanism for you to learn more about sociological inquiry, as a way for you to practice your writing, and as a demonstration that you have grasped both the course and research material and can apply it to a specific topic.

The bulk of these Writing Guidelines are geared toward the writing of research papers. However, please recognize that the basic principles of proper writing and referencing apply to all papers. Therefore, a thorough reading of these guidelines is required of all students in SOC 6060.

Outside research work is required when writing a research paper and is required in nearly all sections of the research proposal. In this case, you **MUST** use outside sources, by conducting library research. The primary purpose of the research paper is to demonstrate the development of skills related to proposing and conducting social research. In order to demonstrate scholarly knowledge, it is necessary for you to familiarize yourself with **JOURNAL ARTICLES** that address your topic. A list of acceptable journals is included after these guidelines.

A major problem encountered by some students is failure to adequately address the issue at hand. It is often useful to discuss your paper topic with the professor. It is recommended that students clarify the direction of their paper; this can be accomplished by meeting with the professor and discussing the outline for the paper.

A secondary, but very serious problem that students have with writing assignments, in general, is failure to give proper credit for the material used to substantiate the points. Seeing as the material will come directly from the writings of other authors, you must reference all of the material! This is an extremely important issue, and is covered in detail in the section titled NOTES ON REFERENCING. It is possible that other professors/ teachers have not required diligent referencing from you in the past. However, that is **not an excuse**, and will not prevent a penalty being applied.

APPROACHING THE TASK

As with all your assignments, you are encouraged to get an early start. Granted, everyone has a number of different obligations and writing may not be at the top of the list. However, understand that procrastination often makes the task difficult, especially if a person is already nervous about writing.

The most important starting point is clarity of the questions being asked. Begin by outlining the overall question or thesis you wish to address. You do not need to submit a formal outline for evaluation; however, feel free to discuss preliminary work on your outline with the professor. For example, your thesis may be on an examination of violence in the family. It is wise to check with the professor for clarity on this part prior to submitting it for evaluation, most notably because of the depth and breadth of such a topic. (NOTE: checking with the professor can occur during office hours, or by asking in class.) While rugged individualism is touted in this society, it does not mean that you have to approach the problem by yourself, without discussing it with the professor or with other students.

Always write a rough draft. Ideally, write it so that you can leave it for at least 24 hours before rereading it. You can also bring a rough draft to the professor and discuss what you have written. This is especially helpful in ensuring that you are on the right track. As there are plenty of computers on this campus, take advantage of them and put your rough draft on a diskette. That way, changes to the manuscript will not require a great deal of extra work.

Some students benefit from having a friend read their draft, especially to check for spelling and logic. The writer often becomes so immersed in the topic that the paper makes sense to them. However, it may not make as much sense to another reader. Of course, if you use another reader, try to select someone who is a good writer! It is often helpful to have different members of the base group proofread each other's work.

EVALUATION OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Writing assignments are graded on substance, and on grammar and/or spelling. In general, papers are evaluated based on your ability to (1) clearly define your topic/issue; (2) logically discuss the particulars of your topic/issue; (3) insure that your writing relates to issues raised in this course, either directly or tangentially; (4) utilize scholarly sources, as required and defined; and (5) give proper credit, via referencing. Proper referencing is very important; failure to do so carries very stiff penalties, including a grade of zero points. Do not assume that your opinion, however wonderful it may be, will be an adequate substitute for scholarly material. You may integrate material from class lectures (this class only); however, such referencing should be kept to an absolute minimum, as these assignments are not designed as regurgitations of lecture material.

Remember, part of the reason for the various writing assignments is to evaluate your grasp of material presented in this course. Providing information from other courses is insufficient.

There are very sound reasons for this approach. The primary one is that the professor is evaluating you based on information presented in this course (after all, your grade in one course should not be dependent on your work in other courses). Keeping these reasons for the assignments in mind will generally help keep you focused on the task at hand. For example, if you know that in many cases your opinion will not earn you points, you will probably be less inclined to merely compose your paper as you type it, since this method lacks documented materials used to substantiate your points.

In summary: (1) outline the task; (2) get feedback on your outline; (3) write a rough draft, and incorporate material from the research sources (be very careful that all of the information is properly documented, as demonstrated in the next section of this guide); (4) reread the rough draft 24 hours later; (5) have someone else review the rough draft; (6) make the necessary changes; (7) type the final product; (8) proofread it for substance, grammar, and spelling; and, lastly, (9) turn it in on time! [NOTE: the syllabus lists the penalty for late assignments.]

As the syllabus notes, some of the writing assignments in this class, particularly the journal assignments and reading response papers, are not graded. Instead, they are assigned credit if done correctly. However, it is still important that you approach all your writing with the intent of doing the task well, as this will help you in your overall learning of the writing process.

With the research proposal, there is an evaluation sheet provided so that there is clarity on both expectations and points assigned to various aspects of the paper. Familiarize yourself with this document as it will help you in the development and organization of your paper.

NOTES ON REFERENCING

Whenever another person's ideas, thoughts, and/or words are used, that person must be given credit. To not give credit to the original source is to plagiarize the material. Plagiarism is a form of **cheating** because the writer is misrepresenting someone else's work as his or her own.

The Western Michigan University Code of Student Life explicitly prohibits plagiarism, which includes the submission of purchased term papers and reports, the copying of other students' work, the lack of proper citation of material, and the copying of material from textbooks. There is additional information on this provided in the syllabus, under Academic Integrity.

Remember, when writing it is important to demonstrate to the reader that the writer understands the material she is writing about. To facilitate this demonstration, it is useful to paraphrase information as much as possible, that is, restate it in words different from the original, keeping the same meaning. If the writer understands the context of the reading or research, she should be able to put things into her own words.

Limited use should be made of direct quotes. Too many quotes can demonstrate a lack of understanding on the part of the writer. Direct quotes should only be used when they can make a dramatic point.

All of the researched information must be cited. The writer's (that is, you) original thoughts are not cited, since they are original. Non-original thoughts, those that someone else has already put to paper, must be credited to the person or persons who thought them. Therefore, both direct quotes and paraphrased material must be properly cited throughout the paper.

As a rule of thumb, for the assignments in this course, every paragraph should have at least one citation in it, unless it is a paragraph of the writer's own opinion or conclusion. Since the bulk of the writing assignments is not supposed to be your opinion, it should be heavily referenced. Regarding class reading response papers, as you are analyzing some aspect of the reading, you will need to properly reference the part of the reading to which you refer.

So, unless you are asked to give your opinion, there should be a proper reference for the material. If you were to refer to only one source in a paragraph, and all of the information was paraphrased, you could properly reference the information by placing one citation at the end of the paragraph. However, if you refer to different sources in the same paragraph, then each one must have its own citation. Direct quotes always have a citation **directly after the quote**.

EXAMPLE OF ESSAY PARAGRAPH

In the example below, the writer of the paragraph is referring to two different sources regarding the topic. With the first source, Chesney-Lind and Shelden, the writer is referring to both a direct quote and paraphrased material. As to the second source, Caulfield, the writer has paraphrased information from that source. The use of direct quotes is obvious because all of the quoted material must be contained within quotation marks, and at the end of the quote, the reference must include the last names of the authors, the year of the publication, and the page(s) where the quote can be found in the text being cited.

Despite the fact that "about a quarter of the people arrested in the United States are girls, as recently as 1969 there is evidence to suggest that even reputable theorists, such as Travis Hirschi, were unable to recognize the female's role in delinquency as having any greater significance than to afford them more than a footnote in their literature, e.g., The Causes of Delinquency" (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992, p. 1). However, with the era of the "just add girls and mix" approach falling under heavy criticism, new attention is being devoted to both the diminishing gap between the sexes for certain offenses, as well as the prevalence of females among primarily status offenses (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992) ...To suggest that gender related demographics can be accurately applied to indicate that **because you are female** you are either biologically or psychologically predisposed to an involvement in shoplifting or in prostitution clearly represents a misapplication of these studies. However, if these findings can be utilized to discern the aforementioned relationships, to cite just a few, between females and delinquent behavior, then the reliability of these demographics is certainly detectable (Caulfield, 1-16-92).

Note how direct quotes (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992, p. 1) are referenced differently from paraphrased material (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992), and how both are referenced differently from lecture/course material (Caulfield, 1-16-92).

REFERENCING STYLE

Various referencing styles are both available and documented. Documentation can be found in bookstores and libraries. The style chosen will depend on personal preference, type of research being conducted, and/or class requirements.

The following examples of referencing are part of the APA (American Psychological Association) style. This particular style is often suggested to beginners because of its relative ease and clarity. It is recommended that you use this style for all writing assignments in this course.

The key information needed for citations used in the text of the paper includes the **Last Name of the Author or Authors**, the **Year of the Publication** (for books, this is copyright year, listed after the title page - always use the latest year listed, for journal articles this is usually found on the first page of the article, or on the cover page of the journal), and the **Page or Pages from which the information was taken**. Note that additional information is needed for the complete citation that is listed on the reference page of the paper. Details on this are provided later in this guide.

It is quite helpful to think of this information as a type of road map. The general idea is that the reader of your paper may wish to read more about something you have cited. The only way for the reader to be able to do this is to have directions to the information you have cited. The author, year and, if direct quotation, page number, tell the reader exactly where to go to read more about the topic at hand.

Some writers like to include the title of articles when referencing a source in the text of the paper. It is not necessary to do so, as it is lengthy and often awkward to read. Since the full title is provided on the reference page, it makes more sense to merely cite the author(s), the date of publication and, in the case of direct quotes, the page number. The reader can get the rest of the information from the reference list.

1. **Direct Quotes**. Direct quotes are when the writer uses the exact words found in the sources being cited. Limited use should be made of direct quotes. However, there are times when the original wording is very well done or would be difficult to put into different words.

For each direct quote, APA requires that the writer list the **Last Name of the Author**, the **Year of the Publication**, and the **Page (or pages) from which the quote was taken**. For example, if the writer were quoting something from **The Brethren**, written by Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong in 1979, the text of the paper would appear as follows:

According to Woodward and Armstrong (1979; p. 186): "Nixon had two criteria. He was still looking for a Southerner, and he wanted another 'first' for his administration. He wanted to appoint the first woman to the Court."

Note how the quoted information is contained in quotation marks. This is important as it distinguishes quoted information from information that is paraphrased. Failure to place this information in quotation marks can be construed as plagiarism, since the writer is representing the work as the writer's own words (i.e., paraphrased information).

Here is another example, taken from Samaha's book on Criminal justice.

According to Samaha (1991; p. 79): "Crimes within families and among acquaintances frequently do not enter the criminal justice system, despite their widespread occurrence."

[The reader of this passage knows that if she wants to read more about this topic, she can go to Samaha's book (of which a full reference would be included at the end of the paper) and look on p. 79 for this quote.]

The writer may not wish to make direct reference to the original author, yet still quote someone. This may take the following format:

One could also look at this consent as a system based on fair play, where one consents "by a principle of fairness, by the fact of participation in a system of benefits based on reciprocal sacrifice" (Murphy, 1970, p. 136).

In this excerpt, the information in quotes is directly taken from Murphy's work, and is introduced by the writer of the paper.

Using the example from Samaha:

According to a nationwide survey of crime victims, people are less likely to report a crime if they know the offender. Therefore, "crimes within families and among acquaintances frequently do not enter the criminal justice system, despite their widespread occurrence" (Samaha, 1991, p. 79).

There are a variety of ways to present quoted information. **One rule is that if the quoted information is more than five typed lines, it should be single-spaced and indented in the body of the paper.**

The important point, of course, is to give credit where credit is due.

Note: glossary terms, definitions in the margin, and items from dictionaries and thesaurus must be quoted as well. Use of such items should be kept to a minimum, if used at all, since the necessary definitions can generally be found in the body of the textbook.

2. **Paraphrasing**. As noted above, limited use should be made of direct quotes, which means that most of the material being cited from a source should be written in the writer's own words. That is, one should restate the general point being made in the source. Paraphrasing is not about moving around one or two words in a sentence. Paraphrasing is rewriting several sentences into one summary statement that captures the essence of the original sentences found in the cited source. Each time a writer paraphrases another author, APA requires that the writer list the Last Name of the Author and the Year of the Publication.

Using the same example above:

Direct Quote:

According to Woodward and Armstrong (1979; p. 186): "Nixon had two criteria. He was still looking for a Southerner, and he wanted another 'first' for his administration. He wanted to appoint the first woman to the Court."

Paraphrased material:

Nixon desired to be the first president to appoint a woman to the Supreme Court (Woodward and Armstrong, 1979).

Using the example from Samaha:

Direct Quote:

According to a nationwide survey of crime victims, people are less likely to report a crime if they know the offender. Therefore, "crimes within families and among acquaintances frequently do not enter the criminal justice system, despite their widespread occurrence" (Samaha, 1991, p. 79).

Paraphrased material:

Even though crimes among people who know each other occur quite often, they frequently are not brought to the attention of the criminal justice system (Samaha, 1991).

If paraphrasing different authors in the same paragraph, give proper citations after each unique source. If the entire paragraph relies on the thoughts of only one source (albeit paraphrased by the writer), be sure to give credit at the end of the paragraph.

3. **Citations Once Removed**. Often times, the writer will want to reference information that an author has referenced in his or her text. For example, Samaha may reference

the work or words of Gruber. Generally speaking, one should not reference Gruber through Samaha, because one could not be confident that Gruber was quoted in proper context. The best thing for the writer to do is locate the Gruber source (which would be included in Samaha's reference list). However, this is not always feasible and, for some assignments, such as the writing assignments in this course, it may be acceptable to use Gruber as presented in Samaha.

For this course, cite Gruber through Samaha, but be sure to list it properly; that is, as read through Samaha, since you will not have read Gruber.

In doing so, the writer must still give proper credit. For example:

Gruber (as cited in Samaha, 1991, p. 153), in discussing police functions, noted that: "For all our policing, we understand that law enforcement is not the solution to the problem of drugs in our society."

Using this format, the writer tells the reader that (a) this is someone else's idea/thought, (b) Gruber, not Samaha, is the original thinker/writer of the thought, and (c) the reader will be able to find the quote, if necessary to do so, and where in the text (Samaha) it can be found.

(a) through (c) are essential pieces of information. The reader should always know whose thoughts are being presented, and where they came from, in case the reader wishes to pursue them further, either for clarification or for the reader's own research purposes.

4. **Citing from an Edited Anthology.** Anthologies are books that consist of numerous chapters, each of which is a paper written by the authors listed on the first page of the chapter or section. One way to identify an anthology is to note that each chapter is generally written by different authors, while the book itself is edited (that is, organized) by the author(s) listed on the cover of the book. Because each chapter is written by a unique author(s), it is not acceptable to list the editors (those whose names are on the cover of the book). Instead, one must reference the authors of the chapter and the title of their chapter, as part of the larger anthology. To reference work in a particular chapter is analogous to treating the chapter as though it were an article, followed with a reference that notes what pages this chapter consists of and in whose book. For example, Barak edited a book, and one of the chapters was written by Caulfield. The citation listed on the reference page would be formatted as follows:

Caulfield, Susan L. (1991). "Subcultures as crime: The theft of legitimacy of dissent in the United States." Pp. 49-61 in Barak, Gregg (1991). (Ed.) Crimes by the capitalist state: An introduction to state criminality. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

In the text of a paper, the above citation would be cited as Caulfield (1991), with page numbers included for any direct quotes. Any citations in the body of the paper would draw the reader to the Caulfield citation in the bibliography, with the information one needed to find the complete chapter.

5. **Citing Information from the World Wide Web.** While the bulk of research for this course will not come from web sources, there will be times when web sources are used as supplemental information. Therefore, it is important to use proper referencing style for any such citations. As with any citation, it is important that you have the author's name and the date of the publication. One would use the author's name and the date of the publication in all citations provided in the text of their paper, and a complete citation on the reference page. An example of the complete citation is provided in the next section.
6. **Reference List.** Many styles, especially APA, require not only citations in the text, but a separate Reference List as well. While the citations included in the actual body of the paper do indicate the original author, they do not provide the full citation. Full citations must be included at the end of the paper, on a page titled Reference List. This separate listing of sources should be in alphabetical order by the last name of the first author. The following is an example of a reference list. **You, of course, would not put the identifiers that are provided in capital letters. These are provided here to help distinguish how to write proper citations for different types of sources.**

BOOK:

Bernard, T.J. (1983). The consensus-conflict debate: Form and content in social theories. New York: Columbia University Press.

CLASS NOTES:

Caulfield, S.L. (2006). SOC 6060 Lectures, date of lecture or page of handout.

JOURNAL ARTICLE IN HARDCOPY FORMAT:

Caulfield, S.L. (1993). Voices of dissent: Political prisoners and the role of the state. Journal of Prisoners on Prison, 4(2): 121-132.

EDITED ANTHOLOGY:

Caulfield, Susan L. (1991). "Subcultures as crime: The theft of legitimacy of dissent in the United States." Pp. 49-61 in Barak, Gregg (1991). (Ed.) Crimes by the capitalist state: An introduction to state criminality. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

BOOK:

Elias, R. (1986). The politics of victimization. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

JOURNAL ARTICLE FROM THE WEB:

Fine, M.A. & Kurdek, L.A. (1993, November). Reflections on determining authorship credit and authorship order on faculty-student collaborations. American Psychologist, 48(11), 1141-1147.
Retrieved March 6, 1998 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.apa.org/journals/amp/kurdek.html>

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE FROM THE WEB:

Murray, B. (1998, February). Email bonding with your students. APA Monitor, [Newspaper, selected stories online]. Retrieved March 6, 1998 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/bond.html>

WORLD WIDE WEB SITE:

Williams, Scott (1996, June 14). Back to school with the quilt. AIDS Memorial Quilt Website. Retrieved June 14, 1996, from <http://www.aidsquilt.org/newsletter/stories/backto.html>

SUMMARY

To not follow these guidelines is to put oneself at risk. Plagiarism can be dangerous to your academic health. It will result in a grade of zero on assignments and, if deemed particularly serious, can result in failure in the course and further University action. Importantly, such risk can be avoided by following these simple guidelines.

As stressed above, the writing assignments are designed such that students further develop their critical skills in the area of research methods and sociology. To do so, students must conduct scholarly inquiries into particular subjects, and write up their findings in a professional and logical format.

ABBREVIATED GRADING COMMENTS

When grading writing assignments, I rely on abbreviations to mark what are generally grammatical and sentence structure errors. The most common abbreviations used are as follows:

- NN - not necessarily (you didn't substantiate the point)
- SS - sentence structure is incorrect (can affect clarity)
- NAS- not a sentence (which weakens your argument)
- DF - doesn't follow (statement does not support previous one)
- DMS- statement doesn't make sense (hurts your argument)
- OV - overly vague (indicates lack of understanding)
- NTS- not the issue (you are off track)
- BS - self-explanatory

RBS- random BS (really not impressing me at this point)

Try to learn from the comments and improve your writing style. Always feel free to review your paper with the professor. However, it is wise not to wait until the day before something is due to do so.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

In these days of computers and word processing packages, it is important that you both use a spell checker and **NOT** rely on a spell checker as your sole means of proofreading your work. In particular, pay careful attention to words that have multiple spellings.

For example, know the difference between **there** (a place), **their** (the possessive of more than one person), and **they're** (the contraction for they are).

Also know the difference between **accept** (to receive with consent) and **except** (to exclude or object)!

There is also **cite** (to quote an authority), **site** (a location), and **sight** (refers to seeing).

While one can say that “they **passed** the test,” they would walk **past** the door.

We can be **right** (meaning correct), observe a **rite** (ceremony), or **write** a letter.

Than is a conjunction suggesting difference (he is taller than I am), while **then** is an adverb meaning “at that time (then we shall go).

Also, work to avoid unorthodox spellings. Use **night**, not **nite**, to refer to the late evening. If one is going through a town, use **through**, not **thru**. While the use of abbreviated spellings is acceptable for taking notes, it is not acceptable in writing scholarly papers.

Note that your grade is lowered for misspelled words and/or improper grammar (see specifics on paper evaluation form). Such mistakes detract from your argument, and your overall presentation. Always keep in mind the image of self that you wish to present.

Use these guidelines as a beginning point in becoming a better writer. Also make use of the Academic Skills Center, use a dictionary, edit drafts of your work, and learn from your mistakes.

LIST OF ACCEPTABLE JOURNALS

American Sociological Review	Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences
any Law Review	British Journal of Criminology
Contemporary Crises	Crime and Delinquency
Crime and Social Justice	Crime, Law and Social Change
Criminology	Critical Criminologist
Human Rights	Human Rights Quarterly
Humanity and Society	International Journal of the Sociology of Law
Issues in Criminology	Journal of Conflict Resolution
Journal of Quantitative Criminology	Journal of Marriage and the Family
Journal of Social Issues	Journal of Criminal Justice
Journal of Prisoners on Prisons	Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare
Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency	
Mediation Quarterly	Signs
Social Justice	Social Problems
Social Work	Social Forces
Sociological Focus	Sociology and Social Research
The Prison Journal	Victimology
Violence and Victims	Women and Criminal Justice
Women's Studies International Forum	

NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list, but should give you some guidance as to what is considered a scholarly source. The library does not have all of these, so leave plenty of time to order what you need through the Resource Sharing Center on the second floor of Waldo (you can also order such material via the library's web site). If you end up with a topic that does not appear to be covered in such journals, check with the professor for alternative sources. Generally speaking, pop magazines (such as Time and Readers Digest) are NOT scholarly sources. Scholarly sources are so-named because of the level of research that is behind the publication, plus the fact that many of them use a peer-review process for publication decision making. If in doubt, check with the professor.

Searching for references in journals requires the use of a system such as FIRSTSEARCH system, accessible via the mainframe computer. Or, use the old stand-by, journal indexes. When necessary, ask the Reference Librarians for help---that's why they're there. And, check the SOCIAL SCIENCE INDEX SOURCE LIST for other acceptable journals - it is located in the reference section of the main library.

