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COURSE SCHEDULE

There is a course reader containing relevant articles for each class. Each session will be devoted to both the readings and three class presentations of the given writing assignment.

February 2: From puzzle to story

Read Joseph M. Williams, “Clarity,” Chapter 2 of Style: Toward Clarity and Grace


In a one-page essay, transform the research question into a puzzle that needs to be explained. Give an account of a story that provides a plausible interpretation that helps make the puzzle understandable. What conclusion do you reach from your story?

February 9 Claims and evidence

Read Kai Erikson, “On Sociological Prose”

Write an essay that presents your research claim with supporting reasons and evidence. What is the central claim you are making in your paper? What other sub-claims support this major claim? What evidence supports these claims and reasons? Begin with a paragraph that lays out your major claim and supporting reasons in a précis of your main ideas. Then devote a paragraph to developing each of your supporting reasons with evidence. End with a concluding paragraph that presents the lessons learned in your research. Your final product should be in classic essay form, one page, single-spaced.

February 16: Counter-claims and response

Read Donald N. McCloskey, “”Mere Style in Economics Journals, 1920 to the Present.””

As an extension of our discussions and writing on claims and evidence, write a one-page essay addressing the rebuttals that might be laid against your claims and evidence. What
alternative interpretations might be made of your evidence? What objections might be made to your claims?

February 23: Theoretical underpinnings

What are the ideas, theories, models, or concepts that underlie the story you are telling? In a one-page essay, discuss the intellectual foundations of your research and answer the question, “What is this a case of?”


March 1 Backing your theories

In a one-page essay, respond to these questions: How might the ideas, theories, models, or concepts upon which your claims are based be challenged? What are the alternative or rival assumptions to those you have chosen? Why does your theory have greater explanatory power over the data?

Read John Van Maanen, “Style as Theory.”

March 8 So what?

In a one-page essay, address these issues: What are the major implications of your claims for policy and practice? What does your research add to the literature? How can your findings help others to understand a broader range of phenomena of which the focus of your research is a type?

Read C. Wright Mills, “Appendix: On Intellectual Craftsmanship,” from The Sociological Imagination

March 15: The argument as a whole

In 1000 words, lay out your entire argument, in the form of an abstract.

Read Ramage and Bean, “Classical Argument as an Initial Guide,” from Writing Arguments.

March 22-April 5: No class meeting: Time is set aside to write a draft of the paper (submitted on day of oral presentation)

April 12 Presenting your research orally

Read Morrison, “Presenting Your Research Orally”

April 19: Class presentations with advisors present

April 26: Class presentations with advisors present

May 3 Class presentations with advisors present

May 4-May 17 Rewrite paper and submit to your advisor