

SOC6511HF: Professional Development Seminar
Professor Vanina Leschziner
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
Fall 2023

Location and Time: Room 17146, Tuesday 3-5PM

Office Hours: Tues. 5-7PM, Room 17149, 700 University Avenue

Email: vanina.leschziner@utoronto.ca

Brief Overview of the Course

This course is required for students in the 1st year of the PhD program in sociology at the University of Toronto. The goal of the course is to support and help 1st-year Phd students learn and improve skills required to succeed in the graduate program. The course offers workshops and discussion in key aspects of academic work in sociology, such as finding data sources for research, preparing literature reviews, and writing grant proposals, as well as on the opportunities and challenges of the Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant roles. It also aims to build “soft skills” that are helpful for navigating the graduate program and the profession more broadly, such as interacting with people in the department and beyond. We will discuss strategies to achieve program milestones in a timely manner, as well as career goals beyond program requirements. The Prosem is focused on the more practical sides of being a PhD student and doing academic work.

Objectives

The key objectives of this course are: acquiring practical information about working in sociology; learning about useful resources for research and teaching in sociology; offering a collegial space for everyone to ask questions and exchange ideas; promoting professional, creative and fulfilling work in sociology.

While this seminar is aimed at honing professional skills, it also seeks to foster your own inclinations, preferences, and strengths in your pursuit of sociological work. In short, in addition to offering information about the graduate program’s requirements and other useful resources to conduct academic work, the seminar also seeks to help you develop your own professional identity (see Uggen and Hlavka, 2008, pp. 2-3).

Requirements

Attendance at each class meeting is required. You are expected to not only be present, but also actively participate in discussions at each meeting. This means presenting your ideas as well as respectfully responding to thoughts shared by others. Voicing ideas clearly and engaging in thoughtful discussion are key soft skills in academia, and practicing them in class is a great way to start honing these skills early on. Lastly, you are required to actively find ways to participate in

the intellectual life of the department. Look for events in your areas of interest, job talks, or other research talks in the department.

Evaluation

This is a required credit/no credit course for 1st-year Ph.D. students in sociology. Given the learning objectives of this course, there are few required readings or assignments. You will obtain credit for this course if you attend and participate fully and submit the few required assignments.

Academic Integrity

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical or other certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well: (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence "*to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.*"

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) and *Code of Student Conduct* (<http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Accessibility Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at:

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make

this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at distressedstudent.utoronto.ca; Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

Class Schedule

September 12

WRITING GRANT APPLICATIONS: SSHRC and OGS APPLICATIONS

Leader: UofT Sociology Research Coordinator Suzanne Jaeger

Topic: Writing and perfecting the research proposal.

*Be prepared to provide and receive feedback on your application materials in class.

September 19

SETTING THE STAGE FOR YOUR PHD PROGRAM

Leaders: Junior faculty/Advanced Ph.D. students

Topics: navigating the Ph.D. program; milestones and pathways; being an active scholar; how should I shape my graduate career to meet my goals? what kinds of work do sociologists do? what do the data suggest about UofT Ph.D. graduates? who do I want to be as a professional sociologist?

*Identify talks or workshops you will attend this semester and will report on; email me your plan.

September 26

BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL SOCIOLOGIST

TRICKS OF THE TRADE (hour 1)

Leaders: Advanced Ph.D. students

Topics: specializations; learning in your area(s), on your topic, and in sociology more broadly; mentors, advisors, supervisors, and committees; ranks and positions in the department and university; moving forward and upward through graduate school and beyond.

MAPPING THE FIELD (hour 2)

Leaders: Advanced Ph.D. students

Topics: when should I integrate into the profession? how do I go about doing it? CSA? ASA? how do ASA sections work? ASA journals? why plugging into these worlds?

October 3

BEING A TEACHING ASSISTANT: LEARNING AND CHALLENGES EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM

Leaders: Advanced Ph.D. students and faculty

Topics: what do you do as a TA? what are the most important aspects of a TA position? what strategies can make the experience more successful? how do you work as a team with faculty and other TAs? how can you be the best possible TA? what can you learn from being a TA?

October 10

MAPPING OUT AND READING THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

Leaders: Advanced Ph.D. students

Topics: mapping a sub-field and its journals; choosing the best sources; searching beyond the sub-field; the annotated bibliography; looking for literature, 3Rs: recent, relevant, and regularly cited; following citations and when to stop reading; targeting audiences; never “review” the literature!; course papers and journal articles; the sociology article; structuring a paper: sections, paragraphs, sentences; organizing the writing process.

*Reading: Zuckerman, Ezra W. 2008. “Tips to Article-Writers.” MIT Sloan School of Management <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/shared/ods/documents?PublicationDocumentID=7627>

Suggested reading: Zuckerman, Ezra W. 2017. “On Genre: A Few More Tips to Article-Writers.” https://mitmgmtfaculty.mit.edu/esivan/reviews_essays/

Suggested reading: Hannah Wohl and Gary Alan Fine. 2017. “[Reading Rites: Teaching Textwork in Graduate Education](#).” *American Sociologist* 48:215-32.

October 17

NO FORMAL CLASS, IN LIEU OF ATTENDING AND REPORTING ON A RESEARCH TALK/ACADEMIC JOB TALK/CONFERENCE TALK AT ANY TIME DURING THE FALL

Topic: what makes a good talk? what are mistakes to avoid? structuring a talk; PowerPoint slides; managing the Q&A.

*Upload a paragraph-long “review” of the event to the discussion board the week of the event, and by December 6.

October 24

WRITING WORKSHOP WITH DR. DANIEL NEWMAN, FAS

Leader: Dr. Daniel Newman, FAS

Topics: tools for writing: how to use paragraphs strategically

*Submit a few paragraphs of a literature review for a project you are working on or will start soon through Quercus by Tuesday morning. Possible projects are a course paper, or a new paper to be prepared for submission to a conference (e.g., CSA) or journal, among others. [Keep in mind lessons from SSHRC -- write in language that can be understood by anyone.]

October 31

THE CV AND SOCIAL MEDIA: BUILDING YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Leaders: Advanced Ph.D. students, faculty

Topics: targeting audiences with your CV; local, national, and international audiences; what belongs on the CV? showcasing your expertise and strengths; personal websites and social media.

*Bring a draft copy of your CV to class.

November 7

NO SCHEDULED CLASS: Fall Reading Week

November 14

TIME MANAGEMENT: THE PHD PROGRAM AND MENTAL LIFE

Leaders: Advanced Ph.D. students; Caroline Rabbat, Director, High Risk, Faculty Support & Mental Health

Topics: time management for courses and projects; using tools for research, writing, and bibliographies; data sources; strategies and styles; managing deadlines; feeling overwhelmed? how to get help.

November 21

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Topic: what makes a good talk? what are mistakes to avoid? structuring a talk; PowerPoint slides; managing the Q&A.

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November 28

DOING RESEARCH IN THE PHD PROGRAM: RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Leaders: Advanced Ph.D. students, faculty

Topics: how do you get an RAship? what’s it like to be an RA? getting training to do research; collecting data; secondary data sources; doing fieldwork; publishing with faculty and/or students.

December 5

WRAP UP: DEVELOPING YOUR RESEARCH AGENDA THROUGHOUT THE PH.D. PROGRAM AND STAYING MOTIVATED

Topics: suggestions welcome! end-of-term celebration.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

NOTE: This syllabus is closely modeled after the syllabus originally developed for our Phd program by Melissa Milkie, as well as from Markus Schafer’s adapted version. Melissa Milkie modeled hers (with permission) from Tina Fetner’s and from Chris Uggen and Heather Hlavka's 2008 article, “No More Lane ProSems: Professional Development Seminars in Sociology.”