Writing 109SS: Writing for the Social Sciences

**Prerequisites:** Writing 2, 2LK, 2E, or equivalent; upper-division standing or consent of instructor.

**Catalog Description:** Analysis and practice of various forms of writing appropriate for primary and secondary research in the social sciences. Research writing projects include literature reviews, research proposals, research reports, case studies, and theoretical analyses. Attention to disciplinary resources, formal conventions, and style.

**Course Description:** Writing 109SS is designed to increase students’ ability to communicate effectively in the social sciences for multiple purposes and audiences. Writing 109SS immerses students in the research process in order to help them understand the role of writing in the formation of disciplinary knowledge. To this end, students read both practical and theoretical texts, conduct library research, propose and/or conduct primary research, and learn the formal conventions of various genres of writing in the social sciences.

Through active engagement with social science research, students learn about the genres of research writing; the basics of graphics and document design, collaborative writing; oral presentation; basic research methodology in the social science; and ethical issues in human subject research.

**Curricular Premises:** Writing 109SS addresses the writing conventions of the social sciences, and as such, it is aligned with Writing 109ST and Writing 109HU, which address the other major divisions of the academic research disciplines. Although many students who take Writing 109SS are majoring in one of the wide variety of social science disciplines, all upper-division students can benefit from the course, which emphasizes writing for academic researchers in these disciplines. The major objective in Writing 109SS is to help students understand the forms and functions of various genres used to record and advance the work of social science research. Students are encouraged to relate the work they do in Writing 109SS to their evolving knowledge in their own disciplines.

**Course Requirements:**

**Texts:** Readings should help students improve their awareness of the purpose of social science research and how its research questions, design, and distinct writing styles and genres are suited to particular audiences and rhetorical situations. Issues addressed in readings may include the distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research; the value and limitations of different research methods; the role of theory in social science research; ethical considerations of social science methods and writing; the relationships between personal opinion, politics, and social science research; the role of social science research in shaping public policy and social action; the media's use of social science research and, of course, the relationship of all these issues to the conventions of social science writing.

**Assignments:** Informal and formal writing assignments allow students to analyze and critique previous theory and research, summarize research findings and research articles, describe and interpret primary research methods and data, and argue research claims. These assignments may include literature reviews, research reports, research proposals, annotated bibliographies and position papers. Smaller assignments—often leading up to these larger projects—may include abstracts, reviews of books and articles, and essays critiquing previous work or justifying research topics and disciplinary approaches. Many instructors assign a group research project, culminating in a group presentation and/or an essay reporting and/or evaluating the group study.

**Outcomes**:

* Recognize and analyze discipline-specific formats and organizational strategies
* Understand specialized terminology of the discipline or field
* Understand how evidence is typically used in the field to support theories or arguments
* Access secondary source materials using a range of resources, including specialized professional journals and databases, websites, and popular literature
* Be aware of the differences between primary and secondary research
* Conduct a significant independent research project
* Cite and document sources in a manner appropriate for the field
* Produce a series of shorter texts that demonstrate typical content, formats, and stylistic conventions of the field
* Refine and develop a mature style of writing appropriate for the field
* Tailor writing to meet the requirements of lay, professional, or specialized audiences
* Translate complex writing into clear, concise language.