

Wheaton College
Department of Sociology
Goals for Writing in the Major
2009

The sociology department recognizes that students need to develop academic literacy and expertise communicating knowledge visually and in writing. There is a clear consensus that specific reading, writing and presentation skills are necessary for student work to connect with theory and engage deeply with thinking in the field. There is also a consensus that writing serves a variety of purposes: demonstrating understanding, clarifying thinking, and, most importantly, communicating with lay and professional audiences.

100 Level

- Review required literature
- Learn to write one paper on one theoretical concept
- Read the fundamentals of sociology and learn to write on key concepts that all majors should become familiar with
- Speak to scholars' ideas, both conceptual and theoretical, and learn how to debate them. Write short essays on sociological topics
- In some courses, students are introduced to the concept of the précis
- Practice achieving concision and precision
- Practice selecting appropriate evidence

200-Level

- Learn to write a concept/theory paper that focuses on argumentation.
- Understand how a sociological argument is constructed.
- Critique and review literature with increasing depth and clarity.
- Learn synthesis and use it to incorporate several sources into student writing.
- Review explanatory and interpretative skills, and use them in writing sociological essays.
- In some courses, students learn how to narrate data, presenting quantitative visually and writing complementary text.

300 Level

- Refine the review of literature and introduce research methods into student writing
- Write more sophisticated synthesis essays
- Practice substantive critical analysis with a focus on explication rather than simple response
- Learn how to analyze a text, using data assessment and argumentation

- Develop relevant oral communication skills often through giving class presentations

400 Level

At this level, the public nature of communication in sociology is emphasized, as students participate regularly in the exchange of their ideas verbally and in writing

- Learn to write a conceptual thesis
- Engage in the process of empirical research
- Focus more specifically of the methods of analysis (403)
 - Explanatory
 - Interpretive
 - And/or, analysis in the form of critique
- Students should be able to design and execute a thesis that used all the above methods of analysis.
- Understand how to cite and discuss sociological viewpoints
- Practice in the oral presentation of ideas is continued
- Write a synthesis that reflects the breadth of sociology
- Learn how to read and write sociological abstracts