

The Badass Sociologist

Society for the Study of Social Problems

Teaching Social Problems Division Newsletter

A NOTE FROM THE DIVISION CHAIR

HEPHZIBAH V. STRMIC-PAWL

Dear TSPers,

I hope that this newsletter finds you well and not too deep in work and grading! For those of you who were unable to attend the SSSP meeting in Chicago, our division sponsored sessions were a great success! All of our sessions had good turnout and critical conversation. During our business meeting we discussed sessions for the next annual meeting, ideas on how to increase membership in our division, and a possible name change. The sessions for the next meeting are listed on the following page. Regarding membership, we encourage you to sponsor a graduate student's membership *or* if you know of a graduate student who wants to join but needs a financial sponsor, please let me know. Another way to increase membership is for you - as members - to let me know what resources, opportunities, or sessions you think are helpful. We are also pondering a name change, please send suggestions to my email. Other information to look out for in this newsletter is a wonderful piece about encouraging student writing by Lynn Green, the graduate student paper award announcement, profiles for two members on the job market, and other announcements. Always feel free to send me any suggestions, comments, or questions.

In solidarity, hephzibah

hvsp@mville.edu

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IMPORTANT DATES

JANUARY 31ST

SSSP Annual Meeting
Paper Submission

JANUARY 31ST

Student Paper
Competition Submission

AUGU 19-21

SSSP Annual Meeting
Seattle, WA

TEACHING SOCIAL PROBLEMS SPONSORED SESSIONS FOR SSSP 2016



SUBMIT YOUR PAPERS AND GET YOUR FRIENDS TO SUBMIT, WE HAVE SOME GREAT SESSIONS!

"Teaching through Comedy"

"Working with Undergraduates," Critical Dialogue

"Experiencing and Responding to Microaggressions in the Classroom," Workshop (Invited)

"Pedagogical (R)evolutions in a Globalizing World,," co-sponsored with Educational Problems

"Teaching Globalization," co-sponsored with Global

"Teaching Racial Inequalities," co-sponsored with Racial and Ethnic Minorities

"Teaching Crime and Juvenile Delinquency as a Social Problem," co-sponsored with Crime and Juvenile Delinquency



ELECTIONS: NEW CHAIR

My two year term as division chair is coming to an end. With the start of the SSSP annual meeting in 2016, the Teaching Social Problems Division needs a new chair. This opportunity is a wonderful experience to give back to SSSP and highlight the importance of teaching in our profession.

Please send nominations (self-nominations are welcome) to hvsp@mville.edu

A NAME CHANGE FOR THE TEACHING SOCIAL PROBLEMS DIVISION?

At the annual meeting this past summer, attendees of the TSP business meeting discussed a possible name change for the Teaching Social Problems Division. Concerns that were addressed included: "teaching social problems" does not accurately reflect all that the division addresses, SSSP members might think that the division only speaks to people who teach courses on social problems, and that the division might need some updating and revising to increase membership.

Thus, if you think our division needs a name change, please submit your suggestions for name changes to hvsp@mville.edu

We will vote on a name change through the SSSP ballot.

SSSP MEMBER PUBLICATIONS

Jerome Krase, 2015, "Seeing the Right to the City Change" in *Inclusive City – Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Mobilität und Diversität zur Stadtgesellschaft*, edited by Wolf-D. Bukow, Melanie Behrens, Karin Cudak, and Christoph Strück, VS Verlag: 23-42.

Jerome Krase and Timothy Shortell, (2015) "Seeing Islam in Global Cities: A Spatial Semiotic Analysis," in *Seeing Religion: Toward a Visual Sociology of Religion*, edited by Roman R. Williams. Routledge: 61-84.

Call for Newsletter Editor

The Badass Sociologist needs an editor!

Why do it?

- ▶ You get to interact with our cool members!
- ▶ You get to learn a new computer app!
- ▶ It looks great on your CV!
- ▶ You're supporting SSSP and TSP!
- ▶ You can use the stipend to splurge on that latte!

➤ Email hvsp@mville.edu for more information

"UNFETTERED WRITING: REDUCING ANXIETY TO FACILITATE WRITING, LEARNING AND TRUST

LYNN H. GREEN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

I have been professing sociology for fourteen years at the first HBCU in the nation, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. All too often I am stunned by students' first writing submissions though surely I am not the only professor in America to feel the strain of navigating tension between focusing on academic content and facilitating college-level writing. In this teaching note, I suggest that as instructors of social problems, we can do better with both of these learning objectives by turning students' writing anxiety into a powerful tool for academic success.

"TO REDUCE ANXIETY PARALYSIS, SELF-DEPRECIATION, AND SELF-DISTRUST"

Writing Anxiety: It's Only Human

In Writing as an Act of Courage:

How Writers Transform Fear
Ralph Keyes quotes the prolific author E.B. White who confessed that one of his worst fears of writing was the "fear that I was unknowing about things I should know about" (4). In *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*, successful film writer Steven Pressfield notes how serious physical and emotional symptoms may arise when we engage in creative processes due to very primitive fears such as the fear of being selfish, of betraying our race; the fear of failure and the fear of seeming ridiculous (142).

Inspired by these authors to address my own writing anxiety, I came to view students' avoiding and procrastinating writing, plagiarizing and rushing through assignments with little to no proof-reading, as very human ways of coping with normal anxiety and insecurity when asked to share one's own true thoughts with others. What appears to us to be a simple act of completing a one-page paper may indeed be a psychologically and cognitively overwhelming task to even the brightest and most talented of students.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Paulo Friere addresses more specific fears that often plague the disempowered. He argues that

self-depreciation and a distrust of the self are common outcomes among those oppressed by social structures (63). I suggest Friere would agree that my primarily first-generation, minority and low-income students at Cheyney are among those "who have been unjustly dealt with" and all-too-often "deprived of their voice" (50). When we, with the power and authority of a professor, ask those deprived of a voice to write down their own thoughts, the request itself intimidates as we are in essence asking students to make their ideas visible and vulnerable to criticism. As Keyes points out, sending such pieces of ourselves "out there" is a genuine act of courage; doing so requires the ability to overcome some of our deepest fears. To reduce anxiety paralysis, self-depreciation, and self-distrust, I engage first-year students immediately in what I call Unfettered Writing.

Unfettered Writing

Unfettered Writing is designed to reduce writing anxiety by getting students to write often in order to facilitate acquisition of the sociological imagination and establish trust between students and faculty. To these ends Unfettered Writing (UFW) ignores the technical aspects of students' written work by not grading these

aspects at all. UFW unfolds as follows.

Write, Write, and Write Some More

In my Introduction to Sociology courses students are required to post and bring to weekly discussion a one-page “commentary” on the reading assignment. In these commentaries, grammar, usage, spelling, etc. do not count whatsoever in grading. In these informal weekly writings, I want the students to focus on content only. I want each student to think about sociology freed from the constraints of any deficits in his/her writing or grammatical abilities; I want them to write unencumbered and unfettered by top-down rules. Commentaries are akin to sociological journal entries: students discuss their reactions to articles using concepts and terminology from lectures and readings. UFW thereby ignores the writing structure to enable students to enjoy reading sociology and recording their insights rather than getting bogged down by the writing itself. I find that eliminating “punishment” for poor writing, spelling or grammar encourages and frees students to focus on the substance of their ideas and acquiring a sociological imagination.

I grade commentaries generously; responses are virtually all positive in the first month or so. I take care to note anything that is interesting and shows understanding of the text. Gradually, I suggest, somewhere around week three, that “going forward” they should incorporate more sociological terms and concepts from lectures. By the midterm, I make more

pointed suggestions about sociological content – though still not about the writing itself. I am more than inspired to see the week-by-week progress in their understanding of social forces in their own words and through their own voices.

The Next Stage of Unfettered Writing: Take-Home Essay Exams

When I have the rare luxury of Introduction to Sociology classes with 25 or fewer students (vs. my typical two sections of 50) I assign one-page “take-home” essays for the midterm and final exams. The students have five days to respond to one of two broadly focused questions in about 250 words. The printed essay then serves as a “ticket” to the in-class multiple-choice part of the exam. Given that these take-home essays are “formal” I do take the time to highlight errors but still do not reduce grades for having less than ideal English/writing skills.

When I return the midterm essays I engage in a serious but non-threatening discussion about the importance of writing skills to academic and professional success. I underscore that I love to work with students on writing and suggest that they speak with me if not satisfied with the amount of red ink on the page and/or seek tutoring through our Writing Center and that they do so promptly. Above all, I emphasize that they have no reason ever to be embarrassed by seeking to improve their writing skills. I stress that writing only improves when you work on it and this is as true for professors as it is for students.

**"I WANT THEM TO WRITE
UNENCUMBERED AND
UNFETTERED BY
TOP-DOWN RULES"**

Summary

While this essay focused on UFW for the beginning student, I am currently working on a more detailed account of the various ways I adapt the strategy in upper level courses. For now, I point out that at any course level UFW requires us, the professors, to relinquish our nerdy need for students to write perfectly. In doing so, we liberate them from the pressure to meet our rules which facilitates an open mind toward course substance and the ongoing process of becoming better writers. Finally and equally important, I have seen this process generate actual paradigm shifts in students’ confidence to take more risks and trust others with the precious words of their genuine voices. I hope Unfettered Writing may do the same for you and your students.

Works Cited

Friere, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/ 2000). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Keyes, Ralph. (2003). *The Courage to Write: How Writers Transcend Fear*. New York: Henry Holt & Company.

Pressfield, Steven. (2002). *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. New York: Time Warner Books.

SSSP UPDATES

SSSP AWARDS

Know the awards that SSSP offers, check them out [here](#)

AND SSSP SCHOLARSHIPS

check those out [here](#)

TEACHING SOCIAL PROBLEMS STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION ANNOUNCEMENT

The [Teaching Social Problems Division](#) announces its 2016 Outstanding Student Paper Competition.

Examples of paper topics include innovative teaching methods, “best practices” in the classroom, service-learning courses, using technology, using media, and assessment of learning. The winner will receive a cash award of \$100, a certificate of recognition, a one year membership to SSSP, and payment of the 2016 conference registration fee. The winner also receives an opportunity to present this paper at the 2016 SSSP meeting.

To be eligible, a paper must meet the following criteria: (1) the applicant must be a graduate student at the time of the 2016 SSSP annual meeting (or graduated in 2016); (2) the paper must not be co-authored with a faculty member or a colleague who is not a student; (3) the paper must have been completed between January 2014 and January 2016; (4) The paper may not have been submitted or accepted for publication (papers that have been presented at a professional meeting or that have been submitted for presentation at a professional meeting are eligible); (5) The paper must be 30 pages or less, including notes, references, and tables; (6) Please note that any paper submitted for consideration for the Paper Award must also be submitted to be presented at the [2016 meeting of the SSSP](#). Double submission to other SSSP award competitions will disqualify the submission.

Self nominations are welcome and highly encouraged. Please submit the paper electronically as a Word-compatible file, along with a letter of nomination, to the Outstanding Paper Competition committee chair: Dr. Hephzibah Strmic-Pawl, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Manhattanville College, 2900 Purchase Street, Purchase, NY 10577; hvsp@mville.edu (email submissions preferred). The winner will be announced prior to the 2016 SSSP Annual Meeting in Seattle, WA.

Deadline: January 31, 2016

For more information, see the award website for all divisions

Check out TSP on our social networks!

Facebook www.facebook.com/SSSPTSP

Twitter [@ssspteaching](https://twitter.com/ssspteaching)

ON THE MARKET

Marie Skoczylas, PhD in Sociology, and certificate in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (expected 2016)



My research and teaching interests are in the areas of gender and social movements. I have five years of experience teaching sociology at the University of Pittsburgh including courses on Deviance and Social Control, the Sociology of Globalization, and Social Research Methods. I am currently in my second year as a Visiting Instructor in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies program, teaching sections of Feminist Theory. My dissertation examines the Occupy movement in the U.S. that emerged as part of a new wave of political contention that began in 2011 with the Arab Spring protests in North Africa and the Middle East, spread throughout Europe and the United States and elsewhere, and that continues to shape responses to inequality. I analyze cases of Occupy movements in New York City (NY), Oakland (CA), and Pittsburgh (PA) to assess how participants sought to address gender, race, and class inequalities and create alternate economic institutions and new forms of democracy through "leaderless" networks and decentralized organization. MBS@pitt.edu.

Bradley J. Zopf, Ph.D. expected July 2016; University of Illinois at Chicago



Dissertation Title: Narrating through Ambivalence: Re-Examining Arab and Middle Eastern Racial Identity

My dissertation examines how Egyptians interpret, manage, and respond to racial formation experiences. Through in-depth qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations, I explore how Egyptians construct and express a sense of ambivalence surrounding racial identity in the United States. In constructing a non-white/non-black racial positionality, Egyptians negotiate the ambivalence created by the contradiction between their official racial classification and their self-perceived racial identity. Racial narratives from interviews reveal that racial formation, racial identity, and racial classification are fluid, ambiguous, and often contradictory experiences that result in complicated practices and strategies of race-making. Dissertation Chair: Dr. Nilda Flores-Gonzalez (UIC)

Areas of Research Specialization: Race and Ethnicity; Sociological Theory; Qualitative Methods; Religion; Immigration

The foundation of my teaching philosophy is informed by bell hooks' critical pedagogy. She calls for teachers at all levels to engage in "transgressive" teaching to unmask and challenge both preconceived assumptions and the structures of marginalization present inside and outside of the classroom. I have three mutually reinforcing teaching goals. First, I hope to facilitate a sociological imagination that not only illuminates structures of inequality, but also challenges students' preconceived assumptions about such issues as race, gender, inequality, stratification, religion, and/or sociological theory. Second, in teaching students about the social and historical processes that create and sustain all forms of inequality, I hope to foster critical reading, writing, and problem solving skills that students can apply in a broad range of professions. Third, in designing courses that incorporate in-class activities and out-of-class immersion experiences, I encourage students to apply their sociological training outside of the classroom to enact positive change in their communities.

Teaching Interests: Racial and Ethnic Relations; Sociological Theory; Introduction to Sociology; Social Problems; Sociology of Religion; Research Methods

JOBS

Job Searching?

Check out job opportunities on the [SSSP website](#)

Have a job opening?

Post it on the SSSP website [via this link](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Papers *URBANITIES* - Journal of Urban Anthropology and Ethnography

<http://www.anthrojournal-urbanities.com/>

Urbanities is an on-line peer-reviewed academic journal launched in 2011. It is published twice a year, in May and in November. The Journal's scope is to share original ideas, explore new research trends, stimulate debate, promote critical scholarship and highlight the contribution of urban research to the social sciences and to the broader society. *Urbanities* welcomes ethnographically-based submissions from established and younger social scientists. Committed to promoting cross-disciplinary debate, *Urbanities* welcomes contributions from cognate disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, including Sociology, Geography, History, Political Sciences, Economics. *Urbanities* publishes full-length articles, review articles, comments, book reviews and carries sections on research and recently completed doctorates. As a service to the community of scholars, *Urbanities* also welcomes brief announcement and reports of conferences, academic seminars and course offerings, new books from publishers. Contributions should be sent to the Journal's Editors, Italo Pardo and Jerome Krase, at the editorial email address: urbanitiesthejournal@gmail.com *URBANITIES* is indexed by: Academic Keys (Social Sciences Journal Database), DOAJ, ERIH PLUS, InfoBase Index, SCOPUS. Several academic organizations have inbound links to *URBANITIES* and the journal is carried by many list-servers.

Humanity and Society

Multimedia Review Submissions

Recognizing the multiple modalities of communication and how presentations enhance our sociological understanding of the complex realities of the 21st century, the journal *Humanity & Society* announces the introduction of **media reviews**. We invite reviewers of sociological messages in popular films, television shows, documentaries, multimedia presentations, video games, and other forms of media. Written submissions should be approximately 1,000 words.

The journal welcomes reviewers from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives, including activists, graduate students, and practitioners in fields other than sociology. To review for *Humanity & Society*, please contact the Media Review Editor, Bhoomi K. Thakore at bhoomi.thakore@northwestern.edu with your background information and suggested review topic.

Call for Papers: Mini-Conference on Teaching Multiple Publics

Southern Sociological Society Annual Meetings; Buckhead/Atlanta, GA; April 13-16, 2016

SSS this year includes a mini-conference on Teaching Multiple Publics and we want *you* to be part of it. The mini conference includes invited panels as well as sessions selected through submissions. Our topics include a focus on skills for public engagement, scholarly activism, using social media in the classroom, teaching about families and relationships, and preparing graduate students to teach. If you have original teaching strategies to inspire sociological imagination, deeply engage with local stakeholders in community building, and/or are a scholar/activist, we encourage you to submit a proposal to the 2016 Teaching Multiple Publics Mini Conference. We welcome submissions that share successful research strategies as well as showcase research on any of the topics related to the mini-conference theme.

To submit a paper, send an extended abstract through the SSS portal by clicking on the hyper link below or going to <http://mymeetingsavvy.com/ss/login.aspx>.



**RACIAL DEMOCRACY
CRIME AND JUSTICE
NETWORK**

RUTGERS
School of Criminal Justice

**Crime & Justice Summer Research Institute:
Broadening Participation & Perspectives**

**June 27 – July 15, 2016
Rutgers University, School of Criminal Justice**

The Racial Democracy, Crime and Justice Network's Summer Research Institute (SRI) is designed to promote scholarly success and career advancement among faculty from underrepresented groups working in areas of crime and criminal justice. Faculty pursuing tenure in research-intensive institutions, academics transitioning from teaching to research institutions, and faculty members carrying out research in teaching contexts are encouraged to apply for the three-week intensive workshop.

Funded by the National Science Foundation and the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University, the SRI is organized by Dr. Jody Miller, Dr. Rod K. Brunson, and Dr. Ruth D. Peterson. During the Institute, each participant will complete an ongoing project (either a research paper or grant proposal) in preparation for journal submission or agency funding review. In addition, participants will gain information that will serve as a tool-kit tailored to successful navigation of the academic workplace.

The Summer Research Institute will provide participants with:

- Resources for completing their research projects
- Senior faculty mentors in their areas of study and within the Racial Democracy, Crime and Justice Network
- Opportunities to network with junior and senior scholars
- Workshops addressing topics related to publishing, professionalization, and career planning
- Travel expenses to Newark, NJ, housing and living expenses

The institute culminates in a research symposium where participants present their completed research before a national audience of faculty and graduate students.

Completed applications must be sent electronically by Friday, February 12, 2016. To download the application form, please see our web site (<http://cjrj.osu.edu/sri>). Send all requested application materials electronically to Maddy Novich, RDCJN Program Manager, at rdcjin@newark.rutgers.edu

Eligibility: All applicants must hold or be entering regular tenure-track positions in U.S. institutions, and be able to demonstrate how their involvement would contribute to broadening participation of underrepresented groups in crime and justice research. *Graduate students without tenure track appointments are not eligible for this program.*

Please direct all inquiries to rdcjin@newark.rutgers.edu

JOB OPENING

The College of Science at Coastal Carolina University invites applications for a tenure-track position at the rank of Assistant Professor of Sociology to begin in the fall of 2016.

Candidates must have a Ph.D. in Sociology by the time of appointment. In addition to teaching general sociology courses, the successful candidate must have teaching and research experience in social inequality (specifically Race, Class, and Gender) and in Social Justice. The successful candidate will also actively encourage and support experiential learning and undergraduate research. Prior experience with distance learning would be beneficial.

The Department has an established Social Justice Research Initiative and Social Justice Concentration. The successful candidate is expected to support and complement these programs by having the training and experience to teach at least two (2) of the following existing courses: Poverty, Environmental Sociology, Community Development, Social Policy, and Social Movements.

Coastal Carolina University is a public comprehensive liberal arts institution located just nine miles from the Atlantic coast resort of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Coastal enrolls more than 9,900 students from 45 states and 58 nations. The University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the baccalaureate and selective masters degrees of national and/or regional significance in the arts and sciences, business, humanities, education, and health and human services, a specialist degree in educational leadership, and a Ph.D. degree in Marine Science.

To apply, submit the following items electronically at <https://jobs.coastal.edu> : 1) a letter of application stating your teaching and research interests, 2) an updated curriculum vitae, 3) copies of academic transcripts, 4) teaching evaluations or evidence of teaching accomplishment, and 5) contact information for three references. Review of candidates will begin on October 15, 2015 and continue until the position is filled. Questions about the position can be directed to Professor Deborah Perkins, Chair of the Search Committee at dperkins@coastal.edu.

Coastal Carolina University is committed to building a diverse faculty and encourages applications from women and underrepresented minorities. Coastal Carolina University is an EO/AA employer.