

## Introduction to Law and Society

LGLS 110.00

Professor Robert Garot

*"It is not easy in any given case—indeed  
it is at times impossible until the courts have spoken—  
to say whether it is an instance of praiseworthy salesmanship  
or a penitentiary offense."*

--Thorstein Veblen

TTh, 1:10-2:30, PRC 201

Office: Palme House 106

Email: [garotr@kenyon.edu](mailto:garotr@kenyon.edu)

Phone: (740) 427-5886

Office Hours: Weds., 11-5 or by appointment

Sociology Office: Palme House, 101 Ward Street

Sociology Secretary: Sharon Fair

Sociology Department Phone: (740) 427-5815

### Perspectives and Overview

This course examines the intersections of law and society. It is not a sociological perspective on the legal profession; for that, you should take the course, "Sociology of Law." Neither will this course provide you background for becoming a lawyer. What this course will do is examine how law impacts society, and how society impacts the law. Hence, in many ways, the perspective of this course is the opposite of what one would find in law school, where you learn to see everyday events in a legal perspective. Instead, in this course you will learn to see how the law is invoked in everyday contexts.

It is essential that you *wrestle* with the readings for each week, and *mull over* how they apply to your own experience. I hope to open new perspectives to you, and what transforms "information" into a "perspective" that opens up new ways of thinking is wrestling with what you encounter. For each reading, I hope that you work to understand not just *what* the author is saying, but *why*. What received wisdom is she or he trying to challenge? With what ideas might they be competing? What is their evidence? I hope that you will enhance for yourself the value of what you read through the paired (and perhaps literally opposed) habits of mind of skepticism ("Ought I really believe that?") and suspended disbelief ("What if it were true?").

The idea is to foster an intense, searching class discussion. A great deal of learning happens in discussion, when one's new ideas, guesses, hunches, ideological convictions, and moral persuasions rub unexpectedly up against others'. I will assist this process through my questioning in class, and want you to have challenged each reading so that you, in turn, can be challenged by others in class.

Please feel free to discuss topics further with me after class, or before class by appointment. Be sure to exchange phone numbers with two or three other students and form study groups.

## **Requirements**

### ***Q & Q***

Each week, as indicated, you will be responsible for presenting quotes and questions for the readings, which we will use as our basis for discussion. You should provide a minimum of three quotes and three questions, along with some commentary, to fill about one page with text. Each of these will comprise 1% of your grade, and *they will not be accepted late*. I will provide one additional percentage point at my discretion, based on your participation in class discussions.

### ***Papers***

Written assignments for the class consist of one 2-3 page tutorial project and one 10-15 page term paper. For the tutorial project, you will write up the details of your actions in following a set of instructions, and the term paper will be based on an interview with a legal practitioner. Further details about the tutorial project and the term paper are presented below, and will be discussed as we proceed. Papers handed in late will lose one course percentage point for each day they are late. *I do not accept papers sent electronically.*

### ***Exams***

Three exams are required for this course, one following each section, each worth 20% of your grade. The exams will be composed primarily of short answer and short essay questions, although I may occasionally use a multiple choice, matching, or true/false format. Exams will be based on lectures and readings. *I will make special accommodations regarding exams (rescheduling, etc.) only for those students who have discussed their concerns with me ahead of time, and have provided documentation of the necessity for accommodation.* Further details about exams will be discussed in class.

### **Grading Policy**

You will not be graded on a competitive basis, so in theory everyone can do well in the class. However, in order to get a top grade, students will be expected to achieve standards of excellence in their work. If you are dissatisfied with any grade you receive, you must submit a written request for a review of the grade, including a defense, no later than one week after the work is handed back to the class. By requesting a review of the grade you receive, you invite the possibility that the new grade will be lower than the original grade, as well as the possibility that it will be higher. Points will be distributed as follows:

Q & Q: 15%

Exams: 60%

Tutorial Project: 10%

Final Paper Evidence: 5%

Final Paper: 15%

A+ 98-100	B+ 88-89	C+ 78-79	D+ 65-69
A 93-97	B 83-87	C 73-77	D 55-64
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 50-54

## **Cheating/Plagiarism**

Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be referred to the College Provost. For guidelines on avoiding these offenses, please see your Student Handbook

## **Required Readings**

All readings for this course are held on reserve in the library, and some are on electronic reserve. The Law and Society Reader, The Death of Common Sense, Divorce Lawyers and their Clients, and Environment and Enforcement are available at the Kenyon Bookstore.

Be sure to complete each week's readings **PRIOR TO** coming to class. Additional background readings are available for students who wish to read further on the week's topic. Also, be sure to check the class website frequently for announcements.

## **Weekly Topics and Readings**

Please note that the following schedule, including project and exam dates, is tentative, and may change based on how quickly we cover the material.

### **Introduction to Law and Society**

#### **Thursday, August 28<sup>th</sup>**

Abel, Richard. "What We Talk About When We Talk About Law." The Law and Society Reader, pp. 1-12.

Krislov, Samuel. 1995. "Review of the Law and Society Reader."

Friedman, Lawrence M. 1986. "The Law and Society Movement." Stanford Law Review 38: 763.

***Intro Q & Q due 9-2.***

### **Part I: What is Law?**

#### **Week 1: The Use of Rules**

#### **Tuesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Thursday, September 4<sup>th</sup>**

John Heritage. 1984. "Actions, Rules and Contexts." Chapter 5 in Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology.

Sharrock, Wes and Graham Button. 1999. "Do the Right Thing! Rule Finitism, Rule Scepticism and Rule Following." Human Studies 22:193-210.

***Week 1 Q & Q due 9-4.***

***Tutorial Project: Find an object for pursuing instructed actions.***

#### **Week 2: For Rules and Against Rules**

#### **Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>**

Calavita, Kitty. "Worker Safety, Law, and Social Change: The Italian Case." The Law and Society Reader #11.

Howard, Philip K. The Death of Common Sense. New York: Random House. Chapter 1.

***Week 2 Q & Q due 9-9.***

***Tutorial Project Due September 11<sup>th</sup>.***

### **Week 3: Rules in Action**

**Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup>**

Blankenburg, Erhard. "The Selectivity of Legal Sanctions: An Empirical Investigation of Shoplifting." The Law and Society Reader #5.

Sidnell, Jack. 2002. "An Ethnographic Consideration of Rule-Following." Unpublished Manuscript.

***Week 3 Q & Q due 9-16.***

**Exam #1: Tuesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

### **Part II: Macro Perspectives on Law and Society**

**Week 4: Equality: Class, and Gender and Law**

**Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup>**

Galanter, Marc. "Why the 'Haves' Come Out Ahead: Speculations on the Limits of Legal Change." The Law and Society Reader #14.

Daly, Kathleen. "Structure and Practice of Familial-Based Justice in a Criminal Court." The Law and Society Reader #16.

Whyte, William F. "Interviewing in the Field."

***Week 4 Q & Q due 9-25.***

***Term Paper:*** Find Interviewee by 9-30. Make appointment with interviewee between 10-7 and 10-16.

### **Week 5: Equality: Race in the Law**

**Tuesday, September 30<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Mertz, Elizabeth. "The Uses of History: Language, Ideology, and the Law in the United States and South Africa." The Law and Society Reader #17.

Radelet, Michael L. and Glenn L. Pierce. "Race and Prosecutorial Discretion in Homicide Cases." The Law and Society Reader #15.

***Week 5 Q & Q due 9-30.***

***Term Paper:*** Turn in interview schedule on October 2nd.

### **Week 6: Law in a National Context**

**Tuesday, October 7<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup>**

Douglas, Lawrence; Austin Sarat and Martha Merrill Umphrey. 2002. Lives in the Law. Pp. 1-19.

Tanase, Takao. "The Management of Disputes: Automobile Accident Compensation in Japan." The Law and Society Reader #3.

*Optional:*

Henry, Stuart. "Community Justice, Capitalist Society, and Human Agency: The Dialectics of Collective Law in the Cooperative." The Law and Society Reader #4.

***Week 6 Q & Q due 10-7.***

***Term Paper:*** Conduct Interview between 10-7 and 10-16.

### **Week 7: Norm Creation**

**Tuesday, October 14<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>**

Scheerer, Sebastian. "The New Dutch and German Drug Laws: Social and Political Conditions for Criminalization and Decriminalization." The Law and Society Reader #10.

Calavita, Kitty. "Worker Safety, Law and Social Change: The Italian Case." The Law and Society Reader #11.

**Week 7 Q & Q due 10-14.**

**Term Paper:** *Begin transcribing interview.*

### **Week 8: Regulation**

**Tuesday, October 21<sup>st</sup> and Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Ekland-Olson, Sheldon and Steve J. Martin. "Organizational Compliance with Court-Ordered Reform." The Law and Society Reader #12.

Gilboy, Janet A. "Penetrability of Administrative Systems: Political 'Casework' and Immigration Inspections." The Law and Society Reader #13.

**Week 8 Q & Q due 10-21.**

**Term Paper:** *Finish transcribing interview.*

### **Week 9: The Law and Political Struggles**

**Tuesday, October 28<sup>th</sup>**

Gabel, Peter and Paul Harris. "Building Power and Breaking Images: Critical Legal Theory and the Practice of Law." New York Review of Law and Social Change. 11: 369-411. 1982/1983.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2001. "Grounded Theory." Pp. 335-352 in Robert M. Emerson (Ed.) Contemporary Field Research. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland.

**Week 9 Q & Q due 10-28.**

**Term Paper:** *Open Coding.*

### **Exam #2: Thursday, October 30<sup>th</sup>**

### **Part III: Micro Perspectives on Law and Society**

#### **Week 10: Lawyer/Client Interaction**

**Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup>**

Sarat, Austin and William L.F. Felstiner. "Law and Social Relations: Vocabulary of Motive in Lawyer/Client Interaction." The Law and Society Reader #19.

*Optional:*

Sarat, Austin and William L.F. Felstiner. 1995. Divorce Lawyers and Their Clients: Power and Meaning in the Legal Process. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1-4.

**Week 10 Q & Q due 11-4.**

**Term Paper:** *Focused coding..*

#### **Week 11: Disputes in Community**

**Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, November 13<sup>th</sup>**

Engel, David M. "The Oven Bird's Song: Insiders, Outsiders, and Personal Injuries in an American Community." The Law and Society Reader #1.

Merry, Sally Engle. "Going to Court: Strategies for Dispute Management in an American Urban Neighborhood." The Law and Society Reader #2.

O'Barr, William M. and John M. Conley. "Lay Expectations of the Civil Justice System." The Law and Society Reader #18.

**Week 11 Q & Q due 11-11.**

**Term Paper:** *Complete one analytic memo by 11-13.*

**Week 12: Sanctioning and Selectivity. Part 1: Plea Bargaining**  
**Tuesday, November 18<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup>**

Alschuler, Albert W. "Plea Bargaining and Its History." The Law and Society Reader #7.

Heumann, Milton and Colin Loftin. "Mandatory Sentencing and the Abolition of Plea Bargaining: The Michigan Felony Firearm Statute. The Law and Society Reader #9.

**Week 12 Q & Q due 11-18.**

**Term Paper:** *Complete one analytic section by 11-20.*

**November 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>: Happy Thanksgiving**

**Week 13: Sanctioning and Selectivity. Part 2: Holistic Effects**  
**Tuesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>**

Emerson, Robert M. "Holistic Effects in Social Control Decision-Making." The Law and Society Reader #8.

Sudnow. "Normal Crimes"

*Optional:*

Hawkins, Keith. 1984. Environment and Enforcement: Regulation and the Social Definition of Pollution. Oxford: Claredon Press. (selected excerpts)

**Week 13 Q & Q due 12-2.**

**Term Paper:** *Rough draft due 12-4.*

**Week 14: The Use of Social Science Research in Law**  
**Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, December 11<sup>th</sup>**

Lempert, Richard. 1988. "Between Cup and Lip": Social Science Influences on Law and Policy, 10 Law & Policy 167.

**Final Paper Due 12-11.**

**Final Exam**

**Paper Guidelines**

**Tutorial Project: The Lebenswelt Pair (Instructions and Instructed Actions)**

In the first week of class, you will need to find a set of instructions, and then follow them, carefully keeping note of the ways in which you must elaborate on the instructions in order to make them sensible. Typically we mask this artful work of following instructions: you will need to make it evident.

Your tone may be informal in style and should be written in first person, but do not become sloppy, and be sure to abide by standard rules of spelling, grammar, etc. Include your name, student ID number and date in the upper right hand corner of the first page. Do not use a title page, or any sort of binder. Pages must be stapled, not paper-clipped. Be sure to number your pages, and include your name and ID number in a footer in the bottom center of each page, by the page number. Your grade will be based on how thoughtfully you complete the project, as reflected in the detail and skill of your write-up. If you are unhappy with your grade, you may complete the tutorial project again with a different set of instructions.

## **Final Paper: Interviewing a Provider of Law in Society**

Writing a paper based on interview data may be different from papers you have written for other courses, in that the paper will be inductive. In other words, you will not be trying to test a hypothesis, or prove a theory, but you will develop your thesis based on the data. This is often called a “grounded” approach, meaning that your analysis will be grounded in your data, and you will work from data to theory, rather than working top down, from theory to data. This does not mean that your data collection will not be theoretically informed. It does mean that you will not quite know what your paper will be about until after you have conducted, transcribed and coded, and analyzed your interviews. Even then, your data may still present surprises.

Since so much work will be put into the *process* of writing this paper, you will need to follow a schedule, and document your progress. In fact, 5% of your course grade will be dependent on such progress, as documented on your interview progress sheet, and supported by attached evidence. Be sure to bring this evidence to class, as I will check it regularly throughout the term. You will turn in this material, neatly organized in a folder with the progress sheet attached on top, when you turn in your final paper. One-third of your paper grade will be based on your selection of and use of data, and two-thirds will be based on your use of readings and materials from the course.

### 1. Find an Interviewee (Deadline, 9/30)

For your term paper, you will interview a professional with practical experience in topics from the course. Possible occupations for interviewees may include a judge, a lawyer, a police officer, or a welfare eligibility officer. You may not choose pre-existing friends or family members, nor individuals with whom you maintain a business relationship, such as your family physician, or your current teacher. You may choose acquaintances with whom you have come in contact through community involvements, and others you have met briefly, and would like to get to know better. You may begin by asking friends or family members for contacts, by opening up a phone book, or by talking with people on your daily rounds.

Once you’ve found a potential respondent, tell them that you’re a sociologist conducting a study on life in the modern metropolis, and you’re wondering if they’d like to be interviewed. If they assent, make sure they are over the age of 18 (those under 18 need parental permission, so you would have to make up a form for that), and willing to be tape recorded. If they agree, arrange to conduct the interview at a mutually agreeable quiet location where you are not likely to be disturbed or interrupted. Schedule at least three hours for the interview. Schedule your interview between October 7<sup>th</sup> and October 16<sup>th</sup>.

### 2. Write up an Interview Schedule (Due, 10/2)

Although your interview should proceed like an informal conversation, you should put considerable thought into the sorts of questions you would like to ask. Below are areas I focused on for my dissertation research:

- Where informant has lived over the life course
- Reasons for moving
- Family structure, siblings and place in birth order
- Neighborhoods lived in, how they liked them
- Experiences in schools attended
- Fights, what happened, reasons for, how felt about

- Revenge fantasies; regrets
- Fights avoided, why, how, how felt about
- Girlfriends, how feel about multiple partners, domestic abuse
- Hobbies
- Drug use
- Places avoided; fear of crime
- What it means to be a "man"
- If they alluded to the fact that they were involved in a gang, I asked what this involvement consists of, how they were recruited, how they got out, etc.
- If they alluded to the fact that they were not involved in a gang, I asked what they think about gangs, how they avoided gangs, their thoughts about gangs and others who are involved in them, etc.

Put time into developing questions that merge your own personal interests with the topics from this course. Once I have checked your questions, you may conduct your interview.

### 3. Conduct the Interviews (Deadline, 10/16)

Make sure to talk as little as possible during your interview. Begin by turning on the tape recorder (!), and reintroduce yourself and your reason for the interview. Assure your respondent that everything they say will be strictly confidential and anonymous. Then conduct your interview, maintaining eye contact throughout. Nod your head often, and use many continuers ("Mm, hm," "Tell me more about that," "Really? And then what happened," etc.). Try to follow the general pattern of the questions you laid out in advance, but do not hesitate to deviate from them. Think of the interview as a mental challenge, in which you are working to unearth the details of your informant's life. Stay attentive for any lapses, inconsistencies, or areas for further questions; it will be much more difficult to ask about such matters after the interview is over, than in the heat of the moment. Once you think you have run out of questions, then, and only then, look down at your "cheat sheet" of questions, and ask any that remain. At the close of the interview, thank your respondent effusively, ask them if it would be OK to call for a follow-up, and ask if they'd like to see the transcript and the final paper.

### 4. Transcribe Interviews (Deadline, 10/23)

Transcribing interviews is not easy work. A good rule of thumb is to set aside 3 hours of transcribing for each half-hour of interview. We should be able to use transcribing machines in the Rural Studies Center. Make all margins one inch, except for your right margin, which should be about 3.5 inches. Try to transcribe as much of your interview as possible, but if you are short of time, you may limit your transcription to the most useful parts of the interview (though this is hard to know ahead of time). You may want to listen to your interview tapes a number of times before transcribing. However much you transcribe, remember that it will be turned in and used to compute your final grade.

### 5. Open Coding (Deadline, 10/30) and 6. Focused Coding (Deadline, 11/6)

In class, we will discuss and practice two types of coding: open coding and focused coding, as discussed in the reading by Kathy Charmaz. You will work with a partner to code and recode your papers, and highlight the data which is most relevant for building an argument.

### 7. Prepare One Analytical Memos (Deadline, 11/13)



After you have thoroughly coded your data, take an excerpt of your consultant's *most poignant* data and analyze it in detail as discussed by Kathy Charmaz. Once you receive feedback on this memo, feel free to continue writing memos based on your data excerpts.

#### 8. Prepare One Analytic Section (Deadline, 11-20)

Find two more *poignant* data fragments which contrast with your first fragment, and write analytic memos for these. Now weave the three fragments together into an analysis in which you compare and contrast their analytic points. Your final paper should contain roughly three such analytic sections.

#### 9. Write a Rough Draft of your Paper (Deadline, 12/4)

Begin with an introductory paragraph, bringing your reader into your essay with an intriguing "hook" or "lead." Be sure to include a thesis statement, telling your reader your conclusions, and what they should expect to find along the way. Then take about five pages to describe the theoretical foundations of your approach, based in the course readings. Next, proceed with your three (or more) analytical sections bringing in course readings where relevant. Finally, conclude by stating what you have learned, perhaps providing policy recommendations.

### **General Writing Guidelines\***

#### **Format and Presentation**

Do not skip lines between paragraphs (like I'm doing here). Use an easily legible font, 12-point size works in most types. Papers should be typewritten, double-spaced with approximately 1" margins. Number all pages. Papers should be stapled. This means no plastic binders, no folding the edges together and no paper clips. The following information should appear in the upper right-hand corner of the first page: name, student ID#, date, paper topic number, and title. A bibliography is a necessary part of a research paper (see Citation, below), and should be attached at the end.

#### **General Organization**

You should make sure that you read the paper assignment instructions and follow them closely. The most important feature of your paper is that you have answered the question you have chosen. No matter how good your ideas are, if can't demonstrate your understanding of the question, and give an answer to it in your paper, then you will not do very well.

Academic papers have introductions, bodies, and conclusions. An introduction should be simple and explicit, and describe what you are going to do, and in what order. It should provide a complete "road map" for the rest of the paper. Tell your reader something about the study you are conducting, what you will focus on in the paper, what points you will be making, what you will argue, and what you will conclude. It is perfectly acceptable to use the first person voice and say, "I will focus on ...", after all who is writing this paper, anyway?

The body of the paper must be well organized. You must use paragraphs to divide your thoughts. A paragraph is a set of sentences with one common idea. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence and make one main point. Your argument should flow logically from one paragraph to the next. Please use subheadings if they are appropriate or help the reader navigate through different sections of the paper. I should be able to make sense of your paper, in a general way, by reading the introduction, the first sentence of each paragraph, and the conclusion.

In your analysis, you will need to make explicit links between your "data" and the relevant course material. You will need to organize your paper around a description of the data you are analyzing and a review of the course material that helps to make your points. You should address all of the analytical issues I have proposed in the question. You may find that these do not exhaust the points you need to make, and answering your own additional questions may help further your analysis. Don't overlook a review of the course material (even though you know that I already know it). That way I can determine how fluent you are with the concepts, and how well you are able to apply them to your subject matter. There are various strategies for integrating the course material with an analysis of your data, but these are indispensable.

For your conclusion, restate the paper's highlights and take the opportunity to tie things up neatly. You may restate ideas from your opening paragraph. Repeat your thesis and briefly summarize the main evidence you have included. After reviewing your main points, you may speculate, include personal reactions, pose additional questions or suggest avenues for future research, and the like. If you have some doubts about whether your format will work effectively for the assignment, please feel free to consult with me first.

### **Citation**

This is sometimes tricky, but by this point in your academic career, it is essential that you do it correctly. It is expected that you will use material from the texts and lecture to analyze your subject. Thus, whether you use direct quotes or paraphrases, you must give credit to the authors of those words, when they are not your own.

If you cite a lecture, do it this way: (Lecture, 9/9/02). However, relying solely on lecture citations for material that is also in the readings reveals to me that your familiarity with the readings is inadequate. So you should be sure to prioritize. Where appropriate, always cite the original source and not my delivery of it in lecture.

Directly quoted course materials from the reader should be cited in one of the following ways.

"Self-absorption is consistent with the emphasis on self-satisfaction fostered by capitalism in general and advertising in particular" (Karp, 1996:176).

Or alternately:

David A. Karp (1996:176) suggests that, "self-absorption is consistent with the emphasis on self-satisfaction fostered by capitalism in general and advertising in particular."

Also, be sure to cite any ideas that you borrow, not just quoted text. For instance:

Many analysts have noted how self-absorption may be fostered by capitalism (Karp, 1996:176).

Any direct quotation that is longer than three lines needs to be set off from the body of the paper by indenting and single-spacing. Since your papers will be double-spaced and indented only to begin paragraphs, you will see the contrast. Be careful to differentiate between what the textbook authors are saying themselves, and the other authors that they may in turn quote. Cite accordingly. Do not string quotes together without putting them in context with your own prose. When you use

a direct quote, place it in the context of a sentence that includes an explanation of what the quote means and why it is useful in service of the point you are making.

A full reference, including the author's name, book or article title, publishing information and page numbers will appear in a separate, alphabetically organized bibliography at the end of the paper, under the heading, "References." Refer the bibliographies of our articles as examples.

## **Style**

In general, write as simply as possible. Never use a big word, when a little one will do. Big words don't necessarily convey intellectual prowess – especially when they are awkwardly used. Your word choice should be appropriate to formal writing: no slang, and no contractions ("can't", "don't"), unless you are quoting others or it somehow better helps you to make your point. You must use words that actually exist, and words must be used correctly. Look up definitions and spellings if you are unsure. Spell check often misses words.

Avoid using the indefinite "you". You will notice that I am addressing these instructions to you; that is, I am using the second person. That is because I am giving these instructions to a definite person or set of persons. In your papers, unless you mean to address the reader directly, do not use "you" when you mean to use "one" or "we." Refer to yourself as "I" instead of the royal "we." It is perfectly acceptable to use the first person singular in papers – it is not too informal. Use "we" for the author and the reader together: "We have seen how breaching experiments disturb our taken-for-granted notions about reality." Never refer to "society" as an active agent (that's my pet peeve), as in, "Society requires that people follow norms."

Avoid "a lot" (and by the way it's not spelled "alot"), and "very". Hemingway and Morrison do not need them, and neither do you. Don't confuse "their/there/they're" or "it's/its", or "to/two/too", or "were/we're/where", etc. Also please differentiate between "suppose" and "supposed" – these are not interchangeable, and are almost always improperly applied. These are sets of words that give students trouble, so please be careful.

Try to avoid using "he", "his", or "mankind" to mean anyone or all in general. If for some reason you have a strong ideological commitment to using "he" as the generic, you may do so, but it is not accurate, and there are other options available.

Make sure that nouns and verbs agree in number. Avoid sentence fragments. Make sure that the sentences you write have subjects and predicates. Verbs are also necessary. Do not leave a clause hanging without these necessary components. Avoid run-on sentences. Make sure that if you link things together in a sentence that you do so by using the proper connective words or punctuation marks. These kinds of mistakes can often be caught by reading your paper aloud. If it sounds wrong, it probably is.

Always follow the parsimony principle. That is, use as few words as possible to make your point.

## **Process**

One way to start is by saying your ideas out loud, and writing them down. Just get the words out of your head and onto the page where you will be able to work with them more easily. I strongly suggest that you write more than one draft of your paper. Most successful papers are begun well

in advance of the night before the assignment is due. The best way to start is to just spew out a messy first draft, getting all of your ideas and facts down on paper (if you write long-hand) or your computer screen (if you prefer to word process). Then, a second draft will help you to organize the sections, focus your argument, and refine the content and style.

You must be at this point before you come to see me about your paper. Although we will be unable to read entire drafts, we may be able to discuss with you specific parts of your thesis or analysis, and/or help you with difficulties in transitions between ideas or sections of your argument. A final draft is useful for correcting spelling and grammatical errors, and for formatting the paper. You must proofread your own paper. It is not acceptable to turn in a paper with typographical errors, misspellings, nouns and verbs that do not agree, misused words, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, etc. You may want to rewrite the beginning or end of your paper in the last draft. Often in composing your paper, you will have changed your focus or ideas somewhat by the time you finish. You will want to make sure that these changes are reflected in a new version of your introduction or conclusion.

Finally, re-read your own paper and imagine that someone else wrote it. Does it make sense? Fix it, if it doesn't. You may also want to get someone else to read your paper and give you comments. It is often hard to be objective when you are so close in the writing process. If you have trouble with your writing, get help: see me during office hours, or seek assistance from the writing center on campus. For further suggestions on writing, I suggest:

Richlin-Klonsky, Judith and Ellen Strenski (Eds.). 1994. A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers. New York: St. Martin's Press.  
Becker, Howard S. 1986. Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Also, please feel free to visit during office hours for personal assistance.

Good luck, and start writing now!

\*This document adapted with thanks from Dr. Kerry Ferris' Case Study Essay Guidelines.