TIPS FOR WRITING ANALYTICAL SOCIology PAPERS

This document is intended as an additional resource for undergraduate students taking sociology courses at UW. It is not intended to replace instructions from your professors and TAs. In all cases follow course-specific assignment instructions, and consult your TA or professor if you have questions.

- **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!** You must cite all sources you use—not only for direct quotations, but also for data, for facts that are not common knowledge, and very importantly for ideas that are not your own. The UW policy on academic honest explains what plagiarism is, but also the consequences for students found to have committed it: [http://www.washington.edu/uaa/advising/help/academichonesty.php](http://www.washington.edu/uaa/advising/help/academichonesty.php)

- It is generally expected that you state your argument (usually called a “thesis statement”) in the first couple paragraphs (preferably the first). For theory application papers, this would include mention of the theory or argument you are applying and the case or empirical phenomenon to which you are applying it.

- Introductions and conclusions are important: they are the first and last impression given to your readers. A good introduction summarizes what the author does in the paper, and sets up (“motivates”) the analytical problem or question. It is sometimes referred to as a “roadmap” for the paper. Some writers find it effective to present an interesting or controversial statement or a quote in the introduction to gain the reader’s attention. However, you should make certain that the quote or information is actually relevant to your thesis (your main argument)!

- A good conclusion almost always restates the argument and the evidence brought to bear. This is not a place to introduce new evidence or make new claims. However, you might address unresolved issues, why we should care about the topic of the paper, directions for future research, etc.

- Once you have completed the paper, you should revisit the introduction and conclusion to make sure that they “match” each other, and that they reflect the argument you make in the body of the paper.

- Most analytical sociology assignments should not rely upon personal anecdotes, experiences, or opinions as “data” to make an argument. This varies by assignment—for example, some ask you to incorporate personal experiences and opinions. If you are unsure, check with your instructor or TA.

- It is considered appropriate to use subject headers in longer analytical papers, as it helps guide the reader and organize your argument.

- Unless you are instructed otherwise, it can be helpful to write analytical papers in first person (using “I statements”): this helps you avoid passive constructions, wordiness, and confusion about voice (who is arguing what). If your instructor prefers that you avoid the first person in your papers, you can write “This paper argues...” in order to distinguish your voice from that of the authors/theories/articles you discuss.