

STS 200 Writing Lab

This syllabus is based on the Spring 2009 STS 200 Writing Lab syllabus prepared by Dr. Selma Sabanovic. Our debt to her is gratefully acknowledged.

This year the STS Senior Colloquium (STS 200) is divided into two parts: the Reading Sections and the Writing Lab. The Writing Lab is designed to support and guide you through the process of writing **your senior papers in STS**. Class time will be spent discussing the writing process, research design and methods, and alternative ways of presenting findings. A key element of the course is the schedule of **weekly research memos** that will help you progress to a final paper. The process will lead to both a **written senior paper** and a **final presentation** based on that paper.

The first session of STS 200 will include a brief introduction to the Writing Lab. Then **three other class sessions** of STS 200 will be devoted to the Writing Lab:

- Week 2—January 12
- Week 5—February 2
- Week 8—February 23

Writing lab objectives

In this part of STS 200, you will:

- Develop and conduct a research project on an innovative topic in STS. This project should be driven by individual student interests and incorporate relevant STS concepts and perspectives;
- Complete a research paper based on this research project. The paper must have a specific thesis, include a careful argument, be well written, and incorporate relevant STS materials, perspectives, concepts and/or theories.
- Learn how to evaluate work in STS critically and engage constructively with your intellectual community.

Core features of the writing lab

Senior papers:

You will write **a 20-25-page senior paper** on an STS topic of your choice, although we hope that you chose your topic so that it fits the theme of this seminar. The process of writing the paper will include the following steps:

- You will identify a specific topic or question for your paper, posit a thesis or hypothesis about that topic, and then explore that thesis in the paper.
- You will draw upon and incorporate STS materials (ideas/concepts, theories, frameworks, perspectives, works, etc.) from the Reading Sessions of STS 200 and from your prior STS studies.
- You will search the scholarly literature related to your topic in a systematic way and will prepare an appropriate bibliography for your paper.

- You will choose a specific methodology/research design to guide the process of collecting and analyzing evidence relevant to your thesis or hypothesis.
- You will then gather empirical evidence and will analyze that evidence to test your thesis or hypothesis.
- You will then carefully organize and write your paper, including carefully editing your draft paper, in order to produce a clear argument with supporting evidence.

The Writing Lab portion of the course is designed to help you with these tasks, and it is structured so that you can make steady progress each week towards completing the paper.

Members of the STS Capstone Committee (Robert McGinn, Rebecca Slayton, and Patrick Windham) will read and grade each paper. The committee will grade each paper along *five dimensions*: STS relevance, argument, method, analysis, and writing.

Final drafts of the senior papers are due on the Monday of finals week: ***Monday, March 15, at 9am.*** However, this year we are offering *an option*: students who wish to revise their final papers in order to seek a higher grade may request a short extension for that purpose. However, each student who wants this extension must make this request before the end of the finals period, and the student must turn in the improved version by the end of the first week of spring quarter.

Weekly assignments:

Again, a key element of the course is the schedule of *weekly research memos* that will help you write and complete your senior paper. In order to complete a high-quality paper in the ten weeks of the quarter, it is extremely important that you complete each assignment and complete them on time. The readings assigned for each week will help you with this process.

Class sessions:

The three class sessions devoted to the Writing Lab will focus on the following subjects:

- Week 2: An introduction to the Writing Lab, a discussion of key elements of a successful paper, particular attention to the subject of hypotheses and methodologies, and examples of successful STS 200 papers from past years.
- Week 5: Further discussion of research methodologies and brief student presentations on topics and research designs.
- Week 8: Brief student presentations on arguments and evidence and a discussion of how to write peer reviews.

Writing groups:

At the first Writing Lab session, during the second week of class, students will form writing groups. You will be paired with two or three other students. The main task of the writing groups will be to provide peer review comments during the ninth week of class (Memo 7), but you are also encouraged to exchange memos and ideas throughout the quarter.

Student presentations:

Each student will also make a presentation to the STS Capstone Committee. The presentation will be a summary of your final paper, and you will make the presentation at the end of the quarter, at a time to be determined. The Committee will give feedback that you can use to improve your paper.

Grading

Your grade for the Writing Lab will be based on the following factors:

- Final paper (40 percent)
- Final presentation (20 percent)
- Weekly memos and participation in Writing Lab class sessions (25 percent)
- Peer reviews that you write (15 percent)

The grade you receive in the Writing Lab will constitute 50 percent of the your final grade in STS 200. All assignments must be turned in by the due date to receive full credit and consideration. Participation includes regular attendance, contributing to class discussions, being prepared for class, handing in memos on time, and working with you writing groups.

Writing assignments (memos and drafts)

The STS Senior Paper confronts you with a demanding schedule: you have ten weeks to develop your topic into a viable research question situated within existing scholarly literature, choose an appropriate methodology, collect and analyze data, write a first draft, and revise it for your final paper. The best way to tackle this challenge is to create a detailed research and writing plan and make sure to spend some time working on it every day. The Writing Lab assignments (research memos and paper drafts) described below are designed to help you progress towards a final paper by dividing the process into manageable segments distributed throughout the quarter. It is *critical* that you hand in all the assignments *on time*; by doing so you ensure that you are keeping up with the schedule and give your instructor and peers the opportunity to offer you timely feedback, which will assist you in continuing your project.

Week 2: Memo 1—Topics and research questions Due by Monday, January 11, 9:00 A.M.

Assignment: In this memo, you will identify your topic and describe the “territory” you are interested in researching and writing about. List the expectations, beliefs, and assumptions you have about the phenomena that you plan to study and describe how you plan on investigating them empirically. The memo should include (1) a *research question* describing what you want to learn more about through your research, why it is significant, and how it relates to STS; (2) a set of working *hypotheses or claims* about your topic; (3) a description of *data sources* and/or *literatures* that you think will help you develop your arguments; and (4) a thoughtful reflection on some of the *difficulties* you may encounter in implementing your project. You should write about three double-spaced pages.

Readings:

- Craft of Research (“COR”), Chapters 3-4.
- Strunk and White (“S&W”), Part I.
- Duke Library on Choosing a Topic:
<http://library.duke.edu/services/instruction/libraryguide/choosing.html>
- Sergey Levine, “The Full-Time Guild Master,” *Intersect*, Vol, No 1 (2008),
[http://www.stanford.edu/group/publicknowledge/cgi-bin/ojs/sts-journal/index.php?journal=intersect&page=article&op=view&path\[\]=1&path\[\]=19](http://www.stanford.edu/group/publicknowledge/cgi-bin/ojs/sts-journal/index.php?journal=intersect&page=article&op=view&path[]=1&path[]=19).
- Judd Anderman, “9/11 on the ‘net: Risk and Uncertainty in Hindsight,” *Intersect*, Vol 2, No 1 (2009),

[http://www.stanford.edu/group/publicknowledge/cgi-bin/ojs/sts-journal/index.php?journal=intersect&page=article&op=view&path\[\]=81&path\[\]=43](http://www.stanford.edu/group/publicknowledge/cgi-bin/ojs/sts-journal/index.php?journal=intersect&page=article&op=view&path[]=81&path[]=43).

Week 3: Memo 2—Grounding your paper in STS
Due by Tuesday, January 19, 9:00A.M.

Assignment: Since you are writing a Senior Paper in STS, your topic and research approach should reflect what you have learned in your previous STS courses and refer to STS research more generally. In short, your Senior Paper must be identifiably “STSy” by virtue of its subject matter, the research question posed about that subject, the way in which the research question is pursued, and the conclusions drawn from the inquiry carried out.

Use this memo to describe how your work is inspired by and contributes to knowledge about science, technology, and society. Specifically mention STS concepts, theories, analytical frameworks and/or methods that you are referring to in developing your topic and analyzing your data. Once you have identified the STS components of your proposed project, provide a definition of these STS concepts/theories/methods and describe how they relate to your research questions.

Readings:

- S&W, Part II.
- To refresh your memory, you may want to refer to syllabi, books, notes, and other materials from STS courses you have taken over the years.
- You can also check out the *Handbook of STS*, 3rd edition, available in the course reserves in the Green library. In particular, read Chapter 1 of the Handbook, Sismondo’s “Science and Technology Studies and an Engaged Program.”

Week 4: Memo 3—Annotated bibliography
Due by Monday, January 25, 9:00A.M.

Assignment: The next step is to develop an *annotated bibliography* of sources for your paper. This memo must include at least 15 references, six of which must be briefly annotated, four of which should be annotated in greater detail, and the rest just listed (these are sources you can check out in more detail later on). You are expected to learn and use the research tools available through the Stanford University libraries, such as electronic databases and journals.

Your four detailed annotations must refer to articles or books (at least two peer-reviewed) and should be approximately 250 words long. You should include the following information in your annotations: (1) a description of the main argument of the article or book and how it is supported; (2) an explanation of how the argument and evidence in the book/article supports, challenges, or otherwise relates to the argument you are developing; and (3) a list of any facts or examples from the article or book that you can use to support the argument that you are developing.

Each brief annotation should be a few sentences long and describe both the content of the article, book, or website and why it is relevant to your research project. No more than two of the references can be websites, and all annotations for websites must include a description of the “author” of the website and the date the website was accessed.

These annotated bibliographies will be useful for constructing the background and literature review sections of your paper. You should, therefore, be seeking out sources that will give you a sense of what previous scholars have said about your topic as well as

the relevant historical, social, cultural, political, and/or economic aspects of your project. Note that all of these references do not have to stay on your final reference list, but you can refer to them as your project develops. The references that you will need are likely to shift as your research focus takes shape.

Readings:

- *COR*, Chapters 5-6 and pp. 283-287, and *S&W*, Part III.
- Also see Purdue University’s OWL website on Annotated Bibliographies: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/> as well as its Best Practices to prevent plagiarism: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/03/>.
- You can see <http://www.4sonline.org/journals.htm> for a list of STS journals.

Week 5: Memo 4—Research methods
Due by Monday, February 1, 9:00 A.M.

Assignment: After developing a research question and reviewing the relevant literature, you are ready to describe the *methodological approach* that you will use for researching your topic. How will you go about collecting, managing, and analyzing your data? Will you be doing interviews, surveys, observation, archival research, or discourse analysis? Describe how your methods and data are related to the questions you are asking and how they will support your thesis statement and main argument. Don’t forget that you are writing a *research* paper. A research paper is not just a statement of your belief. Research involves questions, inquiry, and discovery. You should present your answer to a question that you did not know the answer to before you began.

This is also the time to develop your data collection and analysis instruments—interview or survey questions, coding scheme for discursive analysis, etc. Develop a hierarchy of questions, from your main question, to sub-questions, to questions you will ask your informants or that you will try to get an answer to from the data.

Writing Lab class discussion: At the Writing Lab session this week, each student will make a *brief (five-minute) presentation* on his or her topic and research methodology. Be prepared to make that presentation.

Readings:

- *COR*, Chapters 7-9.

Week 6: Memo 5—Introduction, background, and literature review
Due by Monday, February 8, 9:00 A.M.

Assignment: This memo should include a one-page *introductory statement* that briefly articulates your main arguments and sub-arguments, and gives readers a sense of how your presentation of these arguments will be laid out in the remaining text. A strong introductory statement often starts with a compelling example or story that draws readers in, and gives them a sense of the stakes.

Follow your introduction with a 3-5-page draft of your *background and literature review sections*. The background section will most likely follow the introductory section of your paper. A background section often describes the many “stakeholders” in a topic or issue, and how particular policies, legal decisions or events have shaped the topic or issue. A background section should also provide historical perspective. As part of your background section, develop a close description of a person, place, and/or technology or

scientific practice in your research arena and use the description to make an analytical argument related to your chosen STS theory/concept/etc.

The main aim of the literature review is to learn how to find other scholars' writings on the same subject you are interested in writing and making use of them for your own project. This practice has the function of putting the author and their work in conversation with the broader intellectual community working on the same subject and preventing them from "reinventing the wheel."

Readings:

- *COR*, Chapter 16, and *S&W*, Part V.

Week 7: Memo 6—Outline and thesis

Due by Tuesday, February 16, 9:00 A.M.

Assignment: Next, you will develop a conceptual *outline* of your research paper. The outline will help you double-check organization, balance, and structure. The outline should be sufficiently detailed to support a 20-25-page paper.

At the beginning of your outline, articulate and highlight your *thesis statement*. The thesis statement should articulate an argument, be one or two sentences long, and be followed by at least three supporting points. The supporting points should refer to reasons and evidence that support your main claim(s). As you write your thesis statement, carefully consider whether the data you have collected answer your research questions. If not, what research questions are that data able to answer? Amend your thesis statement accordingly. Highlight your thesis.

Use the outline to sketch out how you will develop the points supporting your thesis: what will you be talking about in each section, what kind of data, visuals, resources will you be using, etc.? The outline for the background section should include a discussion of your topic and of how the topic has been dealt with by other scholars. Devote special care to the organization of the middle section, since that is where you must lay out your arguments and evidence.

Readings:

- *COR*, Chapters 10-12.
- Purdue OWL on Thesis Statements:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/>.

Week 8: First draft

Due by Monday, February 22, 9:00 A.M.

Assignment: This memo is a *preliminary draft* of your final paper. It must be at least 15 pages long and organized around subheadings that match your outline (which should be included as an appendix). [For reference, read *COR* Chapter 13.]

This memo must include a full description of your *research methodology*, a draft of your *data and analysis*, and a summary of your *research findings*. Describe the data that you have collected, how these data address your research questions, and what your initial analysis of the data suggests. Describe what additional data you will need to collect to support your thesis and how/when/where you will get it. You should also include visual representations of your results and/or data (e.g., graphs, tables, charts, photos). [For reference, read *COR* Chapter 15.]

The draft should end with a one or two page **conclusion**, which includes a summary of your main argument and sub-arguments and an explanation of their significance. It should have full citations and include a properly formatted bibliography with at least **15 references**. At least five references must be peer reviewed, five can refer to data you collected (e.g., interviews, documents) and no more than three references can be websites. All text in this draft should be in complete sentences, and edited for spelling and grammar. This memo should be a true full draft, with space remaining to flesh out arguments and supporting evidence. The goal here is to get a full conceptualization of your project on paper, with time remaining to fine tune it, substantiate it, and possibly rearrange it so that it flows more smoothly. Make sure that your paper is properly formatted, including citations in **APA format** throughout.

Class discussion: At the Writing Lab session this week, each student will make **a brief (five-minute) presentation** summarizing his or her main argument, evidence, and conclusions. Be prepared to make that presentation. Also, during this class session the Writing Lab instructor will provide details about the next assignment, where you will write **peer reviews** of the draft papers prepared by other members of your writing group.

Readings:

- *COR*, Chapters 13 and 15.
- For a concise guide to APA formatting, see the Purdue OWL website:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>.

Week 9: Memo 7—Peer reviews
Due by Monday, March 1, 9:00 A.M.

Assignment: In this memo, you will write three-page **peer reviews**—treating each other’s first drafts as texts to be worked and commented on. You will write one review for each of the other students **in your writing group** (the groups that will be assigned during the second week of the course). This practice is aimed at helping you as a writer and reader to think about how to make a text better and helping your peers by giving useful feedback on their work. In responding to the work of your classmates, think of yourself as a friendly yet attentive reader who is helping the writer develop his or her project before presenting it to the more public (and perhaps more critical) readership of the full class and the STS Capstone Committee.

In responding to an early draft of a paper, your aim should be to offer its writer help in thinking about the shape and direction of her or his project as a whole. You will want, that is, not so much to offer advice about local matters of phrasing or editing, but to give the writer feedback about more global issues of aim, argument, example, structure, and so on. What is the writer trying to get done in this essay? Note what works especially well, and point to those moments in the draft that strike you as particularly interesting, provoking, well-argued, nicely illustrated, or the like. Suggest one or two ways in which the writer might develop, extend, qualify, or rethink the project of her or his essay. Let the author know what needs to be added, cut, reworked, or rethought entirely. Once again, this is not a moment to offer advice on editing, proofreading, or other more local matters of style and correctness. The Writing Lab instructor will provide additional details on the peer review process.

Week 10: Continue drafting final version of the paper
Week of March 8

Assignment: Continuing revising and polishing your paper. Pay particular attention to recommendations made by peer reviewers. The Writing Lab instructor will also provide comments and suggestions regarding each draft paper.

Readings:

- *COR*, Chapters 14 and 17.

**Finals Week: Submit final draft of senior paper
Due by Monday, March 15, 9:00 A.M.**

Incorporate the critiques and suggestions that you received from peer reviewers and the instructor to produce a *final version of your senior paper*. You will submit a 20-25-page paper that has been checked for spelling and grammar and is formatted in accordance with the rules for submission to the STS Student Journal *Intersect*. (See the Submission Preparation Checklist at:

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/publicknowledge/cgi-bin/ojs/sts-journal/index.php?journal=intersect&page=about&op=submissions#onlineSubmissions>

Adhere to all of the checklist items, except the one that asks you to remove your name from the text.) Submit, via e-mail, an electronic copy of your paper to the Writing Lab instructor, who will share it with other members of the Capstone Committee. Also hand in a paper copy to Colleen Connors in the STS office (Bldg. 200, Rm.19).

**Finals Week or earlier: Presentations to STS Capstone Committee
Due as scheduled later in the quarter**

Assignment: Each student will give a 10-15-minute oral presentation to the STS Capstone Committee summarizing his or her paper and particularly its central argument, data sources, and conclusion. You may want to use PowerPoint slides as part of your presentation, but this is not required. You should be prepared to answer a few brief questions about your presentation. Capstone Committee members will give you comments on your presentation and argument. Further details on the student presentations and the schedule for these presentations will be provided during winter quarter.