

Writing 101: Congress and Quantitative Writing

Fall 2019

TR 3:05 pm-4:20 pm/ TR 4:40-5:55 pm.

Bivins 214

Instructor: Jacob Smith (jacob.f.smith@duke.edu).

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:15-2:45 pm and by appointment.

I will have extra office hours when major assignments are coming due, including some in the computer lab, later in the semester. I welcome you to come to office hours to discuss assignments, but also if you would like to discuss your experience as a college student at Duke, contemporary politics, or anything else you would like to talk about.

Office: Art 200Z

Course Description

The American people widely view Congress to be a dysfunctional institution, with a 2013 *Public Policy Polling* poll rating Congress as less popular than cockroaches, root canals, and the band *Nickelback*. Yet despite this unpopularity, most members of Congress who seek reelection continue to win. In this course, we will look at how scholars explain puzzles about Congress such as this through writings including theoretical essays, descriptive analyses, and quantitative research articles.

We will begin the course by reading historical and modern critiques and defenses of Congress. These readings will include historical writings such as *The Federalist Papers* and Frederick Douglass' *Fourth of July Speech*, as well as contemporary analyses by scholars of Congress. We will then explore how scholars explain the outcomes of congressional elections. Political scientists use a variety of approaches to write about congressional elections, but many of the most recent scholarly analyses have emphasized the use of quantitative techniques. Moreover, with the emergence of blogs such as *FiveThirtyEight* and *The Upshot*, writing about elections that incorporates statistical analyses has become an important staple for the broader reading public. Thus, the second part of the course will seek to hone your quantitative writing skills.

To develop as a writer, you will complete a variety of assignments in this course including an analysis of congressional dysfunction (about 5-6 pgs.) and an extended research paper (about 12-15 pages). As you complete this extended research project, you will turn in a proposal and annotated bibliography and sections of the paper along the way, which you will revise based on my comments and those of your peers. Finally, you will complete a short blog post (800-1000 words) about this paper in the style of *FiveThirtyEight* and *The Upshot* to develop your skills at writing for the public sphere.

*This course assumes no prior experience with statistics.

Writing 101 Course Goals and Practices

Writing 101 introduces Duke first-year students to key goals and practices of academic writing. Students choose from among Writing 101 courses that are designed and taught by scholars trained in disciplines across the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Thus, individual sections of Writing 101 often focus on different topics and readings, but all sections

share an emphasis on writing as a social process and a commitment to helping students generate effective academic arguments.

Goals: While many features of academic writing vary across disciplines and genres, students in all sections of Writing 101 learn how to:

- Engage with the work of others
- Articulate a position
- Situating writing for specific audiences
- Transfer writing knowledge into situations beyond Writing 101

Practices: Achieving these goals involves several integral writing practices. Through print, in-person, and digital interactions, students in all sections of Writing 101 are offered practice in:

- Researching
- Workshopping
- Revising
- Editing

As a reflection of Duke's commitment to intellectual inquiry, Writing 101 provides a foundation for students to learn new kinds of writing, preparing them to identify relevant questions and articulate sophisticated arguments in their future work, both inside and outside the university.

(For the more extensive version, please visit <http://twp.duke.edu/students/writing-101/course-goals-and-practices>.)

Course grades and assignments:

- Statistics and writing assignment: 10% of final grade.
 - *This assignment will require you to conduct and discuss a statistical analysis about a dataset I will provide.*
- *Is Congress Broken?* Paper (5-6 pages): 20% of final grade.
 - *You will write a paper where you advance an argument about the extent to which the U.S. Congress is broken and what can be done to fix it.*
- Research Paper (12-15 pages): 60% of final grade overall.
 - *You will write an extended research paper on a topic of your choice related to congressional elections that incorporates writing about statistical analyses (several potential datasets will be provided).*
 - 7.5% of final grade based on research paper proposal and annotated bibliography
 - 15% of final grade based on draft of introduction, literature review, and hypotheses section.
 - 10% of final grade based on draft of data and methods section.
 - 20% of final grade based on final draft of entire paper.
 - 7.5% based on blog post.
- Participation: 10% of final grade.
 - *Students who would like to receive a high grade for the class participation portion of the class grade should actively and consistently participate in all aspects of class discussion including discussion about the class readings,*

activities, and writing workshops. I want to give feedback on writing early in the semester, so I will assign a short response due early in the semester. I will take the completion of this assignment into account when assigning participation grades, but no formal grade will be given on this response.

Required Texts:

The following texts are required and can be purchased through the bookstore:

- Connelly, William F., John Pitney Jr., and Gary J. Schmitt, eds. 2017. *Is Congress Broken? The Virtues and Defects of Partisanship and Gridlock*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Referred to on syllabus as “Mayhew.”)
- Other readings are available on Sakai or online. Please let me know if a link to an online resource does not work.

Statistical Software:

This course will make use of the statistical software Stata. This course does not assume any background in statistics and we will spend class time discussing how to access and use this software. You do not have to purchase this software as it is available through the Virtual Computing Manager (VCM) and in physical computer labs on campus (<https://oit.duke.edu/what-we-do/services/computing-labs>).

Writing 101 Course Policies

Attendance and Tardiness: Attendance will be taken at the start of every class. As we will be having a number of group workshops in class, attendance is especially important for this course. Duke policies limit excused absences to short-term or long-term illness, personal emergencies, varsity athletic participation, and religious holidays, although I am willing to discuss absences that do not exactly fit under one of those categories on a case-by-case basis before the date of the planned absence. Students should not consider themselves excused until they have received an email reply from me excusing them. If I do not promptly reply to an email related to absences, please follow up with me.

After two unexcused absences, students will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade on their participation grade. Each further unexcused absence will result in an additional lowering of your participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade per unexcused absence. Upon your third unexcused absence, I will also contact your Dean. Students who are more than 15 minutes late will be counted absent for that class. Students who arrive in class within the first 15 minutes, but after attendance has been taken, should speak with the instructor after class to make sure that they are counted as present.

Students are to notify their instructors and their academic deans by means of a Short-Term Illness Notification Form (STINF) when they are temporarily incapacitated and hence are unable

to attend class or complete an assignment on time (<http://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/illness>). Following submission of a STINF, the student is expected to contact me within 48 hours to discuss accommodations for missed material. If a student fails to contact me within 48 hours, I am under no obligation to accommodate the student's absence. Exceptions to this rule can be made in extreme cases.

Submission of Assignments: All written assignments will be submitted electronically to Sakai. Please refer to the assignment prompt for detailed instructions. On occasion, you will also be asked to bring hard copies of your work to class.

Contact Policy and Office Hours: Students are encouraged to attend office hours or contact me via email with any questions about the course. I am also available by appointment if one is unable to meet during the times listed on the syllabus.

Please feel free to also contact me over email. I will respond promptly and will do my best to respond the same day to emails; however, do not expect an immediate response to a late evening email sent the day before a paper assignment is due.

Late Work: Unless I have approved a deadline extension in advance, all assignments are due according to the deadlines specified, including date and time. Late penalties begin 1 minute after an assignment is due. If an assignment is due at 5 pm Wednesday, the late penalty from 5:01 pm Wednesday through 5 pm Thursday is 1/3 of a grade (e.g. an A would become an A-, an A- would become a B+.). An assignment submitted between 5:01 pm Thursday to 5 pm Friday would lose 2/3 of a grade. And so on for each 24-hour period.

It is very important that students exchange drafts on time for course workshops. Consistently exchanging papers after the set time for that paper will reflect negatively on final participation grades.

Technology: Laptops, e-readers, or similar devices may be used in class as long as they are used for class-related purposes. If these devices are consistently used for other purposes, I reserve the right to revisit this policy later in the semester. If you have an important call you are waiting for (e.g. family emergency, job-related call) please put your cell phone on vibrate and step out of the room when you get the call. Please do not use laptops for any reason other than taking notes, specified course activities, or looking up information related to class content.

Integrity: Academic writing is seldom self-contained with respect to its ideas and proof. Quoting and citing sources strengthens your writing by explicitly situating your argument within an ongoing conversation and body of evidence. There are several systems for documenting sources. Students may use the citation style they choose on papers so long as they remain consistent on that paper. We will discuss quotation, paraphrase, and citation in class.

On occasion, a student may attempt to disguise sources, sometimes due to being unprepared to complete an assignment, or because of time constraints. Copying without attribution from the work of a classmate, from a printed text, or an electronic text weakens your integrity as a student and writer and prevents you from engaging properly with other scholars through writing. Getting

caught carries very serious consequences. If I suspect anyone of plagiarism, I am obligated to report it to the Duke University Office of Student Conduct. Plagiarism on any aspect of our course work will result in failure of the course.

Recall the Duke Community Standard: 1. I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors, nor will I accept the actions of those who do; 2. I will conduct myself responsibly and honorably in all my activities as a Duke student. Please ask me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism. You may also consult: <http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism>.

Grades: Grading standards are meant to be high, but fair. I take grading seriously and am happy to discuss why you received a grade on any assignment during office hours or an appointment at a mutually workable time.

Letter grades map onto the following scale, which I will use in calculating your final grade for the course (grades in between these ranges will be rounded down or up to the nearest number):

A+ (97–100), A (93–96), A- (90–92)
B+ (87–89), B (83–86), B- (80–82)
C+ (77–79), C (73–76), C- (70–72)
D+ (67–69), D (63–66), D- (60–62)
F (0–59)

Writing 101 Support & Resources

Course Librarian: Our course librarian is Ryan Denniston (ryan.denniston@duke.edu). Your librarian has partnered with us to familiarize you with Duke's library system and to assist you with formulating and pursuing your research project(s). Ryan has tailored a Library Guide for our course which will be posted to Sakai, will lead us in a library workshop, and is available for individual consultations.

The Writing Studio: I encourage you to visit the Writing Studio where you will find a place beyond our classroom to work collaboratively with an attentive, non-evaluative reader. You can visit at any stage in your writing process, including before you have even started writing. Visit <http://twp.duke.edu/twp-writing-studio> to schedule a face-to-face or online appointment and to learn more about Studio resources.

International and Intercultural Writers, DukeWrites Enrichment Suite. An online suite of videos and quiz tutorials about U.S. classroom and U.S. English academic writing practices (essay structure, verbs, citation practices, intercultural norms, etc.) designed by TWP experts in intercultural communication. To access and explore the site: <https://dukewritessuite.com/>.

Students with Disabilities: Students who may need special accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Student Disability Access Office (<http://www.access.duke.edu/students/index.php>) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations can be implemented in a timely fashion.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): Each of you will face some level of challenge during your time at Duke – whether it be a challenge like procrastination, or a more profound challenge that impairs your ability to function. The CAPS staff includes psychologists, clinical social workers, and psychiatrists experienced in working with college-age adults. Information about their services and workshops is available here: <http://studentaffairs.duke.edu/caps/about-us>.

The Academic Resource Center: The ARC provides academic support and programming for all Duke undergraduates. Their services include one-on-one consultations and peer tutoring, and they work alongside the Student Disability Access Office to serve students with diagnosed learning disabilities. Their programs include opportunities for students to study together in structured groups ("learning communities"), as well as workshops offered throughout the semester. Further information and resources are available on their website. <http://duke.edu/arc/index.php>.

The Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity: This center provides education, advocacy, support, mentoring, academic engagement, and space for LGBTQIA+ students, staff, and faculty at Duke. The Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity also serves and supports Duke alumni/ae and the greater LGBTQ community. Further information and resources are available on their website. <https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/csgd>.

Deliberations: A Journal of First-Year Writing at Duke University. Deliberations is published annually, in the fall semester. The Thompson Writing Program invites submissions of student writing, of any type or length, from any Writing 101 course. For submission guidelines, visit: <http://twp.duke.edu/deliberations/submission-information>.

This syllabus has been adapted from Thompson Writing Program faculty policies. Policies in the syllabus may be added or modified during the semester and students will be notified in advance of any such change taking effect.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Unit 1: Introduction to College Writing in Political Science

August 27: Course Introduction and Procedures

Pitney, Jack. 2002. "Balance: The CMC Convocation Address." <http://www1.cmc.edu/pages/faculty/JPitney/balance.htm>.

Silver, Nate. 2018. "Skills for a Lifetime." <https://www.kenyon.edu/middle-path/story/skills-for-a-lifetime/>.

August 29: Introduction to Writing in Political Science

APSA Style Guide. Read pages 38-58; skim pages 10-37. (Available on Sakai.)

Pitney, Jack. N.D. "Writing and Research."
<http://www1.cmc.edu/pages/faculty/JPitney/writing.htm>.

Unit 2: Is Congress Broken?

September 3: The Federalist Papers and Historical Critiques of Congress

Fed 10, 51, and 57. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp.

September 5: The Federalist Papers and Historical Critiques of Congress, cont.

Douglass, Frederick. 1852. *What to a Slave is the Fourth of July*
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927t.html> (Available on Sakai.)

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2019. "Our democracy's founding ideals were false when they were written. Black Americans have fought to make them true." *New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/black-history-american-democracy.html> (Available in Sakai.)

September 10: Is Congress Broken? – The Strength of Political Parties and Leaders

Connelly, Pitney, and Schmitt. Chapters 1, 2, & 8. (Introduction and essays by Daniel Stid and Kathryn Pearson.)

Short Response: Happy North Carolina 3rd and 9th District special elections day! Based on the readings so far, what are one or two things that you think the new members of Congress who win these elections should know upon taking office. Why are these things important? Your response should be one page single-spaced and uploaded to Sakai by class time. Please also include a works cited page.

September 12: Is Congress Broken? – Representation in Congress

Connelly, Pitney, and Schmitt. Chapter 3. (Essay by Andrew Busch.)

Guinier, Lani. 1994. *The Tyranny of the Majority*. New York: The Free Press, Chapter One.
(Available on Sakai.)

Newkirk, Vann. 2018. "How *Shelby County v. Holder* Broke America." *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/07/how-shelby-county-broke-america/564707/>

September 17: Is Congress Broken? – Oversight of the Executive

Connelly, Pitney, and Schmitt. Chapters 6 & 7. (Essays by Melanie Marlowe and Gary Schmitt & Rebecca Burgess.)

Glassman, Matt. 2017. "Donald Trump is a dangerously weak president." *Vox*.
<https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/12/4/16733450/donald-trump-weak-president-neustadt>

September 19: Is Congress Broken? - Solutions

Connelly, Pitney, and Schmitt. Chapters 10 & 11. (Essays by Jonathan Rauch and William Connelly & Jack Pitney.)

Dingell, John. 2018. "I Served in Congress Longer Than Anyone. Here's How to Fix It." *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/12/john-dingell-how-restore-faith-government/577222/>.

Mann, Thomas E. and Norman J. Ornstein. 2012. "Want to end partisan politics? Here's what won't work — and what will." *Washington Post*
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/want-to-end-partisan-politics-heres-what-wont-work--and-what-will/2012/05/17/gIQA5jqcWU_story.html. (Available on Sakai.)

September 24: Writing Workshop I

Writing Workshop on *Is Congress Broken? Paper*.

Is Congress Broken? Paper due to group members by class time on September 22.
Final Draft Due on Sakai by September 27 at 11:59 pm.

Unit 3: Writing Electoral Theories

September 26: A Framework for Theoretical Writing

Stimson, James. N.D. "Professional Writing in Political Science: A Highly Opinionated Essay."
(Available on Sakai).

Riker, William. 1982. "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 76(4): 753-766. (Available on Sakai.)

October 1: Mayhew I

Mayhew. Introduction, and part of Chapter 1 (up to page 49).

October 3: Library Session

Library Session. Meet in Perkins 023.

October 7: Fall Break

October 10: Mayhew II

Mayhew. Rest of Chapter 1 and part of Chapter 2 (up to page 105).

October 15: Mayhew III

Mayhew. Chapter 2- pgs. 81-83, lightly read 106-124 and focus on areas around italic terms, read 125-149 and 165-180 closely.

October 17: Individual Meetings

No Class- Individual Meetings on October 21 or 22.

Research paper proposal due to me on Sakai by midnight on October 11.

Unit 4: Building Skills for Quantitative Writing

October 22: Basics of OLS Regression

Jacobson, Gary C. and Jamie Carson. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. Selections from Chapter 6. (Available on Sakai.)

Masket, Seth. 2011. "The Perils of Holding a Tea Party at High Altitude: Colorado's Senate and Gubernatorial Races in 2010." In *Pendulum Swing*, Edited by Larry J. Sabato. Boston: Longman. (Available on Sakai.)

October 24: STATA I

Rodríguez, Germán. N.D. *Stata Tutorial*. Read up to Section 1.1.8.
<http://data.princeton.edu/stata/>.

Torres-Reyna, Oscar. 2007. *Linear Regression Using Stata*. Read Slides 1-6.
<https://www.princeton.edu/~otorres/Regression101.pdf>

Meet in Computer Lab: Hudson 117 for 3:05 section, Soc-Psych 133 for 4:40 section.

October 29: STATA II

Social Science Computing Cooperative. N.D. "An Introduction to Stata Graphics." (Available at <https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/sscc/pubs/4-24.htm>).

Meet in Computer Lab: Hudson 117 for 3:05 section, Soc-Psych 133 for 4:40 section.

Unit 5: Putting it all Together

October 31: Reading and Writing Journal Articles I

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David Brady, and John Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *American Political Science Review* 96(1): 127-40. (Available at on Sakai).

Statistics and writing assignment due to me on Sakai by midnight on November 1st.

November 5: Reading and Writing Journal Articles II

Bowen, Daniel C. and Christopher J. Clark. 2014. "Revisiting Descriptive Representation in Congress: Assessing the Effect of Race on the Constituent-Legislator Relationship." *Political Research Quarterly* 67(3):695-707. (Available on Sakai.)

November 7: Reading and Writing Journal Articles III

Fox, Richard and Jennifer Lawless. 2010. "If Only They'd Ask: Gender, Recruitment, and Political Ambition." *The Journal of Politics* 72(2): 310-26. (Available on Sakai.)

November 12: Writing Workshop II

Writing Workshop II (on first half of paper).

Introduction, literature review, and theory section due to group members by noon on November 11.

Revised draft due to me on Sakai by midnight on November 15.

November 14: Work Session

Class work session to gather data.

Meet in Computer Lab: Hudson 117 for 3:05 section, Soc-Psych 133 for 4:20 section.

Unit 6: Writing About Congress in the Public Sphere and in Popular Culture

November 19: Writing in the Public Sphere I

Abramowitz, Alan. 2019. "The 2020 Congressional Elections: A Very Early Forecast." *Sabato's Crystal Ball*. <http://crystalball.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/the-2020-congressional-elections-a-very-early-forecast/>.

Edsall, Thomas. 2019. "When It Comes to the Senate, the Democrats Have Their Work Cut Out for Them." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/05/opinion/senate-democrats-2020.html>. (Available on Sakai.)

Bring an article from FiveThirtyEight or the Upshot to class that you think does a good job of conveying statistical analyses to a general audience.

November 21: Writing in the Public Sphere I

Smith, Jacob F.H. and Neil I. Weinberg. 2016. "The Elevator Effect: Advertising, Priming, and the Rise of Cherie Berry." *American Politics Research* 44(3): 496-522. (Available on Sakai.)

Smith, Jacob F.H. 2016. "Cherie Berry put her picture in every North Carolina elevator. Here's how that affected her reelection." *Washington Post Monkey Cage Blog*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/04/14/cherie-berry-put-her-picture-in-every-north-carolina-elevator-heres-how-that-affected-her-reelection/>
(Available on Sakai.)

Data and Methods section and Excel Workbook due to me on Sakai by 11:59 pm on November 22.

November 26: Individual Meetings on November 25- No Class

November 28: Thanksgiving- No Class

December 3: Congress in Popular Culture

Ornstein, Norm. 2014. "In Alpha House, Politicians are People Too." *The Atlantic*
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/11/in-alpha-house-politicians-are-people-too/382717/>.

We will watch some Alpha House in class and have a discussion about the show.

December 5: Writing Workshop III

Workshop on blog post.

Exchange draft of blog post with group members by class time on December 4.

Final draft of blog post due to me on Sakai by 5 pm on December 7.