Proposal for Policy-related Writing in Sociology and Criminology, Law and Society

SOC347: Masculinities, SOC 375: Sociology of International Migration,
SOC423: Identity Crime

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This proposal requests 144 hours of TA support for policy-related writing across three courses in the Sociology and Criminology, Law and Society programs – SOC347 Masculinities, SOC375 Sociology of International Migration, and SOC423 Identity Crime. These funds are allocated to enhance existing TA support through the provision of a dedicated policy-writing TA that would facilitate writing initiatives across courses. Our program offers writing instruction through two 200-level courses (SOC221 The Logic of Social Inquiry, and SOC205 Criminological Theory) and we wish to further develop writing instruction in our upper year SOC and CLS courses. As part of this effort, we aim to introduce writing instruction concentrating on policy-related writing, achievable with the support of the WDI.

The above-mentioned elective courses in SOC and CLS were chosen because they currently incorporate policy-related writing that would benefit from this initiative.

> SOC347: Masculinities introduces students to the study and analysis of gender and masculinities. In this course, students have the option of writing a policy brief (3 pages) wherein they evaluate evidence and recommend a policy solution. This assignment requires students to write for a general audience, propose concrete recommendations, and incorporate images, figures, tables, and other elements to make the document visually persuasive.

> SOC375: International Migration examines the sociological and economic reasons for migration. Students in this course currently write through a 4-page position paper and a 3-page op-ed. This proposal concentrates on the 4-page position paper, which asks students to examine and critically analyze immigration policy.

> SOC423: Identity Crime examines issues in identity theft and fraud. In this problem-based learning course, students grapple with real-world cases of identity theft and fraud, for which they are expected to propose viable solutions. Students are required to write weekly reflection papers using the DEAL model (2-8 pages each) wherein they reflect upon the problem they've identified in their case and devise a solution that incorporates academic knowledge. Students must also produce a collaborative final report (25+ pages) in which they develop practical solutions to be directed to specific audiences (law enforcement, law makers, the public, etc.).

The central learning outcome for this proposal is to communicate academic material to a general audience, to apply academic material to practical issues, and to demonstrate the relevance of scholarly content for real-world problems. Developing skills in the effective and practical communication of scholarly material to a general audience is a central feature of these specific assignments. Developing proficiency in this style of writing will enhance our program objective of communicating knowledge in a clear and concise manner. Our students receive training to write scholarly papers in the tradition of our discipline, but do not receive similar training to write for general audiences or to write for policy, which requires clear, jargon-free, empirically-based writing, different organizational formats, comfort with the integration of data, and visual appeal.

The requested TA hours will be used to hire a TA who will specialize in policy-related writing. This TA will work with students, instructors, and TAs across all three courses. We expect that the support provided will reach around 130 students in our SOC and CLS program - 50 in SOC423, 20 in SOC347 (the policy brief is one of several assignments from which students can choose, and typically a third of students select it), and 60 in SOC375. SOC423 has historically maintained full enrollment (50), SOC347 retains high enrolment at the point in the course where the policy brief assignment is offered as an option, and SOC375 retains high enrollment for the position paper, which is due in the first month of the course.

Training in policy-related writing will take place through both the RGASC and through the SOC423 instructor. Much of the support (about 50%) will be concentrated in SOC423 as that course has formative and cumulative assignments that will benefit from early and sustained writing support, and because course TAs in SOC423 are not assigned to assignment support or office hours. Course TA hours originally devoted to grading the first batch of reflection journals will be repurposed for problem-based learning training and in- class facilitation for policy-related problem solving.

This policy specialist TA position will provide the following supports:

SOC347 Masculinities
- Tutorial/workshop for policy brief writing (in consultation with RGASC)
- Email communication for policy brief writing support
- Additional office hours for policy brief writing support
- Training for course TA in the assessment of policy briefs by co-facilitating a benchmark session

SOC 375 Sociology of International Migration
- Tutorial/workshop for policy position paper writing (in consultation with RGASC)
- Email communication for policy position paper writing support
- Additional office hours for policy position paper writing support
- Training for course TAs in the assessment of policy position papers co-facilitating a benchmark session

SOC423 Identity Crime.
- Tutorial/workshop for writing modified reflection journals aimed at the integration of academic material for a policy report (in consultation with RGASC)
- Tutorial/workshop for writing policy reports
- Email communication for reflection journal and policy report writing support
- Additional office hours for reflection journal and policy report writing support
- Training for course TAs in the assessment of reflection journals and policy reports by co-facilitating a benchmark session
- Extensive feedback on the first batch of reflection journals to assist students with their subsequent reflection journals and final report.

Several assessment strategies can be employed to assess the efficacy of writing instruction (listed below). Course instructors are committed to working with RGASC faculty to develop assessment strategies for their respective courses.

SOC347 and SOC375
1. Writing samples of student work
2. Student questionnaires assessing the efficacy of writing instructions, workshops, and supports

SOC423
1. Student questionnaires assessing the efficacy of writing instructions, tutorials, and support
2. Writing samples comparing early reflections with later reflections
3. In consultation with RGASC, a pre- and post-test writing assignment could be implemented into the course asking students to write a similar policy-related piece in the first a final weeks of the course

Confirmation
This proposal has been reviewed and approved by all course instructors (Jayne Baker, Neda Maghbouleh, and Nathan Innocente) as well as our department chair, Anna Korteweg.

Budget

Item	Breakdown	WDI Hours
Training		
TATP Training	3 hours	3
Assignment Training	2 hours x 4 assignments	8
Writing Training (RGACS and Course Instructor)	8 hours	8
Tutorials/Workshops		
Tutorial/Workshop Prep	3 hours x 4 assignments	12
SOC423 Tutorial (reflections and report)	2 hours	2
Tutorial/Workshop (with materials)	1 hour x 3 assignments	3
Contact with Students		
Email Communication	12 hours	12
Office Hours for Policy Assignments	6 hours x 2 assignments	12
Office Hours for SOC423 Reflection	12 hours	12
Office Hours for SOC423 Report	2 hours x 10 groups	20
Grading/Feedback		
SOC423 Reflection Journals (first batch)	12 mins*150 journals	30
Other Duties		
Training Course TAs	3 hours x 4 assignments	12
Communication with Course Instructors	10 hours	10
Total Requested Hours		144