Almost all college courses require student writings of one sort or another, and most college professors require students to follow the standard elements of correct writing conventions. These include such elements as spelling, punctuation, word choice, correct sentence/paragraph/essay construction, transitions, and so forth — all of which will impact a student’s grade. Yes, although this is a Sociology course, how you write and express your ideas communicates not only a clear understanding of Sociology and the topic but also of your ability to critically think and convey those thoughts to your professor. The following will give you some idea about writing in a Sociology course and what Sociology professors look for in student writings. Sociology courses require writing suited to the discipline and writing integral to the course. What does it mean "to make writing integral to the course”? A cornerstone of the writing process is that writing should produce more learning. "Integrating writing," then, means using writing to enhance critical thinking, analytic ability and the incorporation of abstract ideas. Giving excessive attention to stylistic conventions too early in the drafting process may come at the expense of meaning-making, of having something new and interesting to say. Thus, I suggest that students pay more attention to the content of writings early in the drafting process, and then make structural/grammatical corrections in later drafts. By "later drafts," I mean: writing is a PROCESS which involves writing, proofing and revising multiple drafts. I strongly suggest you read your writings OUT LOUD because your ears will hear what your eyes won’t! Be aware that writing in sociology courses unites both form and function and helps students to master the character and conventions of social science writing while using writing as a tool for thinking and discovery. According to Theresa M. Chandler, "Conceptually, the emphasis is on a writing requirement in which the student goes beyond the memorization to the proper use of sociological concepts. .. this .. surpass[es] a traditional term paper [because it involves a] deeper understanding [that incorporates] sociological topics." Certainly, in writing a research proposal or essay, students do research and incorporate it within their writing. Writing assignments such as these teach both disciplinary conventions and critical thinking. According to Wayne R. Morgan Jr., "Critical thinking is a fundamentally different act than merely thinking 'about' something. It goes beyond the thinking that recalls past events or anticipates the future when there is no deeper processing involved. Without a deeper processing, there is no critical thinking." Such “deeper processing” occurs when students use sociological terms and concepts, relate them to their own lives, and examine and critique the ways those ideas are deployed by professional writers.

In addition, students need to follow a documentation style when writing research papers to avoid plagiarism. You may use either MLA or APA format, as long as it is correct. Furthermore, I ask students to write their work according to a MY format, which many find quite curious. “I thought I was taking a Sociology course, not an English course!” is a common reaction to my format — and to my request that you write with as few errors as possible, that is — to my “pickiness” about following the conventions of writing Standard American English (SAE). As you know by now, everything in social life requires discipline, which in turn requires the ability to follow directions, and my request that you follow my format is merely an exercise in both these areas. Such an ability will extend beyond this classroom, for — as you know — social life requires following instructions. For example, if you want to bake a fluffy chocolate cake and leave out the flour, you will end up with a mushy pudding! If that’s what you want, fine, but you wouldn’t call it a chocolate cake!

If your employment requires you to operate a machine in a certain way and you don’t follow instructions, you might end up with less fingers than you had when you were hired! In essence, follow instructions — not only at work but also in this and all your classes. After all, being a college student is an occupation, requiring the same attention you give an employer. As a student, you may not get paid in dollars, but — you will receive something that money cannot buy — your future! Partial Source http://www.louisville.edu/provost/wroffice/new4-1hall.html

**REMEMBER THE ORGANIZATION FOR ANY PAPER:**

There are 3 parts to every essay, as follows:

I. Introduction (be sure to write a THESIS STATEMENT, generally telling the reader what the entire essay is about and briefly mention at the supporting points.

II. The Body (note: the “supports” are statements that support your thesis statement)

A. Support A (Start with a TOPIC SENTENCE - this tells the reader what each paragraph is about)
   1. Detail
   2. Detail
   3. Detail

B. Support B (Start with a TOPIC SENTENCE - this tells the reader what each paragraph is about)
   1. Detail
   2. Detail
   3. Detail

C. Support C (Start with a TOPIC SENTENCE - this tells the reader what each paragraph is about)
   1. Detail
   2. Detail
   3. Detail
   You will need more than 3 body/supporting paragraphs for longer essays -
   3. Detail and some body paragraphs may need more than 3 examples/details.

III. Conclusion (refer to your thesis statement and main points and make a concluding remark of some sort)

**FOR MY FORMAT**, remember to —

- set one inch margins on all sides
- use left justification
- double-space throughout
- indent each paragraph \( \frac{1}{2} \)" using the tab key
- use the correct heading for page 2 and beyond (e.g., Ann Jones – 2)
- rarely, if at all, use bold, and no underlining
- use only “Times Roman” font, size 12 pitch (Mac folks need a larger size)
- use only black toner ink and clean white typing paper, printed on only ONE side of the paper
- staple all pages together in the upper left-hand corner for work turned in - no paper clips!
- For thick projects and Extra Credit for exams, use a binder clip.
- Use only black toner ink and white typing paper (for assignments turned in in class)

continued...
Animal behavior has been the subject of fascination since at least the time of Plato and Aristotle, and if human curiosity drives research, then animal behavior should be near the top of our list (Fogle vii). "We tend to study animals for what they can teach us about ourselves or for facts that we can turn to our advantage. But dogs? Dogs do involve us [because] they have shared our lives for twenty thousand years" (Thomas 1993: 3-4).

Humans tend to define their own lives in their own terms. That is, our species focuses on the world through human lenses with an anthropomorphic view which holds that "mental experiences are a unique attribute of a single species" - the human species (Griffin 1981: 170). However, putting aside our anthropomorphic opinions may not be entirely possible in this discussion because, to some degree, anthropomorphic thinking "is factored into it. I think it has to be ... or else I don't see how we can distill these discrete emotions in a pet. I don't think that we can really define them without ... injecting a little bit into it" (Winters). It is suggested that projecting meaning from one species to another can be misleading, particularly when making comparisons between animal and man (Hinde 201). Even so, our interactions with dogs can provide a rich source of insight into their behavior, and even ours, for there are over 50 million dogs in the United States ("Nature"). But, do dogs have a sense of humor? Are they capable of "doing" humor and "being done" by it? Do dogs have mental experiences? Do they possess a consciousness? Do they feel and think?

In a sociological exploration of humor in dogs, we do well to remember that all human experience is socially constructed. So, too, are dogs' experiences in their association with humans. In fact, both humans and their dogs "are continually engaged in giving meaning to the world around them, [for humor] occurs in a social environment in which participants act to make things humorous" (Mulkay 106). While dogs do not laugh in the sense that we understand laughter, the humor that humans see in their interactions with their pets is socially mediated by both parties to form a collective moment, one which has meaning to each of them.

The following is an example of how to cite a web site article in MLA. Note: if there is no author's name, the title of the article comes first. Be sure to double-space all cites.


**A CHECKLIST FOR WRITING ESSAYS**

**Unity**
- Is there a clear opening statement of the point of the paper (thesis statement)?
- Does the Introduction include the major points to be covered in the paper?
- Does all the material in the paper support the opening point and the topic?
- Is there a Conclusion? Does the Conclusion restate the thesis and include general concluding thoughts?
- Does the subject of this writing and your discussion of it relate to Sociological concepts, and are you communicating with a clear Sociological perspective?

**Support**
- Is there specific evidence and plenty of it? and Does the evidence (including research data) pertain to the topic?

**Coherence**
- Is there a clear method of organization? and Are transitions used to connect sentences, paragraphs, and ideas?
- Is there effective paragraphing?

**Sentence Skills**
- Are there any mistakes in grammar, punctuation, or correct word usage, spelling, pronoun reference agreement.
- Did you write the entire paper in THIRD PERSON, if requested? (No - I, me, my, mine, our, us (1st person), you, your, you’re (2nd person)

**MLA/APA Formatting, following Mrs. D’s Format AND Following the Prompt**
- Is there in-text citation, and in the proper form?
- Is there a Works Cited or Reference page, and in the proper form?
- Was Mrs. Decter’s Format correctly followed?
- Did you follow the instructions for the prompt – AND STAY ON TOPIC?