Doctoral Research Seminar: Reading, Writing & Research

Time and location
Wednesdays, 9-12
Building 9 room 450
In case of a temporary shift to remote teaching:
https://mit.zoom.us/j/94963007740

Professor
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Assistant Professor of Urban Planning and Public Health
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Book office hours: http://dusp.mit.edu/officehours

Description
11.800 is a seminar focused on helping doctoral students learn how to craft and critique written arguments. You will complete the first year papers (FYP) you began planning in 11.233. Class emphasizes intensive peer review and workshop discussion of each other's papers.

Learning Objectives
- Understand the purpose of academic papers' component parts
- Describe widely agreed upon guidelines for effective academic writing in the applied social sciences
- Articulate ways to improve samples of academic writing
- Develop strategies for writing clearly and revising effectively
- Develop strategies for providing constructive peer reviews

Grading
11.800 is graded P/D/F based on the following:

- Participation and professionalism: 40%
- Peer reviews: 15%
- Work submitted for initial review (including short assignments listed on the schedule): 30%
- Revisions: 15%

All assignments are due before class (i.e., posted no later than 2PM) on the day that assignment is listed on the schedule. I.e., come to class having already submitted that day's assignment.

Norms
11.800 asks students to create, and actively participate in, a scholarly community. Being a valued member of a scholarly community entails 1) submitting your best work for peer review; 2) thoughtfully responding to peer critiques; 3) providing constructive peer reviews; 4) offering well-prepared oral presentations of your work; and 5) actively listening to peers present their work, among other tasks.
As you approach each of these tasks over the course of the semester, please keep in mind the following tips for being a considerate colleague:

1) It shows respect for other people’s time when you submit your best work for peer review. Peer reviewers get annoyed when they have to waste time noting careless typos, violations of basic writing standards, glaring logical errors, and other obvious problems. Peer reviewers are there to engage with the substance of your work, and carefully checking your work before submitting helps ensure that their time is well spent. Similar logic applies to submitting revised work after peer review; it shows respect and appreciation for your colleagues when you demonstrate that you have carefully considered their critiques with an open mind.

2) Authors make themselves vulnerable when they submit their work for peer review. Even accomplished academics can recount unfair or unkind peer reviews years after getting such reports. Equally memorable, however, can be the thoughtful, insightful, constructive peer review that dramatically improves the quality of a paper. While we will go over the specific elements of an effective review as part of 11.800, please approach your peer review assignments with the goal of providing memorably helpful feedback to your colleagues.

3) Showing up to class prepared and on time is critical to the functioning of our scholarly community. Please see the attendance policy for more details.

**Attendance**

We cannot accomplish the goals of 11.800 without consistent and complete attendance. Because class meets only once weekly, one missed class equals a missed week of class. For these reasons, each absence results in a 15 percentage point deduction from your final class grade, subtracted from your participation and professionalism points. Absences excused by ODGE for illness, personal emergencies, urgent family matters, religious observation, and any other matter ODGE deems to be a sufficient reason to miss class, do not incur any penalty.

While I understand that members of the MIT community are constantly presented with exciting and professionally relevant opportunities during the semester, missing class to attend conferences, travel for research, give lectures, or engage in other professional or scholarly activities will be penalized. (It’s not that I don’t wish students well in these outside pursuits, and please note that the penalty for missing class is designed so that students do not have to choose between passing 11.800 and one instance of attending a critical outside opportunity. It is up to you to weigh the costs and benefits of missing class.)

**Special Accommodations**

MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. If you have a disability and are not planning to use accommodations, it is still recommended that you meet with
DAS staff to familiarize yourself with their services and resources. Please visit the DAS website for contact information.

If you have already been approved for accommodations, I am ready to assist with implementation. Please inform me so I can oversee accommodation implementation for this course.

**Academic Integrity**

In this course, I will hold you to the high standard of academic integrity expected of all students at the Institute. I do this for two reasons. First, it is essential to the learning process that you are the one doing the work. I have structured the assignments in this course to enable you to gain a mastery of the course material. Failing to do the work yourself will result in a lesser understanding of the content, and therefore a less meaningful education for you. Second, it is important that there be a level playing field for all students in this course and at the Institute so that the rigor and integrity of the Institute's educational program are maintained.

Violating the Academic Integrity policy in any way (e.g., plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, cheating, etc.) will result in official Institute sanction. Possible sanctions include receiving a failing grade on the assignment or exam, being assigned a failing grade in the course, having a formal notation of disciplinary action placed on your MIT record, suspension from the Institute, and expulsion from the Institute for very serious cases.

Please review MIT's Academic Integrity policy and related resources (e.g., working under pressure; how to paraphrase, summarize, and quote; etc.) and contact me if you have any questions about appropriate citation methods, the degree of collaboration that is permitted, or anything else related to the Academic Integrity of this course.

**Laptops**

Please make every effort to limit unnecessary use of laptops in class. Taking notes by hand, it turns out, is better anyways (read about that here). You may use laptops to pull up relevant resources as needed during class, or to take notes when receiving peer feedback, for example. Emailing, browsing the internet, and using social media are example of unacceptable laptop use during class.

**Accommodations**

Students who need academic or other accommodations should follow procedures outlined here.

**Anti-Racist Statement**

This course was designed to support and advance the practice of racial justice, understanding that academic research and writing - by shaping how we learn about the world and what we do with knowledge - can challenge racist power structures and systems that uphold racial/ethnic disparities in power and resources, as well as other social injustices. This course asks students to engage in discussions about how and when academic research and writing centers the experiences of, and shifts power to, people and communities injured by White supremacy, colonialism, cis-heteropatriarchy, ableism, and other forms of oppression. We will discuss examples of how academic writing has been used to challenge racist and colonial ideas and practices that maintain racialized disparity. Recognizing the harm caused by historic and current exclusion of systematically marginalized voices from the fields of urban planning and social science research
more generally, the course includes theories, practices, ideas, and projects developed and articulated by BIPOC scholars and writers.

**Inclusive Classroom**

I (and MIT) value an inclusive environment, and I will work hard to foster a sense of community in this classroom. I welcome to this classroom individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations, as well as across other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class community are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. I aim to foster a culture of appreciation, respect, and trust. If this standard is not being upheld, please speak with me, and I will help.

**Land Acknowledgement Statement**

We acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the land, and the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories. The lands which MIT occupies are the traditional unceded territories of the Wampanoag Nation and the Massachusett Peoples. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of these territories, as well as the ongoing processes of colonialism and dispossession in which we and our institution are implicated. Beyond the stolen territory which we physically occupy, MIT has long profited from the sale of federal lands granted by the Morrill Act, territories stolen from 82 Tribes including the Greater and Little Osage, Chippewa, and Omaha Peoples. As we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples connected to this land from time immemorial, we seek to Indigenize our institution and the field of planning, offer space, and leave Indigenous peoples in more empowered positions.

This statement is lightly adapted from the land acknowledgement of the Resilient Communities Lab and Indigenous Environmental Planning teaching team (Prof. Janelle Knox-Hayes (MIT), Prof. Larry Susskind (MIT), Prof. Elizabeth Rule (GWU), and Osamu Kumasaka)

**Return to in-person teaching/learning**

MIT and DUSP are excited for a semester of in-person teaching and learning. To ensure that all classes can and will be delivered in person, MIT has worked hard to put into place policies, procedures and technologies to maximize the likelihood of a safe and uninterrupted semester. That said, the ever-evolving pandemic means we need to be prepared. If any student in class tests positive for covid-19, MIT Medical has established clear procedures for ensuring safety of everyone and MIT’s Class Notification and Support Team will help that student continue learning with the least possible disruption. If any of the Instructors in this class are unable to attend in person due to covid-19, we will work together with the leadership of DUSP, the School, and the Institute to ensure minimum disruption.

In the case of the need for any remote teaching, we will use this link to meet during our regularly scheduled Wednesday morning time (9AM-12PM):
Schedule

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<tr>
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<th>Topic</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to 11.800, updates since 11.223</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/9/2022</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing we love – finding your voice and identifying your audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/16/2022</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Framing, introductions, theory, background – what makes a good research question</td>
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<td>2/23/2022</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Methods</td>
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<td>Discussion and conclusion</td>
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<td>3/16/2022</td>
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<td>Communicating with journals/editors</td>
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<td>Peer Review and revisions</td>
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<td>4/27/2020</td>
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Weekly agenda

2/2 – class 1

Goals: We will discuss the purpose of research, learn about each student’s motivation for earning a PhD in planning and about their research agenda. We will clarify our thoughts about the connections between (urban studies and planning) research, audience, and social change.

Reading:
- Syllabus
- An example of an allied field interrogating the aims and effects of its research. Please read the introduction and conclusions and feel free to skim the rest. The piece is meant to provide context and example, not so that you absorb all the details on the state of sociological research: DiPrete TA, Fox-Williams BN. The Relevance of Inequality Research in Sociology for Inequality Reduction. Socius. 2021 Jun;7:23780231211020199.

Assignment: Please come to class prepared to speak about what brought you to DUSP’s PhD program and to your field of research. Later in class, you will be asked to speak for up to 20 minutes about your first year paper plans, and progress made since completing 11.233.

2/9 class 2

Goals: 
Reading: 
Norton. Read Chapter 5: General Heuristics.


Assignment: Identify one piece of scholarly writing that was published in the past five years that has shaped the way you think about your own research, taught you something new and important, or changed your mind about a topic you thought you understood. Upload to Stellar the citation and a brief argument for the importance of this piece. Note how the authors’ writing style made the paper particularly accessible or inaccessible to you. Include at least three quotes pulled directly from the paper to illustrate your points. If possible, select at least one example of effective text and at least one example of ineffective text.

class 3

Reading:

University of Minnesota Duluth, "How to write a lit review" http://www.d.umn.edu/~hrallis/guides/researching/litreview.html


Assignment: Post to stellar a complete outline of your FYP. The introduction/background/literature review portion of this outline should, at this stage, be the most complete. It should contain, at a minimum, bullet point-level text describing the arguments you intend to make in this section, not a list of the topics the section will cover.

class 4

Reading:

Ioannidis J. The Proposal to Lower P Value Thresholds to .005. JAMA March 22, 2018

Rettig, Hillary. The Seven Secrets of the Prolific: The Definitive Guide to Overcoming Procrastination, Perfectionism, and Writer’s Block. Section 5.4 Write Nonlinearly: Leverage Your Project’s Easy Parts, in Chapter 5, Optimizing Your Writing Process
https://tomprof.stanford.edu/posting/1226

*This list will be updated by Feb 16 to include readings on PAR and writing about participatory projects

Assignment: Post to stellar an updated outline of your FYP. Update the introduction/background/literature review portion based on last class, and add as complete a methods section as you are able, at this point. The methods section should contain, at a minimum, descriptions of your data source and analytic “variables” (qualitative or quantitative), along with a rationale for why these data points are good representations of the constructs you seek to study. You should, at a minimum, briefly introduce your analytic approach along with key interesting facts about what your analytic approach does well and does poorly. These can be bullet point-level descriptions. The results section can include table shells, qualitative code descriptions, and/or other relevant content to demonstrate how results will be presented. If your results are ready (preliminary is ok!) add the real results.

class 5

Results

Reading:


https://elemental.medium.com/when-science-needs-self-correcting-a130eacb4235

Assignment: Post to stellar an updated outline of your FYP. Update the methods and results section based on last class, and add your discussion/conclusions section. It should contain, at a minimum, bullet point-level text describing the arguments you intend to make in this section, not a list of the topics the section will cover.

class 6

Reading:

MIT VPR. Best Practices For Preventing Research Misconduct
https://research.mit.edu/integrity-and-compliance/research-misconduct/best-practices-preventing-research-misconduct

*This list will be updated by February 16 to include readings on agenda setting and implications for other audiences*

class 7 – no reading. FYP workshop day

class 8

*Reading:*


*Assignment:* Bring a list of at least five journals that you regularly read to class. Before class, subscribe to table of content updates from all five, and (this part is highly recommended, but not required) register as a peer reviewer for at least one.

class 9

*Reading:*


*Additional files to be shared over zoom*

*Assignment:* Provide a ranked list of three potential outlets you might target for your FYP. For your topic choice, write a cover letter and post to Stellar.

Classes 10 – 13

*Reading:* Peers’ FYPs; individualized reading lists as suggested to you over the course of peer review

*Assignment Schedule*

Post a complete FYP draft to stellar by 2 PM, 4/6.

Email peer reviews to authors (CC Mariana) by 2 PM 4/13.

Post revision letter and revised FYP by 2PM 4/27

Post final FYP by PM 5/4.