

Application for Editorship of *Teaching Sociology*
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Teaching Sociology (*TS*) is the premier journal published by the American Sociological Association which focuses on the scholarship of teaching and learning. The journal is where seasoned faculty and new teachers just starting out turn for research on how to invigorate classrooms, enhance their practice of teaching, and assess student learning. The journal's reputation is well-established; the new editor's primary task will be to maintain and build on its quality and to reach out to scholars in order to increase submissions and subscriptions.

Intended Audiences

Teaching Sociology has two primary audiences. The journal has developed a reputation for publishing reports on innovative teaching techniques (along with the ASA's Teaching and Academic Resources publications). There is clearly an on-going audience who turns to *TS* for this kind of information. However, under the last few *TS* editors, another audience has emerged – those who are seeking not just teaching tips for particular concepts or classes, but a body of scholarship about teaching as practice and about how to assess not just our own teaching, but, more importantly, student learning. The audience for sociological articles about the scholarship of teaching and learning is growing, driven in part by the broader assessment movement in higher education and by the desire to apply sociological knowledge to what happens in classrooms.

The central editorial question is “how to balance the needs of these audiences?” My view mirrors current *TS* editorial policy: articles printed in the journal should be based primarily on the scholarship of teaching and learning and notes should be more about teaching techniques. For most issues, the balance needs to be weighted more to articles rather than notes. However, there is a way to increase the amount of teaching techniques available to the audience without modifying that balance or increasing the number of pages: using the *TS* website to provide additional materials about teaching techniques.

In this time of budget cuts, fiscal accountability, a slumping economy, and full-text databases such as JSTOR becoming increasingly available, educational institutions and individuals are reassessing their subscriptions to professional journals. There is little any one editor can do to change that. But what an editor must do is to maintain the highest level of scholarship and work to encourage more submissions and subscriptions. The more people who are aware of, involved with, and reading this quality journal, the greater the likelihood that submissions and subscriptions to *TS* would increase. If appointed, I would communicate with as many individuals as possible who present teaching-related papers at regional and national sociology meetings, encouraging them to submit a manuscript to *TS*. I would attend as many paper sessions at regional and national meetings as I can and personally talk with presenters about the journal and send letters encouraging submissions to those who presented at meetings I cannot attend. I already maintain an

active presence on the Teaching Sociology Google group, and would periodically post a call for papers there. There is a growing blogging community in sociology, and I would consider reaching out to them, asking them to place the *TS* website on their blog roll as well.

My Editorial Philosophy

As an editor, I want to make the review process as open and transparent as possible. Submitting one's work for others' evaluation is stressful, and criticism, no matter how it is expressed, is never easy to receive. From the author's viewpoint, reviewing is an anonymous process that can seem to go on forever. Perhaps worst of all, almost all of us have received a review which was perplexing or even seemed unfair. I believe it is the duty of the editor to handle all submissions carefully and respectfully, but in particular the 'revise and resubmits' and 'rejections,' with a goal of providing constructive, supportive, yet honest comments. My editing philosophy is to nurture scholar-authors, seeing the best in what they submitted and helping them to find even more sociological significance in their data. This is especially something I want to do with younger scholars – our discipline needs to be sure that we foster the next generation of scholars to write on the scholarship of teaching and learning. Or, if the work is truly not something that *TS* would publish – either due to the content or the writing style – to be honest with the author early on.

To support this effort, I will solicit reviewers and Editorial Board members who will be timely and helpful to authors. Luckily, *TS* editors already have created a large database of possible reviewers and I will work to increase it during my tenure as editor. I plan on actively seeking out younger scholars as reviewers, both for their insights and knowledge, and to give them a chance to see this side of the publication process. In keeping with ASA policies, I believe that the Editorial Board should include diverse members from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds, institutional settings, and with a range of experience in the profession.

On-going and New Directions

I support Dr. Grauerholz's decision to utilize the *TS* website as an extension of the journal and I would continue that practice, unless the Committee on Publications and the ASA object. I believe that the additional materials placed on the website this past January to supplement the articles in the special edition about "Lessons Learned at the 2007 Teaching-related Workshops" (Volume 36, Number 1) provided a wonderful model of how to balance *TS*'s two audiences, using both the printed journal and the website. Presenters were asked to submit a peer-reviewed article which was grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning about the issues covered at their workshop, while handouts and more technique-oriented materials from the workshop were placed on the *TS* website for a period of time. Readers of the journal received high-quality scholarship expected of articles in the journal and they could go to the website to obtain the more practical pedagogical advice that the workshop attendees received. I would like to have my Deputy Editor and perhaps one Editorial Board member work with authors whose submissions are more about teaching technique ideas (i.e., notes not articles) to post additional information (e.g., handouts, assessment rubrics, etc.) on the website.

Knowing that I would be applying for this position, I asked graduate students and new faculty members who I knew or met at the Boston meetings of ASA, SSSP, and SSSI what they might want in *TS*. Many said they were overwhelmed with the number of textbooks on the market and wished for some guidance on which ones might be best for their teaching style and their goals for the course. I would propose that, in each issue, one course is selected and we ask one or more people to review some of the common and not-so-common books (not just textbooks) on the market for that course. So for instance, in the first edition I would edit, we might have a review of books for Introductory Sociology. While *TS* has done this on a sporadic basis, my plan is to routinize this for every issue. My Deputy Editor and I would come up with the rotation of courses and then he would locate reviewers so that they could receive, read, and review the books in enough time to meet publication deadlines.

With technological support, I would like to move the journal's submission and review process to a completely web-based process. I think this would help the administration of the submission process and make it easier for those submitting a manuscript for review. I do not have the technological skills to create such a process, but there are enough journals (such as *Sociological Perspectives*) which have such a process that it should be relatively easy to create and implement one.

In addition, while I would like to discuss ideas about special issues with the *TS* Editorial Board and elicit members' feedback, I am considering several possible topics: public sociology in the classroom, as well as the assessment movement in higher education and the roles sociology can play in institutions' assessment activities.

I support *TS*'s joint venture with *American Sociological Review* and would want to continue that practice, if the new editors of *ASR* are still interested. In fact, I would propose expanding the idea to another journal. I have asked Dr. Uggen if that model is something that *TS* and *Contexts* would want to consider, given that *The Contexts Reader* is marketed for use in higher education classrooms. Having a more pedagogically-oriented manuscript published in *TS* about an article published in *Contexts* may increase the sales of the reader, because faculty would be more comfortable knowing how to use the article. Perhaps these companion pieces could even be put together into a teacher's guide to accompany *The Contexts Reader*. Dr. Uggen has expressed interest in this idea and we have agreed to have more conversations about it, if I am appointed editor.

Valdosta State University's Support for My Application

I have spoken with my interim department head and two Deans (the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School) and all are excited by and supportive of my application. VSU's normal teaching load is four courses per semester. My immediate supervisors have endorsed my proposal that I would have a one course load reassignment each semester for this position for the duration of my term as editor, if selected. We have also agreed that I will have only two class preparations each term. I am confident that administrative support (at least one graduate assistant) will be given to me, should I be appointed.

Qualifications of Prospective Editor and Deputy Editor

I have been teaching for 22 years, have an active publication record, and have significant reviewing and editing experience which have prepared me to be editor of *Teaching Sociology*. I have an on-going involvement with the journal. I have published several times in *TS* and have reviewed manuscripts, particularly those that involve teaching sociological theory and using mass media in the classroom. This past summer, Dr. Grauerholz asked me to serve on the Editorial Board. I told her about the fact that I was intending to apply for this position. She thought that it would not be problematic; that if I was selected as editor, I would simply resign from the board. In addition, I have other editorial experience. I have served on the editorial board of *Sociological Spectrum*, the journal of the Mid South Sociological Association. I am currently on the editorial board for *Sociological Perspectives*, the journal for the Pacific Sociological Association. I was asked to join this board after I reviewed a manuscript. The editors were impressed by both the detailed review I provided and the fact that I returned it in less than two days. I believe that journal editors, but more importantly authors, deserve a prompt and thoughtful response, if I am asked to review a manuscript. So unless I am buried in grading, I return reviews within 72 hours of receiving the manuscript and I always read the manuscript at least three times before I begin writing my review. If selected, I will bring that same quick turnaround to writing decision letters.

Since 2000, I have reviewed fifty manuscripts for a variety of journals, including *Feminist Media Studies*, *Homicide Studies*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *Social Problems*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Sociological Perspectives*, and *Symbolic Interaction* (see p. 9 of my vita for the complete list). I also have reviewed several textbooks and book prospectuses for publishing companies. I recently served as editor and major contributor of a teaching manual to accompany the new W.W. Norton text, *Social Problems*, by Joel Best. I approached writing the manual from a different perspective from most supplementary manuals, because I believe many faculty would like to teach from the constructionist theory, but do not know how to do it. So I chronicled how, over the course of several years, I changed from using a "problem of the week" to a fully constructionist approach and how I integrate into the class a semester-long city simulation, where every student is assigned a job, belongs to a civic organization, and where student-citizens try to solve the social problems which occur.

I have served as co-editor of four ASA syllabi collections and have been published in several others. In addition, I have been newsletter co-editor (serving a three year term) for both the ASA Section on Undergraduate Education (now called the Section on Teaching and Learning) and earlier, for the Mid-South Sociological Association. All of these experiences required careful proofing of materials, attention to detail, a strict adherence to deadlines, as well as cooperation with my colleagues.

My own published research tends to fall into one of three major categories: new religious movements; constructionist studies of how social problems are constructed in popular culture, especially on television talk shows; and the scholarship of teaching and learning in sociology.

I work hard at being a teacher and constantly seek to improve my own pedagogy. To that end, I am active in the teaching movement within sociology. I am in my third year as an elected university representative on the ASA's Council for the Teaching and Learning Section, and am chair of its Publications

Committee; I am currently the Chair of the Teaching Social Problems division of SSSP; I have been Chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Education for the Midwest Sociological Society; and just finished my term as a member of the ASA's Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award Committee. These experiences will help me to assess manuscripts using the scholarship of teaching and learning and provide feedback to authors.

I have asked Dr. Glenn Muschert (Miami University) to be my Deputy Editor. Glenn is a relatively young sociology professor, who has already established quite a record of accomplishments since receiving his degree in 2002. He has published fourteen journal articles, chapters, and one book, either as a sole author or with colleagues, including several contributions to the scholarship of teaching and learning. He will be completing a three year term on the editorial board of *Teaching Sociology*. He also has reviewed for journals such as *Sociological Forum*, *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, and the *Journal of Excellence in College Teaching* (see p. 9 of his vita for the complete list). And Glenn is currently the guest editor of a special double issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* focusing on "Lessons from Columbine." Glenn has discussed our application with his administrators at Miami University and they are very supportive.

Together, we feel that we are a good editorial team. We share many characteristics that make us strong candidates: we are strong teachers who have a desire to improve our own teaching and to help others do the same; we both want reviews to be honest, fair, and helpful and will work with reviewers to ensure that. We are attentive to details and deadlines. Most importantly, we both believe in the mission of *Teaching Sociology*. If the journal is placed in our editorial hands, we promise to continue the excellent leadership of our predecessors. We know that Dr. Liz Grauerholz, other former editors, the ASA Committee on Publications, and the ASA staff will be there to help with problems that we might face, especially in our first year. When our tenure ends, we will in turn gladly assist the new editor.