

# contexts

## author guidelines

(Updated January 27, 2012)

*Contexts* makes sociological ideas accessible to non-specialists. Our audience includes professional sociologists, university students, educated “lay” readers, policy professionals, activists, and anyone else interested in contemporary social analysis. We welcome contributions from social scientists and others who write incisively and accessibly, free of jargon and in an engaging style. Published quarterly, the magazine includes feature articles as well as shorter pieces.

### feature articles (3,000 words maximum)

We are mainly interested in two types of pieces, though we would consider other interesting proposals:

a) Articles that use sociological analysis to deepen or challenge conventional knowledge about a subject. Some examples:

- How have Tea Party activists been represented by the media, and what do these images and news frames leave out, according to sociologists?
- What do members of youth subcultures do when they grow up?

b) Debates, controversies, or trends in the profession, particularly if they are relevant beyond sociology. This might include such topics as:

- Are college students getting dumber?
- Can social scientists be people of faith?

### shorter pieces

In addition to Feature articles, *Contexts* includes shorter essays and reports on subjects related to media and culture, education, social trends, visual sociology and books. Descriptions and submission information for these shorter pieces is located under the Department headings below.

### elements of *contexts* style

Academic journals publish articles in which authors “tell,” or report on findings. Magazine writing invites authors to “show”—to describe, set scenes, and allow interviewees to speak for “themselves.” *Contexts* is a scholarly-journalistic hybrid; we encourage you submit writing that “shows” rather than “tells.” Imagine that a typical reader is your college-educated aunt, or a savvy college junior, and try to make the article compelling and accessible to her or him! Here are some further suggestions, particularly for feature articles:

1. *Set the Scene.* The first few paragraphs should draw the reader in, providing a sense of the context of the story—by focusing on a particular event or person, who is emblematic of the larger story.
2. *Tell a Story.* To the best of your ability, populate your prose with living, breathing characters.

3. *Make your writing jargon free, active, and flowing.* Sentences should be active rather than passive; signposting should be implicit rather than explicit. In other words, insure that readers can follow your argument without using such academic conventions of “Now I will argue...”.

4. *Attribute your sources.* *Contexts* does not use formal academic citation. Instead, use journalistic forms of attribution rather than citations, footnotes, or endnotes. For example: “As sociologist Cecilia Ridgeway argued in a 2001 article....” Conclude with a list of suggested articles or books for readers who wish to pursue the topic further.

A sample of *Context*-style writing is available on this website. For additional models of good writing on intellectual/social issues, check out the archives of the (now defunct) magazine *Lingua Franca* at <http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/>, as well as selected pieces in magazines such as the *New Republic*, *Miller-McCune*, and *The Atlantic*.

## proposal and review process for unsolicited articles

Stage One: Send a 2-page proposal that includes a 50-word summary of the main argument, and the first few paragraphs to: [editors@contexts.org](mailto:editors@contexts.org). The editorial team will review your proposal within 2-3 weeks to determine if we are interested in pursuing it. If so, we will invite you to submit a completed manuscript.

Stage Two: When we receive your full manuscript, we will first review it in-house to determine if it is ready for external review. If it we deem that it is, it will be reviewed by two to three experts in the field.

Stage Three: Based on the reviews and our own assessment of the manuscript, we will determine whether to accept or reject the manuscript, or to invite a revision and resubmission. Revised manuscripts will be sent for another round of external reviews contingent on editorial discretion.

Timeline: We aim to complete the external review process and issue a decision within three months of the original date of submission of a full manuscript. Accepted manuscripts will be edited and published within one year --usually sooner-- depending on the number of manuscripts in process.

## departments

Proposals for shorter pieces should be sent to the appropriate editor as listed below.

### *In Brief*

A grab-bag of news items and research of note--culled from journals, blogs, and other sources. If you have ideas for items, please send them to Jennifer Hemler at [jen@contexts.org](mailto:jen@contexts.org).

### *Trends*

Editor: Thomas J. Linneman ([trends@contexts.org](mailto:trends@contexts.org)). Offers insightful analyses of a wide variety of trends: public opinion, culture and politics, demography, and trends within the field of sociology. Our goal is expose subtle nuances within broader trends, allowing the reader to think about important trends in ways. Submissions should be approximately 1000-1100 words with 2-3 charts or graphs.

### *In Pictures*

Editor: Katie Hyde ([photos@contexts.org](mailto:photos@contexts.org)). Photo essays offer a nuanced, visual exploration of a sociological theme. Framed by a written essay, as well as detailed captions,

the sequence of images elicits and addresses questions about society. Submissions should be approximately 500 words (essay) along with 12-14 images and their accompanying captions.

### *Mediations*

Editor: Kari Lerum (culture@contextst.org) The features in this department explore dynamic interactions between contemporary and global medias, cultures, politics, institutions, and identities. We especially welcome proposals that emphasize the reflexive impact of "new media" (digitized, interactive) and critical analyses of potentially democratizing medias (e.g., Youtube, Facebook, Wikipedia), as well as sociological analyses of "traditional media" (e.g. Television, film, newspapers, magazines, books). Submissions should be approximately 1000-1200 words.

### *Pedagogies*

Editor: Gary K. Perry (classroom@contexts.org). This department focuses on critical issues in higher education, classroom instruction that is oriented to addressing students as citizens in a global environment. Features include: discussions of pedagogy, service learning, and community action research, among other topics. Submissions should be approximately 2000-2200 words.

### *Books*

Editor: Arvind Rajagopal (books@contexts.org). We accept books for review and welcome potential reviewers to suggest books—barring any conflicts of interest. Reviews should be opinionated and critical, though not inflammatory. This section will include book essays, short reviews, and book features.

- Review essays that focus on 2-3 books on a particular theme (ala *The New York Review of Books*)— 1700-1900 words.
- Short reviews of a single book. We especially encourage sociologists to review works of sociology and sociologists to review general interest books—500 words maximum.
- Book lists: "Breakthrough Books," "Forgotten Classics," "What They're Reading" and other lists. We are more than happy to receive suggestions of other lists you'd like to see in the magazine. For a sample, see:  
<http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/Special/books.9603.html>

### *Unplugged*

First-person reflections on the profession, economics, culture, politics, and other subjects. Submissions should be approximately 650-750 words. Send ideas to: Jodi O'Brien at jobrien@contexts.org.