**Writing in Psychometrics**

I have advised many people – undergraduates, Masters and PhD candidates, postdoctoral fellows, authors submitting papers to journals, and others – on their writing. I’ve developed some insights about technical writing over time, that not only agree with some of the literature on technical writing, they also seem to help people write better. This course is my attempt to better understand and communicate some of these insights.

There is no one correct way to write. But there are things you can do that tend to make it difficult for a reader to absorb the ideas you are writing about, or make it easier for the reader. Thus, it is important to focus on the reader, and the constraints and habits of mind that most readers (even in the rarefied population of academics who can understand the technical details of your work) bring to the task of reading what you have written. This is a central idea in my thinking about writing.

My goals for you in this short course are:

* To understand that writing requires an intellectual investment similar to the investment that you put into other areas of your research, from developing research questions, data collection, and data analysis, to writing and testing algorithms, and formulating and proving theorems.
* To understand ways of organizing your writing that make it more likely that the reader will interpret and understand your ideas in the way that you intend.
* To gain experience writing with these ideas in mind.

Here are some topics we might cover; the first few we will definitely talk about and the remainder we will touch on as time permits:

* The writer’s task. The reader’s task. Busy readers, distractions, and attention spans. Reader habits.
* The beginning, the middle, and the end.
* The sentence, the paragraph, the section, the article. The importance of stories.
* Planning, outlining, organizing. Layered writing. Format. How do you know what is required?
* Appropriate level of detail. Assertions and evidence. Graphs and Figures.
* No surprises. Good mechanics, consistent use of technical language, writing that is unobtrusive but not boring.
* Dealing with referee reports, as a referee and as an author.
* Citation, academic integrity, establishing your contribution.

Because writing takes practice, and we only have X hours together, I will ask you to do some homework before the workshop begins:

* Read journal X, Y and Z
* Do examples W
* Bring a paper you are working on. Email it to me in advance.

We will spend most of the time in the workshop thinking about your writing, and we will touch on each topic as it comes up in your writing.