

Social Research Methods
Sociology 920:501
Fall 2010
M 9:50-12:30

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This course aims to impart a critical perspective of, and an empirical familiarity with, the range of methods available to sociological researchers. We will examine three, broadly defined, methodological approaches to doing sociology: survey, experimental, and quasi-experimental design; ethnography and qualitative interviews; and historical/comparative studies. It is fair to say that these three methodological approaches correspond to three conventionally rather distinct conceptualizations of social life and of the science dedicated to studying it. Yet even as you get your hands dirty trying to figure out the specifics of each method, you will be well-served to keep in mind that no single approach can adequately account for the richness and complexity of human interaction and social structures. Indeed, to overcome the reductionisms inherent in one method, it is always advisable to reach out for a novel take on the issue at hand. This, then, is the ultimate goal of this course: to instill in you the desire, as a matter of principle and conviction, to push past the conventional boundaries among the main sociological methods. We do this by encouraging you to appreciate the potential and limits of each method through required readings and exercises, and by having you design and execute your own mixed methods research project as your final paper.

COURSE LOGISTICS

Attendance and Participation:

To put it bluntly, the norm for graduate courses is: thou shalt not miss class! You must have an excellent reason to miss a session and, unless not humanly possible, you are expected to let us know well ahead of time if you cannot make it. Moreover, you are expected to come to class fully prepared to analyze, discuss, and debate the issues raised in the assigned reading material. This course is fundamentally designed as a seminar, and its success depends on active engagement and dialogic exchange.

Course Readings:

In the name of cost effectiveness, we will upload as many of the readings for this course as possible on Sakai, however we urge you to buy hard copies of these texts for your own library. At a minimum, you must purchase the following four books, available at the Douglass bookstore and via the usual online book vendors:

- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Miller, Jane E. 2005. *Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Schutt, Russell K. 2009. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 6th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. [feel free to buy an earlier (and cheaper) edition, but it's your responsibility to check on comparability with assigned pages from the 6th edition]

Notice that beyond the required readings for each week, available under "Weekly Readings" on Sakai, we also provide a number of texts that illustrate the method under discussion. These are available both in the relevant week, and alphabetically under "Sample Articles." Finally, for your reading pleasure, we include a set of articles written by our very own faculty that further illustrate the variable, dynamic, and creative ways in which methods are actually used in sociological inquiry.

Course Requirements:

- A set of seven assignments meant to both conceptually and empirically deepen your comprehension of the course material and develop your analytic writing abilities. Several of these assignments may be used to explore topics and conduct analyses for your final project. All assignments should be circulated to the entire class on Sakai no later than 12 noon Sunday, the day before the class in which it is due (use the "Discussion-Assignment Submission" section). (40 percent of grade).
- Two drafts of the proposal for your final paper. The first draft will be due November 22nd the second December 6th. The first proposal should be approximately 2 pages long, and describe your thesis, research questions, and the methods you will use (include 3-5 references). The second proposal should build on the first, be 3-5 pages long, and outline your thesis, research questions, data, methods, literature, and references. Both proposals should be submitted to Sakai no later than 12 noon Sunday, the day before class. (10 percent)

Note: please talk with us about your proposed final project prior to the due date. In addition, we will hold extra office hours during the weeks of November 15th and November 22nd. Each of you is required to make an appointment to formally

talk with each of us about your final project during one of those weeks (with a draft of your proposal in hand).

- In-class presentation of final paper, on December 13th. Plan for a 7-10 minute power point presentation, followed by a 5 minute Q&A session. (10 percent)
- Final paper. Each student is expected to write a 20-25 page final paper on a mixed methods research project. For your final paper, you must use at least two of the three broad social science research methods we discuss in the course. This paper is due December 20th (in addition to an electronic copy, please put a hard copy in each of our mailboxes). (40 percent)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (September 8 th) Wednesday = Monday this week	Introduction to Social Science Inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Explanation and/in social science ➤ Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices ➤ Methodological Rock-Paper-Scissors game
	<p>READING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbott, <i>Methods of Discovery</i>, chapters 1 and 2 <p>ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ass. #1: Analytic Review
Week 2 (September 13th)	The Basics of Social Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discussion of Ass. #1 ➤ IRB certification ➤ Association vs. causality ➤ Attributes and variables ➤ Units of analysis ➤ Levels of measurement ➤ Ecological fallacy ➤ Main steps for conducting research ➤ Selection and formulation of a research problem ➤ Conceptualization and operationalization
	<p>READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schutt, Chs. 2, 4 • Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 190-202)

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Miller, Alan, S., and Rodney Stark. 2002. "Gender and Religiousness: Can Socialization Explanations Be Saved?" *American Journal of Sociology* 107: 1399-1423.

SURVEYS, EXPERIMENTS, AND QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

Week 3
(September 20th)

The Logic of Causation

- Cause and effect
- Elaboration Paradigm
- Bivariate and trivariate tables
- Statistical interaction and 3D tables
- Descriptive analysis: Crosstabulation
- Chi square interpretation

READINGS:

- Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 202-20); Ch. 14 (pp. 514-534)
- Babbie, Earl. "The Elaboration Model." Ch. 15 in the *Practice of Social Research*. 10th edition.
- Babbie, Earl, "Notes on Percentaging Tables"
- Miller, Chs. 3-4

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #2: Bivariate tables (hypothesizing relationships)

Week 4
(September 27th)

Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Design

- Classic experimental design
- Control groups
- Internal and external validity
- Solomon 4-group design
- Quasi-experimental designs

READING:

- Schutt, Ch. 7

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108:937-75.
 - Correll, Shelley J. 2004. "Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations." *American Sociological Review* 69:93-113.
 - Pager, Devah, Bruce Western, and Bart Bonikowski. 2009. "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment." *American Sociological Review* 74:777-99.
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- Rudman, Laurie A., Richard D. Ashmore, and Melvin L. Gary. 2001. "Unlearning' Automatic Biases: The Malleability of Implicit Prejudice and Stereotypes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81:856-68.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #3: Trivariate tables (testing hypotheses using elaboration paradigm)

Week 5
(October 4th)

Sampling and Survey Design

- Descriptive vs. inferential statistics
- Sampling theory/standard error
- Sampling designs
- Survey and questionnaire design
- Reliability/validity

READINGS:

- Schutt, Ch. 5; Ch. 8
- Skim Schutt, Ch. 13

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Carr, Deborah. 2004. "My Daughter Has a Career; I Just Raised Babies": The Psychological Consequences of Women's Intergenerational Social Comparisons." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 67:132-54.
 - Kaley, Alexandra, Frank Dobbin, and Erin Kelly. 2006. "Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies." *American Sociological Review* 71:589-617.
 - Clarke, Lee, and Carroll L. Estes. 1992. "Sociological and Economic Theories of Markets and Nonprofits: Evidence from Home Health Organizations." *American Journal of Sociology* 97:945-69.
 - Gorman, Elizabeth H., and Julie A. Kmec. 2009. "Hierarchical Rank and Women's Organizational Mobility : Glass Ceilings in Corporate Law Firms." *American Journal of Sociology* 114:1428-74.
 - McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Matthew E. Brashears. 2006. "Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades." *American Sociological Review* 2006:353-75.
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ETHNOGRAPHY AND QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Week 6
(October 11th)

Ethnography

- Why Ethnography?
- Styles of Ethnography
- Mechanics of Fieldwork: Observing and Writing
- Ethical Dilemmas in Ethnographic Research
- The role of the IRB

READING:

- Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #4: Report and fieldnotes from ethnographic observation

Week 7
(October 18th)

Qualitative Interviews

- Survey vs. Qualitative Interviewing
- Creating an Interview Protocol
- Interviewing techniques and etiquette

READING:

- Weiss, Robert, S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art And Method Of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press: chapters 1, 2, and 4

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Two or three sets of interview protocols with the relevant sample manuscript: TBD
 - Roos, Patricia A., Mary K. Trigg, and Mary S. Hartman. 2006. "Changing Families/Changing Communities: Work, Family and Community in Transition." *Community, Work and Family* 9:197-24.
 - Kempner, Joanna, Charles L. Bosk, and Jon F. Merz. Forthcoming. "Forbidden Knowledge: Controversy as a Form of Social Control in the Production of Nonknowledge." *Sociological Forum*, forthcoming.
 - Eckstein, Susan. 2001. "Community as Gift-Giving: Collectivistic Roots of Volunteerism." *American Sociological Review* 66: 829-51.
 - Stone, Pamela, and Meg Lovejoy. 2004. "Fast-Track Women and the 'Choice' to Stay Home." *Annals* 596:62-83. [See also, Pamela Stone, *Opting Out?* University of California Press]
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ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #5: Report and partial transcript from qualitative interview (and meta-interview)

Week 8
(October 25th)

Coding and Analyzing Qualitative Data

- Manually? Qualitative data analysis software?
- Open coding, selecting themes, focused coding
- Practice with your fieldnotes/interview transcripts

READING:

- Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, chapter 6

HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Week 9
(November 1st)

Historical Methods

- Tracing social change over time
- Single N-, small N-, and large N-analysis
- Oral history and experience
- Doing archival research

READINGS:

- Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, chapters 1-6
- Craig Calhoun. 1998. "Explanation in Historical Sociology: Narrative, General Theory, and Historically Specific Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 104: 846-71.
- Clemens, Elisabeth S. 2007. "Toward a Historicized Sociology: Theorizing Events, Processes, and Emergence." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33:527-49.
- Adams, Julia, Clemens, Elisabeth, and Ann Orloff. 2004. "Social Theory, Modernity, and the Three Waves of Historical Sociology" in *Remaking Modernity. Politics, History and Sociology*, Duke University Press. [skim]

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Böröcz, József. 2000. "The Fox and the Raven: The European Union and Hungary Renegotiate the Margins of 'Europe'." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42:847-75.
 - McLean, Paul. 2005. "Patronage, Citizenship, and the Stalled Emergence of the Modern State in Renaissance Florence." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47:638-64.
 - Castilla, Emilio J. 2008. "Gender, Race, and Meritocracy in Organizational Careers." *American Journal of Sociology*
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113:1479-1526.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #6: Formulating a research question based on archival material

(November 8th)

No class this week (work on final paper)

Week 10

(November 15th)

Comparative Methods

- Comparing across time and place
- The Millian approach
- Small N- and large N-analysis
- The negative case and counterfactual analysis

READINGS:

- Charles Ragin. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, TBD
- Lieberson, Stanley. 1991. "Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies based on a Small Number of Cases." *Social Forces* 70: 307-20.
- Emigh, Rebecca, Jean. 1997. "The Power of Negative Thinking: The Use of Negative Case Methodology in the Development of Sociological Theory." *Theory and Society* 26: 649-84.

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Evelyne Huber, Charles Ragin, and John D. Stephens. 1993. "Social Democracy, Christian Democracy, and the Welfare State." *American Journal of Sociology* 99:711-49.
- Schofer, Evan and Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas. 2001. "The Structural Contexts of Civic Engagement: Voluntary Association Membership in Comparative Perspective." *American Sociological Review* 66: 806-28.
- Morgan, Kimberly, J, and Monica Prasad. 2009. "The Origins of Tax Systems: A French-American Comparison." *American Journal of Sociology* 114: 1350-94.
- Danna Lynch, Karen. 2006. "Advertising Motherhood: Image, Ideology, and Consumption." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* XLIX: 32-57.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #7: Develop a research project by adding a contemporary counterpart to your document(s) of Ass. #6.
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Week 11
(November 22nd)

Formal Methods: Social Network Analysis

- Overview of formal methods in sociology
- Pattern analysis
- Relational sociology
- Social Networks: theory and methods

READINGS:

- Mische, Ann. Forthcoming. "Relational Sociology, Culture, and Agency." *Sage Handbook of Social Network Analysis*.
- Bearman, Peter, S., Moody, James, and Katherine Stovel. 2004. "Chains of Affection: The Structure of Adolescent Romantic and Sexual Networks." *American Journal of Sociology* 110: 44-91.

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Burris, Val. 2004. "The Academic Caste System: Prestige Hierarchies in PhD Exchange Networks." *American Sociological Review* 69: 239-64.
- Martin, John, L, and King-To Yeung. 2006. "Persistence of close personal ties over a 12-year period." *Social Networks* 28: 331-362
- McLean, Paul, D. 1998. "A Frame Analysis of Favor Seeking in the Renaissance: Agency, Networks, and Political Culture." *American Journal of Sociology* 104: 51-91.

1st DRAFT OF PROPOSAL DUE

Week 12
(November 29th)

Mixed Methods

- Proposal discussion

READINGS:

- Abbott, *Methods of Discovery*, chapters 6 and 7

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Roth, Wendy and Jal D. Mehta. 2002. "The Rashomon Effect: Combining Positivist and Interpretivist Approaches of Contested Events." *Sociological Methods and Research* 31: 131-73.
 - Quinlan, Elizabeth, and Andrea Quinlan. 2010. "Representations of Rape: Transcending Methodological Divides." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 4:127-43.
 - Alise, Mark, A., and Charles Teddlie. 2010. "A Continuation of the Paradigm Wars? Prevalence Rates of Methodological Approaches Across the Social/Behavioral Sciences." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 4: 103-26.
 - Petersen, Trond, and Ishak Saporta. 2004. "The Opportunity
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Structure for Discrimination.” *American Journal of Sociology* 109:852-901.

- Greil, Arthur L., and Julia Mcquillan. 2010. “‘Trying’ Times: Medicalization, Intent, and Ambiguity in the Definition of Infertility.” *Medical Anthropological Quarterly* 24:137-56.

Week 13
(December 6th)

Writing Up

- Presenting and writing up results

READINGS:

- Miller, Chs. 2, 5 (pp. 81-97); Skim Ch. 6
- Miller, Chs. 11-12

2nd DRAFT OF PROPOSAL DUE

Week 14
(December 13th)

Paper Presentations

December 20th *FINAL PAPERS DUE*

MISCELLANEOUS

IRB certification:

Each of you is required to complete the IRB certification no later than week 3. We will go over the logistics in week 2. For further details on how to complete the certification see:

<http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/default.php#general> (General description of Rutgers rule on IRB compliance)

<http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/default.php#HSCP> (Human subjects certification; you will link to and complete the online exam)

Choosing data sets:

- SURVEY DATA

- General Social Survey (GSS). You will use the GSS to do various assignments for this course, and (if you so choose) for your final paper. The [GSS data and codebook](#) are available online. These are cross-sectional samples of the U.S. population from 1972 to 2008 (the data are available yearly in the early years, every other year later on). You'll probably want to focus on one year (e.g., 2008), but feel free to use multiple years as you move into your final project. Talk with us if you have a dataset you'd prefer to use other than the GSS. For example, there are other online datasets you can choose, such as the ones listed immediately below, or you may have access to your own data.
- World Values Survey. This online database focuses on political and sociocultural change across countries. It has four waves, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005 (a 2010 survey is forthcoming). Excellent for those interested in comparative analysis.
- UC Berkeley's SDA Archive. This site includes several surveys, in the same easy-to-use format as the GSS: American National Election Study, American Community Survey, Multi-Investigator Survey, Census Microdata for US and California, as well as a few others

➤ HISTORICAL DATA:

- Rutgers Special Collections and University Archives
<http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/scua.shtml>
- National Library of Congress online manuscripts <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>
- Penn's online archives
<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/flash.cfm?CFID=2022796&CFTOKEN=14695275>
- New York Public Library online images:
http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/index_lowres.cfm
- Jack Lynch's (RU English professor) page on 18th century history
<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/18th/history.html>
- Resources listed by ASA comparative-historical section
<http://www2.asanet.org/sectionchs/research.html#databases>

Research, Thinking, and Writing: [articles available on Sakai]

Alford, Robert T. 1998. *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract"

American Sociological Association, "Publishing Option: An Author's Guide to Journals, May 20, 2009.

Becker, Howard S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee Clarke, Lee. "Notes on Proposing" and "On Writing and Criticism"

- Germano, William. 2005. "Passive is Spoken Here." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2005.
- Jasper, James. "Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers"
- Miller, Jane E. 2005. *The Chicago Guide to Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Peters, Mark. "Like a Bowl in a China Shop." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 9, 2006.
- Rockquemore, Kerry Ann. 2010. "Writing IS Thinking." *Inside Higher Education*, July 19. [<http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/summer/summer6>, retrieved July 21, 2010]
- Rosenfield, Sarah. "Some Things To Think About While Reading Papers"
- Stein, Arlene. 2009. "Discipline and Publish: Public Sociology in an Age of Professionalization." Pp. 156-71 in *Bureaucratic Culture and Escalating Problems: Advancing the Sociological Imagination* (edited by David Knottnerus and Bernard Phillips). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Strunk, William Jr., and E.B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*. Fourth Edition. New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- And, for some humor: "How to Write Good"