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 and experimental designs; ethnography and qualitative interviews; and historical and comparative studies. These three broad methodological approaches correspond to three 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 should keep in mind that no single approach can adequately account for the richness and complexity of human interaction and social structures. To overcome the reductionism inherent in one method, it is always advisable to reach out for a novel take on the issue at hand. The ultimate goal of this course is 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 will encourage 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.

Learning Goals:
By the end of this course, students will be able to: (1) demonstrate hands-on familiarity with a variety of social research methods; (2) communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, about the advantages and limitations of the major approaches to sociological research; (3) draw upon multiple methods to independently design and execute a research project; and (4) critically assess the empirical rigor of research claims in a wide spectrum of sociological subfields and peer-reviewed publications.

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

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1 This syllabus builds on the Fall 2011 syllabus by Joanna Kempner and Patricia Roos as well as our syllabus of Fall 2010. We thank Joanna Kempner for her input.
expected to come to class fully prepared to analyze, discuss, and debate the issues raised in the assigned readings. We intend to conduct much of this class as a seminar, and its success depends on active engagement and exchange.

**Course Readings:**
We will upload many of the readings on Sakai, but you should buy hard copies of the following texts, available at the Douglass bookstore and via the usual online book vendors:


If you want a “methods textbook” that provides an overview of various sociological methods, we particularly recommend Russell Schutt’s. You’re not required to buy it, but you can get this or earlier editions fairly easily:


The syllabus will specify additional required readings each week (available through Sakai, see “Weekly Readings,” or “Articles” by author’s last name). We provide two other types of supplementary readings, also available on Sakai: (1) articles/chapters that illustrate the method under discussion (see the syllabus weekly for “Sample Articles”), and (2) other 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 (see “Sociology Faculty Articles” on Sakai).

**Course Requirements:**

- Each student is required to facilitate discussion of at least one article over the course of the semester. We will distribute a sign-up sheet on the first day of class. On the day you facilitate, come prepared with several questions to facilitate conversation for about 20-30 minutes of class. We encourage you to talk with us about your questions. Your questions should engage with at least some of the bulleted topics for that week. Articles to be facilitated are denoted by an asterisk (*) in weekly readings. (10 percent of final grade)
• One in-class analytic review and five assignments meant to conceptually and empirically deepen your comprehension of the course material and develop your analytic writing abilities. If you think ahead, you can use several of these assignments to explore topics and conduct analyses for your final paper. The five assignments should be circulated to the entire class on Sakai no later than 12 noon the day before the class in which they are due (to submit, use the “Discussion-Assignment Submission” section of Sakai). (40 percent).

• Final Paper. We expect a 15-20 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 (survey/experimental; ethnographic/interview; comparative/historical). The paper is due December 17th. (50 percent)

As part of the Final Paper requirement, you must submit two drafts of your final paper proposal. The first draft is due November 13th, the second December 4th. Both proposals should be submitted to Sakai no later than 12 noon the day before class. 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 5-7 references.

Note: Please talk with us about your proposed final project prior to the proposal due dates. We will hold extra office hours as needed. You are required to make an appointment with each of us to formally talk about your final paper (with a draft of your proposal in hand).

In-class presentation of your final paper, on December 11th. Plan for a 7-10 minute PowerPoint presentation, followed by a 5-minute Q&A session.

**Summary of Due Dates**
(note these are class due dates; except for the 9/18 IRB certification and the 12/17 final papers, all class assignments must be uploaded to Sakai by 12 noon the previous day):

- September 11th (week 2): In-class Analytic Review
- September 18th (week 3): Deadline for getting IRB certified
- September 25th (week 4): Assignment 1
- October 2nd (week 5): Assignment 2
- October 23rd (week 8): Assignment 3
- October 30th (week 9): Assignment 4
- November 13th (week 11): 1st draft of proposal
- November 27th (week 12): Assignment 5
- December 4th (week 13): 2nd draft of proposal
- December 11th (week 14): In-class Power-point presentations
- December 17th: Final paper
**COURSE SCHEDULE**

*This schedule is subject to change. We will announce any necessary changes well in advance during class and on the Sakai course website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction to Social Science Inquiry</th>
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<tr>
<td>(September 4\textsuperscript{th})</td>
<td>• Explanation in social science research</td>
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<td>• Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices</td>
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<td>• Methodological Rock-Paper-Scissors game</td>
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<td>• IRB certification</td>
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**READING:**
- Abbott, *Methods of Discovery*, Ch. 1 and 2

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:**
- In-class Analytic Review

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>The Basics of Social Research</th>
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<tr>
<td>(September 11\textsuperscript{th})</td>
<td>• Discussion of In-class Analytic Review</td>
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<td>• Selecting and formulating a research problem</td>
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<td>• Main steps for conducting research</td>
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<td>• Attributes and variables</td>
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<td>• Units of analysis</td>
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<td>• Levels of measurement</td>
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<td>• Association vs. causality</td>
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<td>• Ecological fallacy</td>
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<td>• Conceptualization and operationalization</td>
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</table>

**READINGS:**
- Miller, Chs. 1-2

**Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):**
- Schutt, Chs. 2, 4
- Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 190-202)

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:**
- IRB Certification
Week 3
(September 18th)

The Logic of Causation

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

READINGS:
- Babbie, Earl, “Notes on Percentaging Tables”
- Miller, Chs. 3-4

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):
- Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 202-20); Ch. 14 (pp. 514-534)

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:
- Ass. #1: Bivariate tables (hypothesizing relationships)

Week 4
(September 25th)

Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs

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

READING:

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):
- Schutt, Ch. 7

SAMPLE ARTICLES:
ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #2: Trivariate tables (testing hypotheses using elaboration paradigm)

**Week 5**

(October 2\textsuperscript{nd})

**Sampling and Survey Design**

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

**READINGS:**


**Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):**

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

**Week 6**

(October 9\textsuperscript{th})

**Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Research**

- Reading, Appreciating, and Critiquing Quantitative Research
- Distinctions between Qualitative and Quantitative Research
- The Relationship Between Theory and Research
- Establishing Credibility

**READINGS:**

Week 7
(October 16th)

Ethnography

***NOTE TIME CHANGE: 9:50-12:30***

- Why Ethnography?
- Mechanics of Fieldwork: Observing and Writing
- Ethics and IRB

READING:

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS
- Ass. #3: Fieldnotes (Report and fieldnotes from ethnographic observation)

Week 8
(October 23rd)

Qualitative Interviews

Guest speaker: Janet Lorenzen

- Creating an Interview Protocol
- Interviewing techniques and etiquette
- Theoretical Sampling

READINGS:
- Charmaz, Chs. 1 and 2.
- *Daipha, Phaedra. “Whose Weather Is It Anyway?” (Go
SAMPLE ARTICLES:

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:
• Ass. #4: Interview (Report and partial transcript from qualitative interview)

**Week 9** (October 30th)

**Coding and Analyzing Qualitative Data**
• Manually? Qualitative data analysis software?
• Open coding, selecting themes, focused coding
• Practice with your fieldnotes/interview transcripts

**READING:**
• Charmaz, Chs. 3 and 4 (skim 5 and 6).

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):
• Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, chapter 6

**Week 10** (November 6th)

**Comparative/Historical Methods**
**Guest speakers: Catherine Lee and Paul McLean**
• Doing archival research
• Tracing social change over time
• Theorizing past events
• Denaturalizing categories
• Comparing across time and place
• Small N- and large N-analysis
• The negative case and counterfactual analysis

**READINGS:**
Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):
- Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, chapters 1-6

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:**
- 1st draft of proposal due

**Week 11**
**(November 13th)**

**Putting It All Together**
- Proposal discussion
- Defining mixed methods

**READINGS:**
- Abbott, *Methods of Discovery*, chapters 6 and 7 (skim chapters 3-5)

**SAMPLE ARTICLES:**
ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:
- Ass. #5: Archival Research

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**NO CLASS**
(November 20th)

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**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!---

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**Formal Methods: Social Network Analysis**

**Guest speaker: Neha Gondal**

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

**READINGS:**


ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:
- 2nd draft of proposal due

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**Writing Up**

- Presenting and writing up results
- Questions regarding final papers

**READINGS:**

- Miller, Chs. 2, 5 (pp. 81-97), 11, and 12 (and skim chapter 6).
- Charmaz, Ch. 7.
- Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, chapter 7

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:
- In-class power point presentations

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**Paper Presentations**

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**FINAL PAPERS DUE---

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MISCELLANEOUS

IRB certification:

Each of you is required to complete the IRB certification no later than week 3. We will go over the logistics prior to this. 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/index.php?q=content/human-subjects-certification-program (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 2010 (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., 2010), 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.
  - http://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm. This site includes several surveys, in the same easy-to-use format as the GSS: American National Election Study, IPUMS (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series), American Community Survey 2006-08 (Census Microdata for US), 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/
  - 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]


American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract"


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


Jasper, James. "Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers"


Rosenfield, Sarah. "Some Things to Think About While Reading Papers"


And, for some humor: "How to Write Good"

More examples of good methods, from Scatterplot: