Social Research Methods
Sociology 920:501
Fall 2013
M 1:00-3:40

Joanna Kempner
Email: jkempner@rci.rutgers.edu
Office hours: M 11-12, and W. by appt.
Davison, Rm. 043

Catherine Lee
Email: clee@sociology.rutgers.edu
Office hours: W 2-3 PM and by appt.
Davison, Rm. 141

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 design; ethnography and qualitative interviews; and historical/comparative studies. These three 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 any 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 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.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
1. Develop foundational knowledge of key sociological methods
2. Critically analyze sociological research
3. Develop research questions and apply appropriate methods for research
4. Conduct original research using quantitative, qualitative, and historical research methods

DIVERSITY STATEMENT
The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

1 This syllabus builds on previous Social Methods Research syllabi written by Phaedra Daipha, Patricia Roos, and Joanna Kempner. We thank Phaedra Daipha and Patricia Roos for their input.
COURSE LOGISTICS

Course Readings:
We will upload many of the readings on Sakai, however we urge you to buy hard copies of the following three texts, available at the Douglass bookstore and via the usual online book vendors:


If you want a “methods text book” that provides an overview of various sociological methods, we particularly recommend one by Russell Schutt. 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. In addition, we provide supplementary readings, also available on Sakai: articles/chapters that illustrate the method under discussion (see the syllabus weekly for “Sample Articles”).

Course Requirements:

- A successful seminar requires the full participation of all members. We expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to engage in dialogue with one another. (5%)

- Each student is required to facilitate discussion of at least two articles over the course of the semester. We will distribute a sign-up sheet on the first day of class. On the day you facilitate, distribute a list of three questions to encourage conversation for about 15 minutes of class. Your questions should engage with at least some of the bulleted topics for that week. For facilitated articles, see asterisked articles (*) in weekly readings. (5%)

- A set of five assignments meant to both 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. All assignments must be submitted to Sakai
by 9 AM the day they are due (to submit, use the “Assignments” section of Sakai). In addition, please bring hard copies to class. (50%).

- Two drafts of the proposal for your final paper. The first draft will be due November 18, the second December 2. Both proposals should be submitted to Sakai no later than 9 AM. Hard copies are due in 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. (15%)

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

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

- Final paper. Each student is expected to write a 15-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 or experimental; ethnographic or interview; historical or comparative/historical). This paper is due December 16. (25%)

**Summary of due dates (note -- assignments and proposal drafts are due by 9 AM on Sakai; hard copies are due in class):**

- September 16 (week 3): deadline for getting IRB certified
- September 30: Assignment 1
- October 7: Assignment 2
- October 28: Assignment 3
- November 4: Assignment 4
- November 18: 1st draft of proposal
- November 25: Assignment 5
- December 2: 2nd draft of proposal
- December 9: In class-Power-point presentation
- December 16: Final paper
# COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Holiday (no class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(September 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Introduction to Social Science Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(September 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explanation in social science research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Methodological Rock-Paper-Scissors game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• IRB certification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

READING:
• Abbott, *Methods of Discovery*, chapters 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>The Basics of Social Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(September 16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introducing three broad approaches to research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Selecting and formulating a research problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Main steps for conducting research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attributes and variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Units of analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Levels of measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Association vs. causality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ecological fallacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conceptualization and operationalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

READINGS:
• Miller, Chs. 1-2

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>The Logic of Causation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(September 23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cause and effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Elaboration Paradigm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bivariate and trivariate tables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Statistical interaction and 3D tables
• Descriptive analysis: Cross-tabulation
• 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 #1 DUE 9/30 @ 9 AM:
• Ass. #1: Bivariate tables (hypothesizing relationships)

Week 5 (September 30)  
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 #2 DUE 10/07 @ 9 AM:
• Ass. #2: Trivariate tables (testing hypotheses using elaboration paradigm)

Week 6
(October 7)
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 7
(October 14)
Problematizing Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Research
• Critiquing categories of analysis: race and gender
• Distinctions between Qualitative and Quantitative Research
• The Relationship Between Theory and Research
• Establishing Credibility

READINGS:
• *Small, Mario Luis. 2009. “’How Many Cases Do I Need?: On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field Based

Read:
• General Guidance for Conducting Qualitative Research
• The Distinctive Contributions of Qualitative Research, by James Mahoney
• A Note on Science and Qualitative Research, by Sudhir Venkatesh

**Week 8**  
(October 21)

**Ethnography**

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

**READING:**


**ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE 10/28 @ 9 AM:**

**Ass. #3: Fieldnotes (Report and fieldnotes from ethnographic observation)**

**Week 9**  
(October 28)

**Qualitative Interviews**

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

**READING:**

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE 11/04 @ 9 AM:
- Ass. #4: Interview (Report and partial transcript from qualitative interview)

**Week 10 (November 4)**
**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
Week 11  
(October 11)
**Comparative/Historical Sociology, Part I**
- Comparing across time and place
- The Millian approach
- Small N- and large N-analysis
- The negative case and counterfactual analysis

**READINGS:**

**SAMPLE ARTICLES:**

**ASSIGNMENT DUE 11/18 @ 9 AM;**
- 1st draft of proposal due

Week 12  
(October 18)
**Comparative/Historical Methods, Part II**
Guest speakers: Paul McLean and Crystal Bedley
- Doing archival research
- Tracing social change over time
- Theorizing past events
- Denaturalizing categories

**READINGS:**
- Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques,* chapters 1-6
Recommended Background Reading


ASSIGNMENT #5 DUE MONDAY 11/25 @ 9 AM:
- Ass. #5: Archival Research

Week 13 (November 25)

**Mixed Methods**
- Proposal discussion
- Defining mixed methods

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

**SAMPLE ARTICLES:**

ASSIGNMENT DUE 12/02 @ 9 AM:
- 2nd draft of proposal due
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 14 (December 2)</th>
<th><strong>Writing Up</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presenting and writing up results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Questions re final papers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**READINGS:**
- Miller, Chs. 2, 5 (pp. 81-97); Skim Ch. 6
- Miller, Chs. 11-12
- Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chapter 7

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS;**
- In-class power point presentations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 15 (December 9)</th>
<th><strong>Final Paper Presentations</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| December 16 | *FINAL PAPERS DUE 5 PM* |

**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/Humans/default.php#HSCP (Human subjects certification; you will link to and complete the online exam).

**Rutgers has an IRB Advisor:**

IRB Advisor, Fall 2011

Dr. Kathryn Greene, the IRB Advisor, has been very successful helping faculty and students improve the quality of IRB submissions (and therefore accelerating the approval process). Kathryn advises applicants on how to smoothly and successfully complete the process for IRB submission. Her activities include several University-wide presentations each semester on different Rutgers campuses, keeping "office hours" before IRB deadlines, and responding to emails sent to irbadvisor@orsp.rutgers.edu
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](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/ICPSR.aspx?NID=37) 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](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](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/scua.shtml)
  - Penn’s online archives [http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/flash.cfm?CFID=2022796&CFTOKEN=14695275](http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/flash.cfm?CFID=2022796&CFTOKEN=14695275)
  - New York Public Library online images: [http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/)
  - Jack Lynch’s (RU English professor) page on 18th century history [http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/18th/history.html](http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/18th/history.html)
  - Resources listed by ASA comparative-historical section [http://www2.asanet.org/sectionchs/research.html#databases](http://www2.asanet.org/sectionchs/research.html#databases)

Research, Thinking, and Writing: [articles available on Sakai](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/scua.shtml)


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: 