

Social Research Methods
Sociology 920:501¹
Fall 2013
M 1:00-3:40

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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 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:

- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Khan, Shamus. 2012. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, Jane E. 2005. *Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

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:

Schutt, Russell K. 2011. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 7th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

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

Week 1
(September 2)

Holiday (no class)

Week 2
(September 9)

Introduction to Social Science Inquiry

- Explanation in social science research
- Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices
- Methodological Rock-Paper-Scissors game
- IRB certification

READING:

- Abbott, *Methods of Discovery*, chapters 1 and 2

Week 3
(September 16)

The Basics of Social Research

- Introducing three broad approaches to research
- Selecting and formulating a research problem
- Main steps for conducting research
- Attributes and variables
- Units of analysis
- Levels of measurement
- Association vs. causality
- Ecological fallacy
- Conceptualization and operationalization

READINGS:

- *Gross, Neil and Solon Simmons. 2002. "Intimacy as a Double-Edged Phenomenon? An Empirical Test of Giddens." *Social Forces* 81(2): 531-555.
- *Goffman, Alice. 2009. "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto." *American Sociological Review* 74(3): 339-357.
- *Loveman, Mara. 1998. "High Risk Collective Action: Defending Human Rights in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina" *American Journal of Sociology* 104(2): 477-525.
- Miller, Chs. 1-2

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):

- Schutt, Chs. 2, 4
- Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 190-202)

Week 4
(September 23)

The Logic of Causation

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

READINGS:

- 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

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:

- *Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108:937-75.
- *Ludwig, Jens, Greg J. Duncan, Lisa A. Gennetian, Lawrence F. Katz, Ronald C. Kessler, Jeffrey R. Kling, and Lisa Sanbonmatus. 2012. "Neighborhood Effects on the Long-Term Well-Being of Low-Income Adults." *Science* 337(6101): 1505-1510.

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):

- Schutt, Ch. 7

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- 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.
 - 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.
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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:

- *Bobo, Lawrence D., Camille Z. Charles, Maria Krysan, and Alicia D. Simmons. 2009. "The Real Record on Racial Attitudes" in *Social Trends in the United States 1972-2008: Evidence from the General Social Survey*, edited by Peter V. Marsden. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- *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.

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:

- *Loveman, Mara. 1999. "Is 'Race' Essential?" *American Sociological Review* 64(6): 891-898.
 - *Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 1999. "The Essential Social Fact of Race." *American Sociological Review* 64(6):899-906.
 - *Messing, Karen and Jeanne Mager Stellman. 2006. Sex, Gender, and Women's Occupational Health: The Importance of Considering Mechanism. *Environmental Research*. 101(2): 149-162.
 - *Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need?: On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field Based
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Research.” *Ethnography*. 10: 5-38.

- National Science Foundation. 2004. *Workshop on Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research*. Report prepared by: Charles C. Ragin, Joane Nagel, Patricia White, for the National Science Foundation: Sociology Program; Methodology, Measurement & Statistics Program; Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences.
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:

- Khan, Shamus. 2012. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press.

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:

- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Sage Publications. Chapters 1 and 2.
 - Weiss, Robert, S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method Of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press: Chapter 4, Skim Chapters 1 and 2.
 - Interview protocol for “Forbidden Knowledge: Controversy as a Form of Social Control in the Production of Nonknowledge.” *Sociological Forum* .26: 475-500.
 - *Kempner, Joanna, Jon F. Merz, and Charles L. Bosk. 2011. “Forbidden Knowledge: Controversy as a Form of Social Control in the Production of Nonknowledge.” *Sociological Forum* .26: 475-500.
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SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- 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.
- Edin, Kathryn, Laura Lein. 1997. Work, Welfare and Single Mother's Survival Strategies. *American Sociological Review*. 62: 253-266.

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:

- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Sage Publications. Chapters 3 and 4.
 - Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, chapter 6
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Week 11
(November 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:

- Charles Ragin. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Chapters 1-4.
- Mahoney, James. 2003. "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences." *Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, James Mahoney and Dietrich Reuschmeyer, New York: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 337-72.

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. Pp. 47-111 in *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore, Barrington, Jr. 1966. "Preface" and Chapter VII, "The Democratic Route to Modern Society" in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Boston: Beacon.
- Stephens, John D. 1989. "Democratic Transition and Breakdown in Western Europe, 1870-1939: A Test of the Moore Thesis." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:1019-1077.

ASSIGNMENT DUE 11/18 @ 9 AM;

- 1st draft of proposal due

Week 12
(November 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
 - *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.
 - *Czaplicki, Alan. 2007. "Pure Milk Is Better Than Purified Milk" *Pasteurization and Milk Purity in Chicago, 1908-1916*.
-

Social Science History 31(3): 411-433

Recommended Background Reading

- 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.

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)
- *Small, Mario. 2011. "How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:57-86.

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 Structure for Discrimination." *American Journal of Sociology* 109:852-901.
- Cherlin, Andrew J., Linda M. Burton, Tera R. Hurt, and Diane M. Purvin. 2004. "The Influence of Physical and Sexual Abuse on Marriage and Cohabitation." *American Sociological Review* 69:768-89.

ASSIGNMENT DUE 12/02 @ 9 AM:

- 2nd draft of proposal due
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**Week 14
(December 2)**

Writing Up

- Presenting and writing up results
- Questions re final papers

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

**Week 15
(December 9)**

Final Paper Presentations

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](#) 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/libscua/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]

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.
- 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.
- Rockquomore, 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"

More examples of good methods, from Scatterplot:

<http://scatter.wordpress.com/2011/08/28/a-beautiful-method/>