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 research, ethnography and interviews, and historical/comparative studies. These three methodological approaches correspond to distinct conceptualizations of social life and the science dedicated to studying it. 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. The ultimate goal of this course is to inspire you 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 conduct 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 clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

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1 This syllabus builds on previous Social Methods Research syllabi written by Phaedra Daipha, Patricia Roos, and Joanna Kempner. We thank Phaedra Daipha, Joanna Kempner and Patricia Roos for their input. [August 7, 2015]
COURSE LOGISTICS

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


Supplementary. Recommended as part of building your methods ‘tool kit’, but not required:

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 Wednesday before the class you will facilitate, distribute a list of three questions on the course’s blog (on Sakai) to encourage conversation for about 15 minutes. 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 four assignments meant to deepen both conceptually and empirically 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). **For assignment #1,**
**please bring a hard copy to class.** You do not need to bring hardcopies for the remaining
assignments. (40%).

- Two drafts of a proposal for your final paper that will be graded pass/fail. The final paper
  is for a mixed methods research project. (Refer to the description for the final paper)

  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) (10%).

  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 (10%).

  Note: please talk with us about your proposed final paper 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. Plan for a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation,
  followed by a 5 minute Q&A session. (5%).

- Final paper. Each student is expected to write a 15-page paper for a mixed methods
  research project. For this paper, you must use at least two of the three broad social science
  research methods we discuss in the course (survey; ethnographic or interview; historical
  or comparative/historical). We encourage you to settle on a topic early in the course, so
  that your assignments will contribute to your final paper. We will provide more detail in
  class. (25%)  

**Due dates (Submit via Sakai):**

September 11 (end of week 2): deadline for getting IRB certified
October 7: Assignment 1. Bivariate / Trivariate tables (Submit to Sakai & bring hard copy to
class)
October 21: Assignment 2. Ethnographic Field Notes
November 4: Assignment 3. Interviews
November 11: 1st draft of proposal for final paper
November 18: Assignment 4. Archival Research
November 25: 2nd draft of proposal for final paper
December 3: In class-Power-point presentation
December 14: Final paper (by 5:00pm)
## COURSE SCHEDULE

*(Subject to change, details to be provided in class)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction to Social Science Inquiry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(September 3)</td>
<td>• Explanation in social science research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Brief introduction to mixed methods</td>
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<td>• IRB certification and recent controversies in the social sciences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Choosing a topic and central/originating questions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

- Lieberson, S., & Lynn, F. B. (2002). Barking up the wrong branch: Scientific alternatives to the current model of sociological science. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1-19

**SUPPLEMENTARY (*strongly recommended for preparing you for final paper)*


**START PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION FOR IRB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>The Basics of Social Research, Part I</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(September 10)</td>
<td>• Main steps for conducting research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working on a research question (class activity)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Going from a topic to a research question</td>
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<td>• Making a good argument</td>
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**REQUIRED READINGS:**

- Booth, Sections I, II, and III. (Pp. 1-170)

**FINISH / COMPLETE CERTIFICATION FOR IRB**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>The Basics of Social Research, Part II</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(September 17)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conceptualization and operationalization</td>
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<td>• Attributes and variables</td>
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<td>• Units of analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Levels of measurement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Association vs. causality</td>
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<td>• Ecological fallacy</td>
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REQUIRED READINGS

- Miller, Chs. 1 & 2
- Shutt, Chs. 2, 4, and 6 (pp. 190-202)

SUPPLEMENTARY

- Becker, Chapters 1-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>The Logic of Causation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(September 24)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cause and effect</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Elaboration Paradigm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bivariate and trivariate tables</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Descriptive analysis: Cross-tabulation (with Elizabeth Luth)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REQUIRED READINGS:

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

SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

- Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 202-20); Ch. 14 (pp. 514-534)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Sampling and Survey Design (Quantitative Methods)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(October 1st)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Descriptive vs. inferential statistics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Sampling theory/standard error</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sampling designs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reliability/validity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Descriptive analysis: Cross-tabulation (again, with Elizabeth Luth)</td>
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</table>

NB. *Bring your initial bi- and trivariate analysis to class for feedback.
REQUIRED READINGS:
- Schutt, Chapters 5, 8, and 13

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE October 7th @ 9AM
- Assignment #1: Bivariate and trivariate tables (hypothesizing relationships)

Week 6 Research Design in Qualitative Methods
(October 8th)
- What kinds of research questions can qualitative research answer?
- The relationship between theory and research in qualitative research
- Sampling in qualitative research
- Introduce assignment on field notes

REQUIRED READINGS:
- Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Field Notes (Chapter 1)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING:
- 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:
  a. General Guidance for Conducting Qualitative Research
  b. The Distinctive Contributions of Qualitative Research, by James Mahoney
  c. A Note on Science and Qualitative Research, by Sudhir Venkatesh
**Week 7**  
(October 15th)

**Ethnography**
- Why ethnography?
- Mechanics of Fieldwork: Observing and Writing
- Ethics and IRB
- Begin preparing for interview assignment

**REQUIRED READING:**

**SUPPLEMENTARY:**

**ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE Oct 21 @ 9:00 AM**
- Assignment 2: Field notes (Report and field notes from ethnographic observation)

**Week 8**  
(October 22nd)

**Qualitative Interviews**
- Types of qualitative interviews
- Creating an Interview Protocol
- Interviewing techniques and etiquette

**REQUIRED READING:**

**ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE Nov 4th @ 9 AM:**
- Assignment #3: Interviews (Report and partial transcript from qualitative interview)
Week 9
(October 29th)

Analyzing Qualitative Data: Coding and Content Analysis
- How to code: Manual coding vs. qual. data analysis software
- Open coding, selecting themes, focused coding
- Practice with your fieldnotes/interview transcripts
- Introduction to content analysis

REQUIRED READINGS:
- Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chapter 6

SUPPLEMENTARY READING
### Week 10
(October 5th)

**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
- Begin discussing archival assignment

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING:**

Next Week: ASSIGNMENT DUE Nov 11th @ 9:00 AM
- 1st draft of proposal for final paper

### Week 11
(October 12th)

**Comparative/Historical Methods, Part II**
- Doing archival research
- Tracing social change over time
- Theorizing past events
- Denaturalizing categories

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
SUPPLEMENTARY:

Next Week: ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE November 18th @ 9:00 AM:
• Assignment #4: Archival Research

**Week 12**
(October 19th)

**Writing Up / Discussion of Mixed Methods Studies**
• Presenting and writing up results
• Questions re: final papers

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
• Booth et al, Part IV (from page 171-270).
• Miller, Chs. 2, 5 (pp. 81-97); Skim Ch. 6
• Miller, Chs. 11-12
• Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chapter 7

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th>No class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Week</td>
<td>Requirements for this week:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DUE: 2nd Draft of proposal for final paper by November 25th.</td>
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<td>• Prepare final paper presentation</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Final Paper Presentations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(December 3)</td>
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</table>

| December 14 | **FINAL PAPERS DUE 5 PM** |
MISCELLANEOUS

**IRB certification:**
All students are required to complete the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) Basic Course. After passing this course, your certification is good for 3 years. **You must complete this course no later than week 2.**

It is an online course, and we will go over the logistics on the first day of class. For further details on how to complete the course see:

For the CITI Basic course: http://rbhs.rutgers.edu/hsp/education/index.html

For a general description of the IRB process: http://rbhs.rutgers.edu/hsp/index.html

**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://rbhs.rutgers.edu/hsp/education/index.html) 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]


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:


Helpful writing resources from University of Southern California:

http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=83009&sid=615849