**Social Research Methods**

**Sociology 920:501[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Fall 2016**

**Th 9:30 -12:10**

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| Office Hours: TH: 1:30-3:00 or by appoint. | Office Hours: M: 2:30-3:30 or by appointment |
| Davison, Rm. 101B | Davison, Rm.107 |

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 several broadly defined methodological approaches to doing sociology: bi- and tri-variate analysis, survey research, qualitative fieldwork 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 multiple (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.

**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. These are also on reserve at Douglass library.

* Booth, Wayne, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2003. *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago press. (Highly recommend that you read/skim entire book)
* Kang, Milliann. 2010. *The Managed Hand: Race, Class, Gender in Beauty Service Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
* Miller, Jane E. 2005. *Writing About Multivariate Analysis.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [Bookstore selling the most current edition, but 2005 is fine]
* Schutt, Russell K. 2011. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research.* 7th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

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

* Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences.*  New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (Highly recommend that you read/skim entire book)
* Becker, Howard. 1998. Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while you’re doing it. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The syllabus will specify additional required readings each week. In addition, we provide supplementary readings, and most will be available on Sakai.

***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%)
* For each class, students should submit two discussion questions related to one of the assigned readings. For empirical pieces (marked with \* on the syllabus), try not to focus on topic or findings; instead your questions should touch on something ontological, epistemological or methodological about the article. Your question can also address issues of the article’s structure, purpose and organization (e.g. comment on the research question and whether the article answers this question). Questions are due by 6:00pm the day before class. Submit questions using the blog function on Sakai. (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 6pm the day they are due (to submit, use the “Assignments” section of Sakai). (40%).
* Two drafts of a proposal for your final paper that will be graded pass/fail. The final paper is for a multiple (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 multiple (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 23th (end of week 3): deadline for getting IRB certified. Send a copy of the certificate to both instructors via email.

October 7th: Assignment 1. Bivariate / Trivariate tables

October 17th: Assignment 2: Deadline to post survey

October 21st: Assignment 2: Deadline to respond to surveys

October 28th: Assignment 2: Written component due

October 31st : Circulate a copy of a methods paper via Sakai

November 3rd: Discuss methods papers in class

November 11th: Interview & Analysis due

November 18th : 1st draft of proposal for final paper

November 22nd: Archival Assignment

November 28th: 2nd draft of proposal for final paper

December 1st and 10th: In class-Power-point presentation

December 14th: Final paper (by 6:00pm)

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

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

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| **Week 1**  (Sept 8) | **Introduction to Social Science Inquiry**   * Explanation in social science research * Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices * Brief introduction to mixed methods * IRB certification and recent controversies in the social sciences * Choosing a topic and central/originating questions   REQUIRED READINGS:   * Booth et al: Prologue, Section I (pp. 1-28) * \*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   \*\* START PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION FOR IRB\*\* |
| **Week 2**  (Sept 15) | **The Basics of Social Research, Part I**   * Going from a topic to a research question * Develop a research question (class activity)   REQUIRED READINGS:   * Booth et al: Section II (Pp. 29-83) * \*Gross, Neil and Solon Simmons. 2002. “Intimacy as a Double-Edged Phenomenon? An Empirical Test of Giddens.” *Social Forces* 81(2): 531-555.   **Tasks**:   * Come in with a topic & research question * Workshop questions & topics in class |
| **Week 3**  (Sept 22) | **The Basics of Social Research, Part II**   * Conceptualization and operationalization * Attributes and variables * Units of analysis * Levels of measurement * Association vs. causality * Ecological fallacy * Intro to GSS with Teja Pristavec   REQUIRED READINGS   * Miller, Chpts. 1 &2 * **\*** Flagg, J. A. (2015). Aiming for zero: what makes nations adopt carbon neutral pledges?. *Environmental Sociology*, *1*(3), 202-212.   SUPPLEMENTARY   * Becker, Chapters 1-2 * Shutt, Chpts. 2, 4, and 6 (pp. 190-202)   TASKS   * Continue to workshop questions and topics * Read through Assignment #1. Take a look at the GSS web site: [[https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org](https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/).]   \*\* FINISH / COMPLETE CERTIFICATION FOR IRB\*\* |
| **Week 4**  (Sept 29) | **The Logic of Causation**   * Continuation of Week 3 (if needed) * Cause and effect * Elaboration Paradigm * Bivariate and trivariate tables * Descriptive analysis: Cross-tabulation   REQUIRED READINGS:   * Babbie, Earl. “The Elaboration Model.” Ch. 15 in the *Practice of Social Research*. 10th edition. * Babbie, Earl, “Notes on Percentaging Tables” * Miller, Chapters 3-4     SUPPLEMENTARY READING:   * Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 202-20); Ch. 14 (pp. 514-534)   TASKS:   * Begin working on Assignment #1: Bivariate and Trivariate Tables. Due Oct 7th. |
| **Week 5**  (Oct 6) | **Sampling and Survey Design (Quantitative Methods)**   * Descriptive vs. inferential statistics * Sampling theory/standard error * Sampling designs * Reliability/validity * Review *Survey Monkey*   REQUIRED READINGS:   * Schutt, Ch. 5; Ch. 8, Ch. 13 * Czaja and Blair. 2005. *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures* Chapter 2 (skim) * Examples from studies (distributed in class)   SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS  (whole books, find in library)   * Dillman, Don. 2007. *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* 2nd Edition. (Best text on these survey research methods) * Czaja and Blair. 2005. *Designing Survey: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures* (another excellent text on survey research design) * Flowler, Jr. 1995. *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation* (excellent text regarding details in wording questions) * Conservse, Jean M. 1987. *Survey Research in the United States: Roots & Emergence 1890-1960*. (Wonderful history on the development of survey research)   TASKS   * Assignment #1 due October 7 @ 6PM. Bivariate and trivariate tables (hypothesizing relationships) * Begin working on Assignment #2: Survey Assignment. Survey must be active by October 17th. All survey responses must be submitted by October 21st. Written component due October 28th. |
| **Week 6**  (Oct13th) | **Qualitative Methods**   * What kinds of research questions can qualitative research answer? * The relationship between theory and research in qualitative research * Sampling in qualitative research * Interviewing: protocols & etiquette * Ethnography * Qualitative field work   REQUIRED READINGS:   * \*Kang, Milliann. 2010. *The Managed Hand: Race, Class, Gender in Beauty Service Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.   SUPPLEMENTARY READING:   * Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory.* Sage Publications. Chapters 1 and 2. * Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Field Notes (Esp. Chpts 1 & 2) * Jerolmack, Colin and Shamus Khan. 2014. “Talk Is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy.” *Sociological Methods & Research* 43:178-209.(N.B. Responses to this article available in the same issue) * Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., and Spiers, J. (2002). “Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *1*(2), 13-22. * National Science Foundation. 2004. *Workshop on Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research*. Report prepared by: Charles C. Ragin, Joane Nagel, Patricia White, for theNational Science Foundation: Sociology Program; Methodology, Measurement & StatisticsProgram; Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences. *Especially*:  1. General Guidance for Conducting Qualitative Research 2. The Distinctive Contributions of Qualitative Research, by James Mahoney 3. A Note on Science and Qualitative Research, by Sudhir Venkatesh  * Small, Mario Luis. 2009. “‘How Many Cases Do I Need?’: On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field Based Research.” *Ethnography.* 10: 5-38. * Weiss, Robert, S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press. (Whole book, find at library)   TASKS   * Continue working on Assignment #2: Surveys (see due dates above) * Begin working on Assignment #3: Interview & Analysis |
| **Week 7**  (Oct 20th) | **Analyzing Qualitative Data: Coding and Content Analysis**   * How to code: Manual coding vs. qual. data analysis software * Open coding, selecting themes, focused coding * Introduction to content analysis   REQUIRED READINGS:   * Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory.* Sage Publications. Chapters 3 and 4. * \*Johnston, J., & Baumann, S. 2007. Democracy versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing. *American Journal of Sociology*, *113*(1), 165-204.   SUPPLEMENTARY READING   * Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *62*(1), 107-115. * Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research*, *15*(9), 1277-1288.   TASKS  Assignment #2 due October 28th @ 6pm: Survey (Written component)  Assignment #3 due November 11th @ 6pm: Interview & Analysis |
| **Week 8**  (Oct 27th) | **Comparative/Historical Sociology**   * Comparing across time and place * Small N- and large N-analysis * The negative case and counterfactual analysis * Begin discussing archival assignment * Doing archival research * Tracing social change over time * Theorizing past events * Denaturalizing categories   REQUIRED 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 Reuschemeyer, New York: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 337-72. * Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques,* chapters 1-6 * \*Taylor, Dorceta. 2014. Toxic Communities. Chapter 3. * \*Brechin, S. R. 2016. Climate Change Mitigation and the Collective Action Problem: Exploring Country Differences in Greenhouse Gas Contributions. Sociol Forum, 31: 846–861.   S*UPPLEMENTARY READING:*   * Vallier, Ivan. 1973. *Comparative Methods in Sociology: Essays on Trends and Applications* UC Press (available at library) * Skocpol, Theda. 1979. Pp. 47-111 in *States and Social*   *Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and*  *China*. New York: Cambridge University Press.   * 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. * 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.   TASKS:   * Begin Assignment #4: Archival Research * Prepare to present on a method for next class (see Week 9) * Circulate methods paper by Monday, October 31st at noon via Sakai. |
| **Week 9**  (Nov 3rd) | **Research Methods, Continued**   * Student discussions of a research method   🡪 Pick an empirical article or book chapter demonstrating a research method not already covered in class but of particular interest to you. On Monday October 31st, circulate this reading via Sakai and be prepared to discuss it in class. This is meant to be an informal presentation to broaden our understanding of the breadth of methods that can be used in sociology and the social sciences. In class, you can talk about why you chose this method, what appeals to you about it, what are the strengths and limitations of the method, and whether you envision being able to use this method in your future research.  TASKS:   * Work on final paper proposal #1 (Due Nov 18th) * Continue working on Assignment #4 Due November 22nd @ 6pm. Archival Research * Bring draft of paper proposal to next class |
| **Week 10**  (Nov 10th) | **Workshop Paper Proposals**   * \*Bring a printed draft of your first paper proposal to class. Be prepared to circulate your work and provide feedback as a peer reviewer.   REQUIRED READING   * How to write a paper outline: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/544/02/> (read all subheadings)   TASKS   * Final Paper Proposal #1 due Nov 18th @ 6pm |
| **Week 11**  (Nov 17th) | **Writing a Literature Review**   * What is a literature review? How is different from a summary? * How do I choose sources?   Required Reading:   * Booth et al. (Section II, chapters 4-5) * \* Centeno, Miguel A., & Cohen, Joseph N. (2012). The arc of neoliberalism. *Annual Review of Sociology, 38*(1), 317-340. * [More readings TBA]   TASKS   * Begin working on paper proposal #2. Due November 28th @ 6pm |
| **Week 12**  (Nov 22th)  \*TUESDAY | **Bringing it all together**   * Finding your “hook” (Heuristics) * Mixed methods research * Preparing for final presentations and papers   REQUIRED READINGS:   * Abbott, Methods of Discovery. Especially Chapters 1 and 2 * Small, Mario. 2011. “How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:57-86.     SUPPLEMENTARY READING:   * Booth et al, Part IV (from page 171-270). * 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. * 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.   TASKS   * Paper proposal #2 DUE November 28th @ 6pm * Prepare for final paper presentations |
| **Week 13**  (Dec 1) | **Final Paper Presentations**  (More detail to be provided in class) |
| **Week 14**  (Dec10) | **Final Paper Presentations** |
| **Dec 14** | **\*\*FINAL PAPERS DUE 6 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: https://orra.rutgers.edu/citi

***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 2012 (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., 2012), 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. [https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org](https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/).
* [World Values Survey](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp). This online database focuses on political and sociocultural change across countries. “The WVS Longitudinal 6 wave aggregate includes WVS 1981-1984, WVS 1990-1994, WVS 1995-1998, WVS 2000-2004, WVS 2005-2009 data and WVS 2010-2014” (from the WVS web site, [FAQs](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp)). 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 (NB. It’s possible that some of these links may have changed. If you can’t find them, try a Google search and please alert us. Also let us know if you find any new web site links).
* 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]***

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.

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.

More examples of good methods, from Scatterplot:

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

Helpful writing resources from University of Southern California:

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

1. This syllabus builds on previous Social Methods Research syllabi written by Phaedra Daipha, Patricia Roos, Joanna Kempner and Catherine Lee. We thank them for their collective contributions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)