This seminar aims to introduce you to social research. How do sociologists think conceptually and practically as they develop a research idea to producing a publishable product? It is a process of both art and craft that every scholar must learn to navigate. In addition, this seminar will 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, content analysis, 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.

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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.
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.


*Highly recommended, but supplementary*


*Supplementary. Recommended as part of building your methods ‘tool kit’*


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 a very short (i.e. 2 to 4 paragraphs) reaction statement. You might comment on the method, how you could use it, its strengths and weaknesses, suitability of the examples, etc. When we assign 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 reading. Your comments and questions 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). The reaction statement is due by 6:00pm the day before class. Submit questions using the Blog feature 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. 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 topic, 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 topic, 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 15-minute PowerPoint presentation, followed by a 10 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, content analysis; 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 by 9pm):

September 29 (end of week 3): deadline for getting IRB certified. Send a copy of the certificate to both instructors via email.
October 13: Assignment 1. Bivariate / Trivariate tables
October 27: Assignment 2: Survey
November 3: Circulate a copy of a methods paper
November 6: Discuss methods papers
November 10: Assignment 3: Frame/Content Analysis assignment due
November 13: Bring a draft of paper proposal #1 to class
November 17: Submit paper proposal #1 (first draft of final paper)
November 27: Assignment 4: Archival Assignment due
Dec 4: Submit paper proposal #2 (second draft of final paper)
Dec 4, 11: In class-Power-point presentation
Dec 15: Final paper due (by 11:30pm)
### 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Sept 11)</td>
<td>Explanation in social science research</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRB certification and recent controversies in the social sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing a topic and central/originating questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Schutt Chapter 1: Science, Society, and Social Research, 1-24; Schutt Chapter 3: Research Ethics and Research Proposals, 63-92


**Tasks**

- *START PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION FOR IRB***
- Think about a topic or research question and have it ready for the following class.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>The Basics of Social Research, Part I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Sept 18)</td>
<td>Going from a topic to a research question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a research question [Class activity. N.B. Students should come to class with a general idea of a research question they’d like to explore]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

- Schutt: Chapter 4: Conceptualization & Measurement, 93-134

  [Read this one strategically: what is the research question? What are the authors studying/measuring? How do they conceptualize Giddens’ theories? How do they operationalize elements of this theory?]

**Tasks:**

- Workshop questions & topics in class
### Week 3

(Sept 25)

**The Logic of Causation**
- Cause and effect
- Elaboration Paradigm
- Bivariate and trivariate tables
- Descriptive analysis: Cross-tabulation
- Intro to GSS with T.A. Laura Callejas

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
- Schutt: Chapter 6: Research Design & Causation 171-197
- Babbie, Earl, “Note on Percentaging Tables”

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING:**
- Miller, Chapters 3-4

**TASKS:**
- No discussion questions due for this class
- Bring a laptop or tablet to class that will give you access to the GSS web site.
- Before class: Take a look at the GSS web site: [http://sda.berkeley.edu/sdaweb/analysis/?dataset=gss14](http://sda.berkeley.edu/sdaweb/analysis/?dataset=gss14) Take a look at the kinds of questions that GSS asks. Just browse to get a sense of what the website looks like and what is there. Creating an account is optional, but we believe it allows you to save your work. Laura will walk us through it in more detail.
- After class, read through Assignment #1 and begin looking at variables on GSS web site.

**FINISH / COMPLETE CERTIFICATION FOR IRB by September 29**

### Week 4

(Oct 2)

**Quantitative Data Analysis**
- Descriptive vs. inferential statistics
- Sampling theory/standard error
- Sampling designs
- Reliability/validity

**REQUIRED READINGS**
- Schutt, Chapter 5: Sampling and Generalizability 135-170
- Schutt, Chapter 14: Quantitative Data Analysis, 445-491

**SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS**
- Becker, Chapters 1-2
- Miller, Chapters 1-2
Tasks

• Work on Assignment #1

Week 5
(Oct 9)

Survey Research

• Look at GSS, World Values Survey or other survey data sets, and identify questions of interest to you
• Discussion of Indices: E.g. Inglehart’s Postmaterialist Values Index; and perhaps Dunlap et al’s New Ecological Paradigm

REQUIRED READINGS

• Schutt, Chapter 8: Survey Research Pp. 229-279
• Materialism and Post-Materialism by Max Roser [to be discussed in class] https://ourworldindata.org/materialism-and-post-materialism/

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

• Dillman, Don. 2007. Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method 2nd Edition. (Best text on these survey research methods)
• Flowler, Jr. 1995. Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation (excellent text regarding details in wording questions)

Tasks:

• Assignment #1: Bi/Trivariate Tables DUE on October 13th
• Begin working on Assignment #2: Surveys

Week 6
(Oct 16)

Qualitative Methods

• What kinds of research questions can qualitative research answer?
• The relationship between theory and research in qualitative research
• Sampling in qualitative research
• Qualitative field work
• Ethnography
• Interviewing

REQUIRED READINGS:

• Schutt, Chapter 9: Qualitative Research Pp. 280-319
SUPPLEMENTARY READING:


• Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Field Notes (Esp. Chpts 1 & 2)


• 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. Especially:

• 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

• 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.


TASKS

• Work on Assignment #2. Survey Assignment

Week 7
(Oct 23)

Frame Analysis & Content Analysis

• Introduction to frame analysis and content analysis

• Sampling

• How to code: Manual coding vs. qual. data analysis software

• Open coding, selecting themes, focused coding

REQUIRED READINGS:

• Schutt, Chapter 13 (go to pages 430-441)


SUPPLEMENTARY READING


TASKS

- Assignment #2: Survey DUE October 27
- Begin working on Assignment #3: Frame/Content Analysis

**Week 8** (Oct 30) **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:

- Schutt, chapter 13: Historical and Comparative Methods 474-505
- Hill, Archival Strategies and Techniques Chapters 1-6

SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

Narrative, General Theory, and Historically Specific Theory.”


TASKS

• DUE: Pick an empirical article or book chapter demonstrating a research method not already covered in class but of particular interest to you. On November 3rd, circulate this reading via Sakai and be prepared to discuss it in class.
• Work on Assignment #3: Frame/Content Analysis
• Begin working on Paper Proposal #1

Week 9 (Nov 6) Research Methods, Continued

• Student discussions of a research method
This is meant to be an informal presentation of the article you chose, as part of broadening 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 that method, and how you envision being able to use this method in your future research.

TASKS

• Bring draft of paper proposal #1 to next class
• Assignment #3: Frame/Content Analysis DUE November 10th

Week 10 (Nov 13) 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

• Paper Proposal #1 DUE November 17th
• Work on Assignment #4: Archival
Week 11  
(Oct 20)

**Writing a Literature Review**
- What is a literature review? How is different from a summary?
- How do I choose sources?
- Linking the literature review with your research question(s)
- Exploring Types of Mixed Methods; Is there a difference between mixed and multiple?

**REQUIRED READING**  
Schutt, Chapter 15: Mixed Methods

**TASKS**
- Assignment #4: Archival DUE November 27th

**Week 12  
(Oct 27)**

**Bringing it all together**
- Finding your “hook” (Heuristics)
- Multiple (Mixed) methods research
- Preparing for final presentations and papers

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
- Abbott, Methods of Discovery. Especially Chapters 1 and 2
- Schutt, Chapter 16: Reporting Research

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING:**
- Booth et al, Part IV (from page 171-270).
TASKS
• Paper proposal #2 DUE December 4th
• Prepare for final paper presentations

Week 13  Final Paper Presentations
(Dec 4)  (More detail to be provided in class)

Week 14  Final Paper Presentations
(Dec 11)

Dec 15  **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 should complete this course no later than week 3.**

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.
(http://sda.berkeley.edu/sdaweb/analysis/?dataset=gss14)

• Institute for Social Research (ISR) University of Michigan:
  http://home.isr.umich.edu/research/data/

  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
  - National Library of Congress online manuscripts
    [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/)
  - 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"


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