

**Social Research Methods**  
**Sociology 920:501<sup>1</sup>**  
**Fall 2015**  
**Th 9:30 -12:10**

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Office hours: Th: 1-2pm or by appointment	Office hours: M: 2:30-3:30 or by appointment
Davison, Rm. 141	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 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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<sup>1</sup> 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:

- 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)
- 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)
- Jones, Nikki. 2009. *Between Good And Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City Violence*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University 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*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

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

- 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, 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: 1<sup>st</sup> draft of proposal for final paper

November 18: Assignment 4. Archival Research

November 25: 2<sup>nd</sup> 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)*

**Week 1**  
 (September 3)

**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:

- Abbott, *Methods of Discovery*. Read chapters 1-2
- Lieberman, 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)

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

**\*\* START PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION FOR IRB\*\***

**Week 2**  
 (September 10)

**The Basics of Social Research, Part I**

- Main steps for conducting research
- Working on a research question (class activity)
- Going from a topic to a research question
- Making a good argument

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Booth, Sections I, II, and III. (Pp. 1-170)
- Saperstein, Aliya and Andrew M. Penner. 2014. "Beyond the Looking Glass: Exploring Fluidity in Racial Self-Identification and Interviewer Classification." *Sociological Perspectives* 57:186-207.

**\*\* FINISH / COMPLETE CERTIFICATION FOR IRB\*\***

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**Week 3**  
(September 17)

**The Basics of Social Research, Part II**

- Conceptualization and operationalization
- Attributes and variables
- Units of analysis
- Levels of measurement
- Association vs. causality
- Ecological fallacy

REQUIRED READINGS

- Miller, Chs. 1 & 2
- Shutt, Chs. 2, 4, and 6 (pp. 190-202)
- \* Gross, Neil and Solon Simmons. 2002. "Intimacy as a Double-Edged Phenomenon? An Empirical Test of Giddens." *Social Forces* 81(2): 531-555.

SUPPLEMENTARY

- Becker, Chapters 1-2

**Week 4**  
(September 24)

**The Logic of Causation**

- Cause and effect
- Elaboration Paradigm
- Bivariate and trivariate tables
- Descriptive analysis: Cross-tabulation (with Elizabeth Luth)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Babbie, Earl. "The Elaboration Model." Ch. 15 in the *Practice of Social Research*. 10<sup>th</sup> edition.
- Babbie, Earl, "Notes on Percentaging Tables"
- Miller, Chs. 3-4

SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

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

**Week 5**  
(October 1st)

**Sampling and Survey Design (Quantitative Methods)**

- Descriptive vs. inferential statistics
- Sampling theory/standard error
- Sampling designs
- Reliability/validity
- Descriptive analysis: Cross-tabulation (again, with Elizabeth Luth)

NB. \*Bring your initial bi- and trivariate analysis to class for feedback.

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 REQUIRED READINGS:

- Schutt, Chapters 5, 8, and 13
- \* 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.

 ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE October 7<sup>th</sup> @ 9AM

- Assignment #1: Bivariate and trivariate tables (hypothesizing relationships)

**Week 6**  
 (October 8th)

**Research Design in Qualitative Methods**

- 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:

- \*Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Sage Publications. Chapters 1 and 2.
- \*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.
- Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., and Spiers, J. (2008). "Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 13-22.
- 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
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**Week 7**  
(October 15<sup>th</sup>)

**Ethnography**

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

REQUIRED READING:

- \*Jones, Nikki. 2009. *Between Good And Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City Violence*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. (Read entire book, including Appendices)

SUPPLEMENTARY:

- Jerolmack, Colin and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk Is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43:178-209.
- Burawoy, M. 1998. The extended case method. *Sociological theory*, 16(1), 4-33.

ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE Oct 21 @ 9:00 AM

- Assignment 2: Field notes (Report and field notes from ethnographic observation)

**Week 8**  
(October 22<sup>nd</sup>)

**Qualitative Interviews**

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

REQUIRED READING:

- Weiss, Robert, S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press: Chapter 4; Skim Chapters 1 and 2.
- \* Williams, C. L. 1992. The glass escalator: Hidden advantages for men in the "female" professions. *Social Problems*, 39(3), 253-267.
- \* Williams, C. L., & Heikes, E. J. 1993. "The importance of researcher's gender in the in-depth interview: Evidence from two case studies of male nurses." *Gender and Society* 7(2): 280-291.

ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE Nov 4<sup>th</sup> @ 9 AM:

- Assignment #3: Interviews (Report and partial transcript from qualitative interview)
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**Week 9**  
(October 29<sup>th</sup>)

**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:

- \*Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Sage Publications. Chapters 3 and 4.
- Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chapter 6
- \* 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.
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**Week 10 Comparative/Historical Sociology, Part I**

(November 5th)

- 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:**

- 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.
- \*Moore, Barrington, Jr. 1966. "Preface" and Chapter VII, "The Democratic Route to Modern Society" in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Boston: Beacon.

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING:**

- 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.
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Next Week: ASSIGNMENT DUE Nov 11<sup>th</sup> @ 9:00 AM

- 1<sup>st</sup> draft of proposal for final paper

**Week 11 Comparative/Historical Methods, Part II**

(November 12th)

- Doing archival research
- Tracing social change over time
- Theorizing past events
- Denaturalizing categories

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

- Hill, Michael. 1993. *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, chapters 1-6
  - \*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
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SUPPLEMENTARY:

- Calhoun, Craig. 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.

Next Week: ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE November 18th @ 9:00 AM:

- Assignment #4: Archival Research

**Week 12**

(November 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:

- 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.
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<b>Week 13</b> Thanksgiving Week	<b>No class</b> Requirements for this week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DUE: 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft of proposal for final paper by November 25<sup>th</sup>.</li><li>• Prepare final paper presentation</li></ul>
<b>Week 14</b> (December 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Final Paper Presentations</b></li></ul>
<b>December 14</b>	<b>**FINAL PAPERS DUE 5 PM**</b>

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## 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](#) 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/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 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

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/>

Helpful writing resources from University of Southern California:

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