

HONORS IN SOCIOLOGY
920:498:01
Tuesdays 10:20-1:20, Davison Hall 122
Spring 2023

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Office hours: M2:00-4:00, T2:00-4:00, and by appointment

This course is the second semester of the two-semester Honors in Sociology seminar for sociology majors who are working on their Senior Theses. You will continue to carry out a research project of your own making, including writing and revising all the parts of a substantial final paper that explains your research question, your research design, the literatures you are addressing, your data collection techniques, your empirical findings, your analyses, and the implications of your work. This is a very challenging yet highly rewarding process! It is an essential process for becoming a thoughtful and creative scholar, which we in the department would like to see you become over the course of this year. You will continue to receive regular advice and support from your faculty advisor, classmates, and me, as the course instructor. I will push you, and more importantly, encourage you to push yourself, in your thinking and your writing: to be intellectually creative, exhaustive in your search for existing research, analytically demanding, and most of all, clear in the oral and written expression of your ideas and findings.

The weekly seminar sessions and assignments this semester are designed entirely to help you to develop the skills necessary to complete your project successfully. As noted last semester, the necessary steps for project completion include:

- defining a research question and formulating the theoretical framework for your project
- reviewing, critiquing, and synthesizing prior literature on your topic
- developing a research design and deciding on best methods of data collection
- receiving IRB approval for data collection involving human subjects
- collecting your data and analyzing it in diverse and creative ways
- writing the thesis, organized into a set of well-ordered and carefully edited and revised sections
- presenting the thesis as an oral presentation and as a written document

The written thesis will have approximately six main parts, plus a bibliography and appendices that include your data collection instrument(s):

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| ▪ Introduction | ~5-8 pages |
| ▪ Literature Review | ~12-15 pages |
| ▪ Methods and Sample Section | ~4-7 pages |
| ▪ Findings | ~12-15 pages |
| ▪ Discussion of Key Findings and Implications | ~5-6 pages |
| ▪ Conclusion, Shortcomings, Future Directions | ~3-5 pages |

This semester, more than in the Fall, we will stress writing and assembling the written portion of your project: what Booth et al. (and many others) call the “report.” We will present drafts of these chunks to each other—sometimes multiple times—over the coming weeks and help each other to revise them for clarity, concision, and completeness. Writing is a circular and recursive process rather than a linear one; anything worth reading has usually gone through many edits!

In addition, in late March to early April, we will work on how to make an effective Powerpoint presentation of your work. That, too, will call for a process of creation and revision through a series of drafts and rehearsals.

As in the Fall, students are encouraged to ask questions of me and of each other, and required to share research experiences and writing with each other. I expect to have recurrent 1-on-1 contact with each of you this semester as your project develops. Any topic is a good topic to discuss with me whenever it's an urgent concern for you.

Learning Goals (listed in full in the Fall syllabus)

In addition to the concrete task goals listed on the first page of this syllabus, you will also learn:

- to think creatively about the relationship between arguments and evidence
- how to edit and revise your work for greater clarity
- to provide thoughtful critique and encouragement of others' scholarly work
- how to manage your time and handle multiple tasks over a long period
- how to improve reflexivity about your own skills and tendencies



This course satisfies the WCR goal in the Core Curriculum.

Required Readings

We will continue to use two texts from the Fall insofar as they help us work on the writing of your theses. They are:

- Gabe T. Wang and Keumjae Park, *Student Research and Report Writing* (Wiley Blackwell, 2016)
- John Levi Martin, *Thinking Through Methods* (Chicago, 2017)

We will also use the following texts about writing—the first available online through the Rutgers library system, the second a gift to you from the Sociology department:

- Wayne C. Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*, (Chicago, 4th edition 2016)
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rutgers-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4785166>
- Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Clockwork Muse: A Practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books* (Harvard, 1999)

I also suggest you have a copy of this classic close at hand to help with clarity and concision (not that it hasn't been critiqued for presenting certain cultural sensibilities as if they were neutral):

- William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (multiple editions available)

Deadlines for Final Submission

You will present your research orally in the Honors Colloquium in the Sociology department on **Wednesday, April 12**. Students invite their family, friends, and advisors. Further, many Sociology faculty come to celebrate the outstanding work of the Honors students. A lunch follows the presentations. We will spend part of this semester working on your Powerpoint presentations for this important event.

The final thesis is due on **Tuesday, April 18** (at the latest). It must be not only completely written, but carefully proofread and properly formatted by that time. These latter tasks are not negligible. We will work on assembling your thesis into a coherently organized, well-written work, and editing it for consistency and clarity, repeatedly over much of the spring semester.

Grades and the Grading Process

As you may recall, at the end of the Fall semester, each student received a temporary grade of H. In April, the faculty advisors and the course instructor jointly decide on grades for both the Fall and Spring semesters. Grades are based on your energy, effort, and excellence. But to be more precise, for this semester I will assign you a score out of **fifteen** for the *combined* February 7 and February 14 writing exercises. I will also assign you a score out of **fifteen** for the combined February 28 and March 7 writing assignments. I will share those assessments with you. The point of these grades is not to measure content quality per se, like a sum of the two assignments, but to assess *improvement* across assignments, as well as the quality of your contributions to improving your fellow classmates' writing. **Thirty** points will be awarded for the quality of your oral presentation, and **forty** points for the quality of your final written work. Also in April, a reading committee of Sociology faculty will decide which projects merit Honors, which merit High Honors, and which deserve Highest Honors.

Class Schedule

January 17

Informal Progress Reports; Pivoting towards Writing

Read: Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*, chapter 2

Do: Before class, circulate your "Methods" section to your instructor and classmates. We will spend much of class time today reading and critiquing them. [n.b. You wrote a first draft of this chunk in early December, so this should be an exercise in further revision, not your first stab at it.]

January 24

Editing and Tightening your Lit Review

Read: 1) Wang and Park, chapter 4 (we read this in the fall; refresh your memory of how to structure a lit review sensibly by topic, theme, and/or perspective)
2) Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*, chapter 6 (useful tips on formatting the content of your lit review at sentence and paragraph levels for better flow)

Do: Before class, circulate your “Literature Review” section to your instructor and TWO of your classmates (distribution details to be worked out in advance). We can’t read everyone’s in full, but will sample from them and suggest formatting/flow changes selectively. [n.b. You have been working on this in waves for a while; we want to try to get a close-to-finished product done. That is, we want a better edited version of what you drafted in the fall, where future changes can be made but are likely to be cosmetic.]

January 31

Status Report on Data Collection

Read: No reading for today

Do: 1) Come to class prepared to tell us how your data collection is going, if you are generating interesting findings, and what your next steps are. This might be premature, but I am hoping it isn’t! If possible, identify at least three things/topics/ideas/comments that have come up in your observations/interviews that you think are worth pursuing.
2) Before class, circulate a draft of your earliest statement of your project’s goals (e.g., sections 1.1 and 1.2 from your IRB protocol) to your instructor and classmates as a proto-“Introduction” to the goals of your project. **DON’T EDIT IT.** Tell us (in class) a few things you would change about it, whether in terms of content, organization, or style, and how you might expand it, or how you need to narrow it.

February 7

Developing Arguments and Supporting them with Evidence

Read: Booth et al., chapters 7-11 on making claims and anticipating objections

Do: Before class, circulate a **new** draft of your “Introduction” to your instructor and your classmates. **You will write and re-write this portion of your thesis many times!** It may well be the last thing you revise, as well as the first, sixth, tenth, fifteenth, and twentieth. Think ambitiously, but not outrageously! In addition to discussing Booth et al., who help you think of how to formulate an argument preparatory to writing it up, we will discuss your drafts.

February 14

Deep Dive into Data Collection

Read: Booth et al., chapter 16 on Introductions and Conclusions

Do: Circulate, once again, a **new** draft of your “Introduction,” using what you wrote for us last week, but also incorporating suggestions from Booth et al., chapter 16. We are doing this additional edit now to get in the habit of recursive revisions, but also to keep the volume of writing workload light for the moment, while you are working hard on data collection, transcription, coding, and processing.

February 21

Continuing our Focus on Data Collection, Sorting, and Initial Reporting

- Read: Booth et al., chapters 12-14 (these chapters cover drafting your paper, learning to read your own work like a reader will read it, and integrating quote material into your report). You are still undoubtedly gathering data, but you are beginning to figure out how to integrate the data into the first draft of your report.
- Do: Bring some examples of interesting data to class and be ready to report on it orally. Together we will brainstorm how to string it together narratively, and/or how to sort it into separate themes.

February 28

Drafting an Interim Write-Up of Findings

- Read: Re-read Booth et al., chapters 13-14 as needed
- Do: Before class, send to your instructor and ONE classmate a draft of your write-up of the findings section to date (distribution details to be worked out in advance). Work in pairs today, reading your partner's work and suggesting needed changes (correcting typos, identifying awkward or unclear passages, looking for disagreements on verb tense and number, reducing wordiness, eliminating excessive use of passive voice, avoiding overly long sentences). Use the Track Changes function in Word to identify the changes you are making and send that new document, with changes marked, to your instructor after class.

March 7

Expanding and Revising your Write-Up of Findings

- Read: Booth et al., chapter 17 (on clear story-telling and style)
- Do: Before class, send to your instructor and TWO classmates a new draft of your write-up of the findings section to date (distribution details to be worked out in advance). Work in pairs today, reading your partner's work and suggesting needed changes (again correcting typos, etc., but working more on flow and organization). As before, use the Track Changes function in Word to identify the changes you are making and send that new document, with changes marked, to your instructor after class.
- Also: After class, send your instructor a list of your top priority tasks for Spring Break

March 14

SPRING BREAK; NO CLASS, BUT YOU'LL LIKELY BE WORKING A TON ON FINAL DATA COLLECTION AND WRITING

March 21

Taking Stock, and Revising the Frame of Your Project

Read: Everything you have written so far! Identify the places where your work is most in need of improvement or completion and tell your instructor where you need help. Also send it to your second advisor for feedback (although I assume you have been getting some feedback from them already).

Do: During class, revise your “Introduction” once again!—in light of the completion of your data collection, and also to further clarify your argument and key evidence in support of your argument. Also write an **abstract**, and hastily throw together some ideas in point form for your “Discussion” and “Conclusion” sections based on this refinement of your Introduction. [What you put in these last sections may only become clear as you complete the meat of the project.]

March 28

Communicating Evidence Visually

Read: Booth et al., chapter 15

Do: Work on and/or revise elements of your report that involve visual data, whether in the form of images, charts, or tables. We can brainstorm about your options collectively in class.

April 4

First Draft of Powerpoint Presentations

Read: No new reading for today

Do: Before class, pick a slide presentation design and begin drafting your presentation. **There should be 1-2 slides for each component part of your thesis, plus some catchy visuals.** The whole thing should be no more than 12 slides long!

April 11

Final Draft of Powerpoint Presentations

Read: No new reading for today

Do: Everyone will do multiple run-throughs of their oral presentations. Pizza or the equivalent will be served. We will also very likely schedule at least one additional run-through session between April 5 and April 10.

April 12

*****ORAL PRESENTATION OF YOUR THESIS PROJECTS*****

Starting at 9:00 or 9:30 a.m., Davison Hall room 128. Includes LUNCH, 12:00-1:30. Hopefully we can meet that afternoon or evening as a group to take stock of what else needs to get done.

April 18

Focusing Your Revision Attention on the Parts that Need it Most

Read: Your own work. Be proud of what you have accomplished!

Do: Last-minute revisions on your own work. If you have time, help a classmate with their revisions, too.

April 25

NO CLASS MEETING—YOU'RE DONE!

Read: Nothing!

Do: Drop by my office any time for cigars and port (more like Skittles and Red Bull, or just Tylenol)