This seminar aims to provide an introduction to social research. How do sociologists think conceptually and practically as they develop a research idea into 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 on, and an empirical familiarity with, the range of methods available to sociological researchers. We will examine several broadly defined methodological approaches to doing sociology: quantitative analysis, survey research, qualitative analysis, and historical/comparative studies. These 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**

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1 This syllabus builds on previous Social Methods Research syllabi written by Phaedra Daipha, Patricia Roos, Joanna Kempner, Catherine Lee, and Norah MacKendrick. We thank them for their collective contributions.
**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 Supplementary Texts**


The syllabus will specify additional required readings each week, which will be on Sakai. For each week, we also suggest 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 reading. 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 analytical 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 (quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, or comparative/historical analysis). 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 21st (End of week 3): Deadline for getting IRB/CITI certified. Send a copy of the certificate to both instructors via email.
October 5th: Assignment 1 Due: Bivariate / Trivariate tables
October 26th: Assignment 2 Due: Survey Research Assignment
October 23th: Circulate a copy of a methods paper of your choice
October 30th: Discuss student-selected methods papers
November 11th: Assignment 3 Due: Interview Coding and Analysis
November 16th : 1st draft of proposal for final paper due
November 23rd: Assignment 4 Due: Comparative/Archival Assignment
November 30th: 2nd draft of proposal for final paper due
December 4th and 11th: Student Powerpoint presentations
December 14th: Final paper due (by 6:00pm)
### COURSE SCHEDULE

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1 (Sept 04)</th>
<th>Introduction to Social Science Inquiry</th>
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<tr>
<td></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>● Brief introduction to multiple (mixed) methods</td>
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<td>● IRB/CITI certification and controversies in the social sciences</td>
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<td>● Choosing a topic and central/originating questions</td>
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**REQUIRED READINGS:**

- Luker, Chapters 1-2, Pp. 1-39


- *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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2 (Sept 11)</th>
<th>The Basics of Social Research, Part I</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Going from a topic to a research question</td>
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<td>● Develop a research question (class activity)</td>
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**REQUIRED READINGS:**

- Luker: Chapters 3-4 (Pp. 40-75)


**Tasks:**

- Come in with a topic & research question
- Workshop questions & topics in class
Week 3  The Logic of Causation
(Sept 18)  ● Conceptualization and Operationalization
                      ● Cause and Effect
                      ● Thinking about Relationships between Variables: Bivariate and trivariate tables
                      ● Descriptive Analysis: Cross-Tabulation
                      ● Intro to GSS with Jason Phillips

REQUIRED READINGS
● Luker, Chapters 6-7, Pp. 99-154 (revisit Ch. 4)
● Babble, Earl, “Note on Percentages”

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
● Miller, Chapters 1-2
● Becker, Chapters 1-2

TASKS
● Bring laptop or tablet to class to have access to the GSS website
● Before class: Take a look at the GSS web site: 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 it will allow you to save your work. Jason will walk us through it in more detail.
● After class, read through assignment #1 and begin looking at variables on GSS web site.
● Continue to workshop questions and topics

** COMPLETE CERTIFICATION FOR IRB**
### Week 4

**Quantitative Data Analysis**
- Descriptive vs. inferential statistics
- Sampling theory/standard error
- Sampling Design
- Elaboration Paradigm

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
- Revisit Luker, Chapters 6-7, Pp. 99-154

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING:**
- Miller, Chapters 3-4
- Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 202-20); Ch. 14 (pp. 514-534)

**TASKS:**
- Work on Assignment #1: Bivariate and Trivariate Tables, due Oct 5th.

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### Week 5

**Survey Research**
- Advantages and limitations of surveys/survey research
- Review of Assignment 2

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
- Materialism and Post-Materialism by Max Roser

**OTHER RESOURCES ON SURVEY RESEARCH:**
(In library)
- 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:**
- Look at GSS, World Values Survey or others; identify questions of interest to you
- **Assignment #1 due October 5** at 6PM. Bivariate and trivariate tables (hypothesizing relationships between variables)
- Begin working on Assignment #2. Survey Research Assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Qualitative Methods</th>
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<tr>
<td>(Oct 09)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What kinds of research questions can qualitative research answer?</td>
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<td>The relationship between theory and research in qualitative research</td>
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<td>Sampling in qualitative research</td>
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<td>Interviewing: protocols &amp; etiquette</td>
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<td>Ethnography</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Qualitative field work</td>
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**REQUIRED READINGS:**
- Luker, Chapter 8, Pp. 155-189.

**SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS:**
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory.* Sage
Publications. Chapters 1 and 2.

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

Tasks
- Continue working on Assignment #2: Surveys (due Oct. 26).
- Begin working on Assignment #3: Interviews Coding and Analysis (due Nov. 11).

Week 7

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 / frame analysis

Required Readings:
- Luker, Chapter 10, Pp. 198-216


**TASKS**
- Continue work on Assignment #2, Survey Research (due Oct. 26th at 6pm)
- Work on Assignment #3, Interview Coding and Analysis (due Nov. 11th at 6pm)

**Week 8**

**Comparative/Historical Sociology**

- Comparing across time and place
- Small N- and large N-analysis
- The negative case and counterfactual analysis
- Doing archival research
- Tracing social change over time
- Theorizing past events
- Denaturalizing categories
- Discussion of comparative/archival assignment

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
- Luker, Chapter 9, Historical Comparative Methods, Pp. 190-197


- Skim the following:

**SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS:**


Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, chapters 1-6

**TASKS:**

**DUE:** Circulate your choice of an empirical article or book chapter demonstrating a research method not already covered in class but of particular interest to you. Do this via Sakai and be prepared to discuss it in class next week.

Work on Assignment #3: Interview Coding and Analysis (due Nov. 11)

Begin working on Paper Proposal #1 (due Nov. 16th)

Begin Assignment #4: Comparative/Archival Research (due Nov. 23rd)

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**Week 9**

(Oct 30)

**Research Methods, Continued**

- Student discussions of a research method
  
This is meant to be an informal presentation 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:
- Work on final paper proposal draft #1 (Due Nov 16th)
- Bring draft of paper proposal to next class
- Continue working on Assignment #4 Due November 23rd at 6PM

**Week 10**  
(Oct 06)

**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/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/544/02/) (read all subheadings)

**TASKS:**
- Paper Proposal #1 due Nov 18th @ 6pm

**Week 11**  
(Oct 13)

**Writing a Literature Review**
- What is a literature review? How is different from a summary?
- How do I choose sources?

**REQUIRED READING:**
- Luker, Chapter 5, Pp. 76-98.

**SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS:**
- Booth et al. (Section II, chapters 4-5)

**TASKS**
- Begin working on paper proposal draft #2. Due November 30th at 6pm.

**Week 12**  
(Oct 20)

**NOTE: Thanksgiving Break NO CLASS (Thursday classes meet today)**

**Week 13**  
(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. Chapters 1-2.

• Luker, Chapter 11, Pp. 217-225.


SUPPLEMENTARY READING:
• Booth et al, Part IV (from page 171-270).

TASKS:
• Paper proposal draft #2 due November 30th at 6pm.
• Prepare for final paper presentations

**FINAL PAPERS DUE 6 PM**

Week 14
(Dec 4)
Final Paper Presentations
(More detail to be provided in class)

Week 15
(Dec 11)
Final Paper Presentations
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 2016 (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).
- [https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/index.html](https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/index.html) ICPSR Survey Research Institute, University of Michigan
- Roper Center for Public Opinion Cornell University: [https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/](https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/)
- [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 (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](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/scua.shtml)
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