

**Social Research Methods**  
**Sociology 920:501<sup>1</sup>**  
**Fall 2017**  
**M 9:30 -12:10 (Dept Library)**

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

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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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- Kang, Milliann. 2010. *The Managed Hand: Race, Class, Gender in Beauty Service Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Schutt, Russell K. 2011. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 7<sup>th</sup>. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

### *Highly recommended, but supplementary*

- 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)
- Miller, Jane E. 2005 (or later editions) *Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

### *Supplementary. Recommended as part of building your methods 'tool kit'*

- 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 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)*

- Week 1**  
(Sept 11 )
- Introduction to Social Science Inquiry**
- Explanation in social science research
  - Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices
  - IRB certification and recent controversies in the social sciences
  - Choosing a topic and central/originating questions

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Schutt Chapter 1: Science, Society, and Social Research, 1-24;

Schutt Chapter 3: Research Ethics and Research Proposals, 63-92

\* Stein, A. and J. Daniels. (2009). Introduction: So you want to go public?  
 In *Bureaucratic culture and escalating world problems: Advancing the Sociological imagination*. Pp. 1-15.

\*Stein, A. (2009). Discipline and publish: Public sociology in an age of professionalization. Pp. 156-71.

**Tasks**

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

- Week 2**  
(Sept 18)
- The Basics of Social Research, Part I**
- Going from a topic to a research question
  - 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]

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

• Schutt Chapter 2: The Process and Problems of Social Research, 25-62

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

• \*Gross, Neil and Solon Simmons. 2002. "Intimacy as a Double-Edged Phenomenon? An Empirical Test of Giddens." *Social Forces* 81(2): 531-555.

[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

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**Week 3**      **The Logic of Causation**

(Sept 25)

- 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>] 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
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**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
- \* Inglehart, R. (1981). Post-Materialism in an Environment of Insecurity. *American Political Science Review*, 75(4), 880-900.
- 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* 2<sup>nd</sup> 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)
- Fowler, 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: Bi/Trivariate Tables DUE on October 13<sup>th</sup>
- 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:**

- \*Kang, Milliann. 2010. *The Managed Hand: Race, Class, Gender in Beauty Service Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Especially: Introduction, Chapter 2, 5, 6
  - Schutt, Chapter 9: Qualitative Research Pp. 280-319
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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 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.
- Weiss, Robert, S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press.

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)
  - \*Saguy, A. C. and Almeling, R. (2008), Fat in the Fire? Science, the News Media, and the "Obesity Epidemic." *Sociological Forum*, 23: 53–83.
  - \*Baumann, Shyon. 2008. "The Moral Underpinnings of Beauty: A Meaning-Based Explanation for Light and Dark Complexions in
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Advertising.” *Poetics*, 36(1), 2-23.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2007.11.002>

#### SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research*, 15(9), 1277-1288
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 62(1), 107-115.

#### 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
- \*Brechin, S.R. 2016 Climate Change Mitigation and the Collective Action Problem: Exploring Country Differences in Greenhouse Gas Contributions. *Sociol Forum*, 31: 846–861.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

- Ragin, Charles. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Chapters 1-4.
  - 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:
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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

- 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 10<sup>th</sup>

**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
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- Week 11**  
(Nov 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 27<sup>th</sup>

**Bringing it all together**

- Week 12**  
(Nov 27)
- 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).
  - 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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 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\*\***

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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 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/>
- World Values Survey. 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](#)). 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 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.

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>