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Social Research Methods Sociology 16:920:501¹

Fall 2022

Thursdays, 9am-12pm, Seminar Room in Davison Hall

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Office hours: Thursdays after class

This seminar provides a basic introduction 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, ethnography, qualitative interviews, 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. I 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.

LEARNING GOALS

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.

¹ This syllabus builds on previous Social Methods Research syllabi written by Norah McKendrick, Phaedra Daipha, Patricia Roos, Joanna Kempner, Catherine Lee, Steve Brechin, and Hana Shepherd. I thank them for their collective contributions.

COURSE LOGISTICS

Course Readings:

I will upload many of the readings on Canvas, but please buy a copy of:

- Luker, Kristen. 2008 or 2010. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Small, Mario Luis, and Jessica McCrory Calarco. (2022) *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. University of California Press.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Recommended, but Supplementary

- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (Assigned chapters will be provided on Canvas, but I 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)
- Miller, Jane E. 2005 (or later editions) *Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). London, England: Zed Books.
- Becker, Howard. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schutt, Russell K. 2011. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 7th. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. [This is a decent introductory text]

The syllabus will specify additional required readings each week. In addition, I will provide supplementary readings, and most will be available on Canvas.

Course Requirements:

- A successful seminar requires the full participation of all members. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to engage in dialogue with one another. My goal for class discussions is for us to learn and grow together. Really good learning happens out loud and in collaboration, but this often requires thinking about talking in groups differently than most of us have in the previous stages of our education. Please adopt this goal and remind yourself of it when you feel intimidated or like you need to “prove” yourself. (5%)
- For each class, students should submit two discussion questions related to the assigned readings. For empirical pieces try not to focus on topic or findings; instead your questions should touch on something theoretical 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 9:00pm two days before class—except the first week, where questions are due the night before class. Submit questions using the Discussion function on Canvas. (5%)

- Students will help lead the class discussion for one or more weeks. These will be distributed during the first week of class (5%).
- A set of three 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 Canvas by 9:00pm the day they are due (to submit, use the “Assignments” section of Canvas). (30%).

Assignments:

Details provided in class and on Canvas

- Assignment 1: Bivariate/Trivariate tables (required)
- Choose two:
 - Assignment 2: Ethnography
 - Assignment 3: Qualitative Interviews
 - Assignment 4: Comparative Historical/Archival

- Two drafts of a proposal for your final paper. 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) (5%).

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. (5%)

Note: please talk with me about your proposed final paper prior to the due dates. I will hold extra office hours as needed. Each of you is required to make an appointment to formally talk with me about your final paper (with a draft of your proposal in hand).

- In-class presentation of final paper. Plan for a 10-15 minute (depending on class size) PowerPoint presentation followed by a 5-minute Q&A session. (10%).
- 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 four broad social science research methods we discuss in the course (quantitative analysis, ethnography, qualitative interviews, and comparative/historical analysis). I encourage you to settle on a topic early in the course, so that your assignments will contribute to your final paper. I will provide more detail in class. (35%)

Due dates (Submit via Canvas by 9pm) – subject to change

September 21th: Deadline for getting IRB/CITI certified. Send a copy of the certificate to me via email.

October 5: Assignment 1 Due: Bivariate/Trivariate tables

October 19th: Assignment 2 Due: Ethnography

November 2rd: Circulate a copy of a methods paper of your choice

November 2rd: Assignment 3 Due: Interviews

November 9th: 1st draft of proposal for final paper due

November 10th: Discuss student-selected methods papers

November 16th: Assignment 4 Due: Comparative/Archival Assignment

November 29th: 2nd draft of proposal for final paper due

December 8th: Student Powerpoint presentations of project/proposal

December 14th: Final paper due (by 11:00pm)

COURSE SCHEDULE

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

****We will also have faculty come talk with us about their methods throughout the class****

*Available on Canvas

Week 1 (Sep 8)	<p>Introduction to Class and to Social Science Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose, perspectives, and positionality in academic research • IRB certification and recent controversies in the social sciences • Class activity: Students should come to class with a general idea of a research question they'd like to explore <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Luker, Chapters 1-2, Pp. 1-39 • *Reyes, Victoria. 2017. "Advice for making the most of graduate school." https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/03/08/advice-making-most-graduate-school-essay <p>Tasks:</p> <p>** START PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION FOR IRB**</p> <p>https://research.rutgers.edu/researcher-support/research-compliance/research-integrity/collaborative-institutional-training</p>
Week 2 (Sept 15)	<p>The Basics of Social Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a research topic and central/originating questions • Explanation in social science research • Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices • Class activity: Continue to refine your research question <p>Required Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luker: Chapters 3-4 (Pp. 40-75) • *Abbott: Methods of Discovery. Chapter 2. • *Hill Collins, P. 1986. Learning from the Outsider Within: The

Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought. *Social Problems* 33(6).

- *Tuck, Eve. 2009. "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities." *Harvard Educational Review* 79(3): 409-27.

Supplemental Readings:

- *King, Gary. 2020. "So, you're a grad student now? Maybe you should do this." In Robert Franceze Jr. and Luigi Curini (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science*.
- *Abbott: *Methods of Discovery*. Chapter 1.

Tasks:

- IRB/CITI Certification Due 9/21 at 9pm
- Take a look at the GSS web site:
<http://sda.berkeley.edu/sdaweb/analysis/?dataset=gss14>
Take a look at the kinds of questions asked on the GSS. 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.
- Continue to work on research questions and topics

Week 3
(Sep 22)

Quantitative Research

- Conceptualization and Operationalization
- Thinking about Relationships between Variables: Bivariate and trivariate tables
- Intro to GSS

Required Readings:

- Luker, Chapters 6-7, Pp. 99-154
- *Miller, Jane. Chapter 3. "Causality, Statistical Significance, and Substantive Significance." (Note: on Canvas all Miller chapters are posted in one file)
- *Maralani V and C Portier. 2021. The Consolidation of Education and Health in Families. *American Sociological Review* 86(4):670-699.
- Skim: *Martin-Caughey, A., 2021. "What's in an occupation? Investigating within-occupation variation and gender segregation using job titles and task descriptions." *American Sociological Review*, 86(5), pp.960-999.

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 asked on the GSS. Just browse to get a sense of what the website looks like and what is
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there. Creating an account is optional, but it will allow you to save your work.

- Continue to work on research questions and topics

Week 4

(Sep 29)

Quantitative Analysis

- Descriptive vs. inferential statistics
- Sampling designs, sampling theory/standard error
- Descriptive Analysis: Cross-Tabulation
- Elaboration paradigm
- Working with GSS

Required Readings:

- *Miller, Chapters 2 “Seven Basic Principles” & Chapter 5 “Creating Effective Tables
- *Babbie, Earl. “The Elaboration Model.” Ch. 15 in the Practice of Social Research. 10th edition.
- *Babbie, Earl. “Note on Percentages”

Supplemental Readings:

- *Schutt, Chapter 14. Quantitative Data Analysis

Tasks:

- Bivariate/Trivariate Tables Due October 5th at 9pm

Week 5

(Oct 6)

Introduction to Qualitative Methods

- What kinds of research questions can qualitative research answer?
- What makes good qualitative research?
- The relationship between theory and research in qualitative research
- Introduce assignment on field notes

Required Readings:

- Luker, Chapter 8, Pp. 155-189.
- Small, Mario Luis, and Jessica McCrory Calarco. (2022) *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. University of California Press.
--Everyone will read the preface, introduction, conclusion, and note on proposals. Chapters 1-5 will be divided up and students will present on their assigned chapter.

Supplementary Readings:

- Compton, DLane. “How Many (Queer) Cases Do I Need.” 2018 *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*. 185-200.
 - Kang, Milliann. 2010. *The Managed Hand: Race, Class, Gender in Beauty Service Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Especially: Introduction, Chapter 2, 5,
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- 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.
 - The Distinctive Contributions of Qualitative Research, by James Mahoney
 - A Note on Science and Qualitative Research, by Sudhir Venkatesh
 - Weiss, Robert, S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press.

Week 6
(Oct 13)

Ethnography

- Why ethnography?
- Ethnography, Positionality, and Activism
- Mechanics of Fieldwork: Observing and Writing

Required Readings:

- *Télliez, Michelle. Doing Research at the Borderlands: Notes from a Chicana Feminist Ethnographer. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 4(2), 46-70.
- *Pascoe, C.J., 2005. 'Dude, you're a fag': Adolescent masculinity and the fag discourse. *Sexualities*, 8(3), pp.329-346.
- Selections TBD: Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Supplementary Reading:

- Khan, Shamus. 2012. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press.
- Burawoy, M. 1998. The extended case method. *Sociological Theory*, 16(1), 4-33.

Tasks:

- Ethnography Assignment Due October 19th at 9pm
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Week 7
(Oct 20)

Qualitative Interviews

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

Required Readings:

- *Weiss, Robert, S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press: Specific chapters TBD, probably: 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 & Society*, 7(2), 280-291.

Week 8
(Oct 27)

Analyzing Qualitative Data: Coding and Content Analysis

- Manually? Qualitative data analysis software?
- Open coding, selecting themes, focused coding
- Practice with your fieldnotes/interview transcripts

READING:

- Luker, Chapter 10, Pp. 198-216
- *Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Sage Publications. Chapters 3 and 4.
- Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, chapter 6

Tasks:

- Interview Assignment due November 2nd at 9pm
- Circulate a copy of your selected methods paper by November 2nd at 9pm

Week 9
(Nov 3)

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

Required Readings:

- Luker, Chapter 9, Historical Comparative Methods, Pp. 190- 197
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- * Mahoney, J. (2004). Comparative-Historical Methodology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 81–101.

Supplementary Readings:

- Charles Ragin. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley and 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.
- Craig Calhoun. 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.

Tasks:

- First draft of proposal due November 9th at 9pm and bring a hard copy to class.

Week 10
(Nov 10)

Student Methods Choice & Workshopping Proposals

- Students lead discussions of a research method not presented in class → Pick an empirical article or book chapter demonstrating a research method not already covered in class but of particular interest to you. Be prepared to discuss it in class. 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.

Workshop proposals: *Bring a printed draft of what you've done toward your first paper proposal to class. Be prepared to circulate your work and provide feedback as a peer reviewer.

Required Readings:

- TBA

Tasks:

Comparative/Archival Project due on November 16th at 9pm

Week 11
(Nov 17)

Bringing it all Together

- Finding your "hook" (Heuristics)
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- Literature Review
 - Multiple (Mixed) methods research
 - Preparing for final presentations and papers

Required Readings:

- Luker, Chapter 5, Pp. 76-98 & Chapter 11, Pp. 217-225.
- *DiMaggio, Four mechanisms for being found by research problems (*Sociologica*)
- *Small, M. L. (2011). How to conduct a mixed methods study: Recent trends in a rapidly growing literature. *Annual review of sociology*, 37, 57-86.

Tasks:

- Second draft of proposal due November 29th at 9pm and bring a hard copy to class on December 1.
- Read everyone's proposals before class on December 1

Week 12 **Thanksgiving: No class**
(Nov 24)

Week 13 **Workshopping final proposals**
(Dec 1)

Week 14 **Final Proposal Presentations**
(Dec 8) Students will present their work-in-progress proposals. Prepare for a 10-15 minute presentation followed by a 5-minute Q&A

Dec 14th ****FINAL PAPERS DUE 11 PM****

*Available on Canvas

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 2014 (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., 2013), 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>)

- [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 18th 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>

