

Sociology 575: Advanced Social Research Methods  
University of Arizona  
Spring 2012 (last updated March 6, 2012)

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This is a general course on the design and practice of social research. The course has three aims. 1) to equip students to formulate interesting research questions and to design theoretically grounded approaches to collecting and analyzing evidence to answer those questions, and 2) to gain literacy in the variety of sociological methods, regardless of whether s/he intends to use them, so as to be able to evaluate arguments and evidence across the discipline, and 3) to write a specific and realistic proposal for the MA thesis (or a subsequent research project if the student already has an MA degree).

The course begins with a brief overview of epistemological positions in social science: that is, what kinds of questions are worth answering, and how can they be answered? Next, we will survey the most common research methods applied in sociology: experiments, surveys, ethnography, interviewing, and comparative research approaches. In reading exemplars for each class of method, we will consider researchers' epistemological stances, and their approaches to theory, measurement, analysis, and argument.

### Readings

Students are expected to come to class meetings having completed the reading and prepared reactions to them to share with the class. The following books are required reading and should be purchased or borrowed. All other readings will be posted online through the D2L system or handed out in class.

*Note:* The Bradburn book will be needed the third week of class, so please order asap. Others will be the sixth week or later.

Becker, Howard. *Writing for Social Scientists*. University of Chicago Press. 2007 (first edition also ok). (\$8 new, \$5 used)

Bradburn, Norman, et al. *Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design*. Revised Edition. Jossey-Bass, 2004. (\$28 new, \$17 used on Amazon).

Emerson, Robert M. et al. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press. 1995. (\$12 new, \$7 used).

Lamont, Michelle. *Money, Morals and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class*. University of Chicago Press, 1992. (\$20 new, \$14 used).

Weiss, Robert S. 1995. *Learning from Strangers. The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press. (\$9 new, \$6 used)

Whyte, William. *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. 31. University of Chicago Press. (4<sup>th</sup> edition; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition also acceptable). 1993. (\$22 new, \$6 used).

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**

There are three basic requirements: reading and active participation in class; completion of several research and writing assignments, and completion of a semester-end research proposal.

Class attendance and participation comprise 10% of the grade. I expect students to come to class having prepared comments and questions on the readings. You cannot receive higher than a B in the course if you do not actively and regularly participate in class discussions. You should also complete human subjects certification early in the semester (details to be given in class).

**Research and Writing Assignments:** There will be several assignments due throughout the semester, worth 60% of final grade. Detailed guidelines will be handed out at the appropriate time.

**Research proposal:** A final research proposal will be worth 20% of the grade. The proposal should emphasize research design. Students are strongly encouraged to make appointments with the professor at least twice during the semester to discuss their proposals.

Please turn your work in on time. Incompletes and extensions will only be given in case of serious family or medical emergency. Writing assignments should be turned in to D2L dropboxes as .pdf documents.

**Due Dates: assignments are due by 6pm on the date they are assigned.**

January 23 (Monday): Human subjects certification due (5% of final grade)

January 30 (Monday): Research question exercise due (5% of final grade)

February 27 (Monday): Pilot survey project due (20% of final grade)

March 30 (Friday): Pilot ethnography project due (20% of final grade)

April 23 (Monday): Pilot in-depth project due (20% of final grade)

May 7 (Monday): Research proposal due (20% of final grade)

## **WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **January 17: Logic of Social Inquiry**

- Merton, Robert. 1959. "Notes on Problem-Finding in Sociology" In *Sociology Today: Problems and Prospects*, edited by Robert Merton, ix-xxxiv. Basic Books.
- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. "Ideas and Puzzles." In *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*, W.W. Norton and Co.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*, pp. 15-28.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 7-19,26-41

### **January 19: Causal Reasoning**

- Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*, pp. 28-38.
- Durkheim, Emile. *Suicide*. Book I Ch 1; Book 2 Ch 2.
- Nisbett, Richard E. and Dov Cohen. 1996. *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South*. Westview Press. Ch 1-2.
- Bloemraad, Irene. 2004. Who Claims Dual Citizenship? *International Migration Review* 38 (2): 389-426.
- Lieberson, Stanley, and Freda B. Lynn. 2002. Barking up the Wrong Branch: Scientific Alternatives to the Current Model of Sociological Science. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 1-19.
- Freeman, David. 1991. Statistical Models and Shoe Leather. *Sociological Methodology* 21: 291-313.

## **WEEK 2: EXPERIMENTS & CAUSAL VALIDITY**

### **January 24: Laboratory experiments**

- Chambliss, Daniel and Schutt, Russell K. "Causation and Experimental Design." In *Making Sense of the Social World*. Pine Forge Press.
- Nisbett, Richard E. and Dov Cohen. 1996. *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South*. Westview Press. Ch 4.
- Correll, Shelley. 2004. Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations. *American Sociological Review* 69 (1): 93-113.

### **January 26: Non-laboratory experiments**

- Pager, Devah. 2003. The Mark of a Criminal Record. *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5): 937-975.
- Kuklinski, James H. et al. 1997. Racial Attitudes and the 'New South.' *Journal of Politics* 59(2): 323-349.
- Henrich, Joseph et al. 2001. In Search of Homo Economicus: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Small-Scale Societies. *American Economic Review* 91(2): 73-78.

## **WEEKS 3-5: SURVEY RESEARCH**

### **January 31. Total survey design paradigm**

Groves, Robert M., et al. 2009. "Inference and Error in Surveys." In *Survey Methodology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Hoboken: Wiley.

Bradburn et al. *Asking Questions*. Chapter 1. "The Social Context of Question Asking."

### **February 2. Surveys, cognition, and interaction**

Clark, Herbert H., and Michael F. Schober. "Asking Questions and Influencing Answers." In *Questions About Questions: Inquiries into the Cognitive Bases of Surveys*, edited by Judith M. Tanur, 15-48. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Tourangeau et al. *The Psychology of Survey Response*. Pp. 7-16 and 313-340. Selections on "Proposed Model of the Response Process," and "Impact of Cognitive Models on Survey Measurement."

Schuman, Howard and Stanley Presser. 1996 "Question Order and Response Order." In *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys: Experiments on Question Form, Wording, and Context*. Sage. Pp. 23-78.

### **February 7. Measuring events/behavior**

Bradburn et al. *Asking Questions*. Ch 2, 3, 7.

### **February 9. Measuring attitudes/subjective states**

Bradburn et al. *Asking Questions*. Chapter 4.

Hout, Michael and Claude S. Fischer. 2002. Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations. *American Sociological Review* 67: 165-90. Also read comment by Gerald Marwell and N.J. Deremath ("Secularization' by Any Other Name") and rejoinder by Hout and Fischer ("O Be Some Other Name").

### **February 14. Sampling for external validity.**

Groves, Robert M., et al. 2009. "Nonresponse in Sample Surveys." In *Survey Methodology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Hoboken: Wiley.

### **February 16. Questionnaire workshop (in-class).**

Willis, Gordon B. 2004. *Cognitive Interviewing: A Tool for Improved Questionnaire Design*. Sage. Pp. TBA.

## **WEEKS 6-8. ETHNOGRAPHY**

### **February 21. Ethnography Example**

Whyte, William. *Street Corner Society*. Ch 1-3, conclusion.

### **February 23. Ethnographic paradigm**

Whyte, William. *Street Corner Society*. Appendix A-B (read appendices first).

Zavisca, Jane. 2007. Ethics in Ethnographical Fieldwork. *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*.

### **February 28. Field entry and role**

Goffman, Erving. On Fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 19 (2): 123-32.

Lareau, Annette. 1996. "Common Problems in Fieldwork: A Personal Essay." In *Journeys Through Ethnography: Realistic Accounts of Fieldwork*, edited by Annette Laureau and Jeffrey Shultz, 196-236. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Zinn, Maxine Baca. 1979. Insider Field Research in Minority Communities. *Social Problems* 27 (2): 209-19.

Thorne, Barrie. 1993. *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. Chapter 2.

Snow, David A., Robert D. Benford, and Leon Anderson. 1986. Fieldwork Roles and Informational Yield: A Comparison of Alternative Settings and Roles. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 14: 377-408.

### **March 1. Taking fieldnotes**

Emerson, Robert et al. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch 1-2

### **March 8. Ethnography proposal workshop**

### **March 10. Data Analysis**

Timmermans, Stefan. 2005. Suicide Determination and the Professional Authority of Medical Examiners. *American Sociological Review* 70: 311-33.

Emerson, Robert et al. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press, pp. TBA.

Charmaz, Kathy. 1995. "Grounded Theory." In *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*, edited by Harre Smith and Van Langenhove, 27-49. Sage.

## **WEEKS 9-10. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING**

### **March 20: Qualitative validity/epistemology**

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. The Extended Case Method. *Sociological Theory* 15(4): 4-33.

Wallendorf, Melanie, and Russell Belk. 1989. "Assessing Trustworthiness in Naturalistic Consumer Research." In *Interpretive Consumer Research*. Pp. 69-84.

Katz, Jack. Ethnography's Warrants. *Sociological Methods and Research* 25 (4): 391-423.

Becker, Howard S. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research." In *Ethnography and Human Development*, edited by R. Jessor et al. Chicago: University of Chicago

**March 22. Introduction to Interviewing**

Becker, Howard. 1953. "Becoming a Marihuana User." *American Sociological Review*  
Weiss. *Learning from Strangers*. Chapters 1-3.

**March 27 NO CLASS (Instructor out of town)**

**March 29 NO CLASS (Instructor out of town)**

**April 3 . Conducting In-Depth Interviews**

Mishler, Elliot G. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, MA:  
Harvard University Press, pp 1-7, 67-116  
Weiss. *Learning from Strangers* Chapters 4-6.

**April 5. Example of in-depth interview study**

Lamont. *Money, Morals, and Manners*. Entire

**April 10 Analyzing interview data (with software demo)**

Lamont. *Money, Morals, and Manners*. Appendix.  
Weiss. *Learning from Strangers* Chapters 6-7, appendices C & E.

**WEEKS 11-12: COMPARATIVE METHODS**

**April 12. Comparative Logic**

Charles Ragin. TBA.

Mahoney, James. 2004. "Comparative-Historical Methodology." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 30: 81-101.

**April 17. Comparing Cases**

Lieberson, Stanley. 1991. "Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases." *Social Forces* 70: 307-320

Fourcaude-Gourinchas, Marion, and Sarah L. Babb. Rebirth of Liberal Creed: Paths to Neoliberalism in Four Countries. *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (3): 533-79.

Biesel, Nicola. Class, Culture, and Campaigns against Vice in Three American Cities, 1872-1892.

**April 19. Comparing over time: Process-tracing**

Stryker, Robin. Beyond History versus Theory: Strategic Narrative and Sociological Imagination. *Sociological Methods and Research* 24(3): 304-352.

Rueschemeyer, D. et al. 1992. *Capitalist Development and Demography*. University of Chicago Press. Pp. TBA.

Zavisca, Jane. 2011. "Explaining the Collapse of Soviet Rule." *Kritika*.

## **WEEKS 14-15: PRESENTING RESEARCH**

### **April 24. Scientific Writing**

Becker. 1989. *Writing for Social Scientists*. Chapters 1-5, 7-8

### **April 26. Style**

Zinnser, William. 2001. *On Writing Well*. Harper Collins, pp. TBA.

### **May 1. Visual Rhetoric**

Selections from Edward Tufte: *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* and “Powerpoint is Evil” (to be distributed in class).