

Research Methods

M9-11:50, 714PLC

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Office Hours: Wednesday 9-11, 632 PLC, by appointment, or chance

*I regard as sociologists those who assume this title
- of honor or disgrace, as you will. - Raymond Aron*

Course Description: Sociology can be exceedingly hard to define. The proverbial person on the street seems just as likely to equate sociology with social work as with the study of society. The phrase “the study of society” is itself unsatisfactory being too vague and more often than not resulting in tautology: After all, what is society, but the amorphous thing sociologists study. Abbott (2004) defines sociology by the areas of analysis inequality, race, class, and so forth that bound sociological work. In other words, sociology is what sociologists do. This seems more to the point, but is still too vague. Sociology in my conceptualization is a specific collection of methods and theories extending from the macro-micro, the positivist-interpretivist and so on. Here, sociology is both a practice (the sociological labor described by Abbott) and an object (the product of this labor).

In this course we will study the methods that form the core of sociology and hopefully learn a little more about ourselves as sociologists. This is not an easy task. Unlike some disciplines there is not a discrete set of tools employed by most practitioners. Rather, sociology consists of a range of tools that have very different assumptions. While we are likely to only use a handful of the tools available to us, having a working understanding of the toolkit as a whole helps our own more specialized work. To understand the strengths and weaknesses of these tools, we must develop an understanding of the logic of research and think through some of the fundamental principles of research, such as what makes a good research question, what is explanation, and what are the constraints of particular methods. We will also spend some time thinking about the practical side of research, such as managing projects, writing proposals, and reviewing articles.

In sum, this class aims to offer a foundation for understanding and conducting sociological research.

Grade Distribution:

Critiques (2 critiques, no more than 1000 words):	20%
NSF-GRFP Proposal (about 5 pages, single-spaced):	20%
Final Prospectus (about 4000-5000 words):	35%
Weekly Discussion Questions & Dialogue:	10%
Article Presentation & In-Class Participation:	10%
Attendance at 2 Colloquium talks or Equivalent:	5%

Requirements:

- Critiques

- Like an article review, critique an empirical article from the syllabus, but focus primarily on the methods. Explain what the paper seeks to accomplish and delve into the strengths and weaknesses of the approach. Are there any counterfactuals worth considering? Would a different methodological approach provide different insight? No more than 1000 words.

- **NSF-GRFP Proposal**
 - The midterm project is based on the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program application. The application consists of two sections. The first, titled Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement, is no more than 3 pages long, single-spaced. The second, titled Graduate Research Statement, is no more than 2 pages long, single-spaced. For the purposes of the class, greater weight will be given to the research statement (4-5 pages total, single spaced).
- **Final Prospectus**
 - The final prospectus is a formal front-end of a research paper through the data and methods section that can be used as a prospectus for an MA thesis. Imagine trying to convince your adviser and potential outside members that you have a good manageable research idea for an MA project. It should correspond in style to the introductions and literature reviews in your subfield, but must contain a clear research question(s), a discussion of concepts pertinent to your topic, and an overview of relevant methodological approaches to your topic and how they present conflicting or overlapping results. The data and methods section should present your proposed data and methods. Note: Students with MA thesis in hand can make alternative arrangements for final project prior to the end of week 3.
- **Weekly Discussion Questions**
 - Submit three questions to a discussion board on canvas about the reading at least 2 hours before each class. These questions should provide evidence of how you are reading the material and highlight what is most intriguing to you from the weekly readings.
- **Article Presentation and In-Class Participation**
 - Each student is asked to present the material from one of the assigned articles (scheduled during week 1 or 2) and participate in discussion throughout the class.
- **Attendance at 2 Colloquium/Job Talks or Equivalent**
 - We present our results both in writing and in public talks (particularly when we are on the job market). It is good practice to start attending talks early in our graduate school experience to learn more about what makes a good talk.

Required Texts:

Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery*. Norton.

Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in the Age of Info-Glut*. Harvard University Press.

Recommended Texts:

Becker, Howard. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists*. University of Chicago Press.

Lieberson, Stanley. 1985. *Making It Count*. California.

Singleton, Royce A., Jr. and Bruce C. Straits. 2010. *Approaches to Social Research*. Oxford UP.

Sword, Helen. 2012. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Harvard UP.

Encouraging Inclusive Learning Environments:

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or uoac@uoregon.edu.

The schedule is subject to change with appropriate notice in class or through email. Note that CV indicates that the reading is available on the Canvas course page.

Week	Content
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9/24 Introductions & A Glimpse at the Sociological Landscape During the first week we will read three articles. Moody and Light (2006) provides an admittedly dated map of sociology. We will also read and discuss two recent articles published in ASR.
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moody, J., & Light, R. (2006). A view from above: The evolving sociological landscape. <i>The American Sociologist</i>, 37(2), 67-86. - Brayne, S. (2017). Big data surveillance: The case of policing. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 82(5), 977-1008. - Offer, S., & Fischer, C. S. (2018). Difficult People: Who Is Perceived to Be Demanding in Personal Networks and Why Are They There?. <i>American sociological review</i>, 83(1), 111-142.
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10/1 Developing Sociological Questions Research questions are the engines of sociological projects. We will discuss the qualities that make a successful question and strategies for thinking through new sociological problems. - Luker <i>Salsa</i> (1-50) - Abbott <i>Methods of Discovery</i> (2004:1-136, 211-48...skim rest) • 10/8 Initiating Research: Literature Review, Casing, Etc. The early stages of a research process can be exciting, but also intimidating. We will introduce the idea of a “case” and read authors with specific recommendations about casing and also developing a literature review. - Luker <i>Salsa</i> 51-98 - Small, M. L. (2009). How many cases do I need? On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. <i>Ethnography</i>, 10(1), 5-38. - Gerring, J., 2004. What is a case study and what is it good for?. <i>American political science review</i>, 98(2), pp.341-354. - Becker, Howard S. 1986. “Terrorized by the Literature.” <i>Writing for Social Scientists</i>. U Chicago Press. - Bryman, A. (2007). The Research Question in Social Research: What is its Role? <i>Int. J. Social Research Methodology</i> 10(1), 5-20.
Week 3	<p style="text-align: center;">Recommended Reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G. and Joseph M. Williams. 2005. “From Topics to Questions.” <i>The Craft of Social Research</i>. U Chicago Press.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10/15 The Logic of Social Research Research design is informed by specific logics. These logics can be explicit or implicit, but most respond to or otherwise embrace experimental methods. We will use sociological experiments to motivate thinking about causality and validity among other key methodological concepts.
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading: CV: Singleton and Straits Excerpt - Jackson, M., & Cox, D. R. (2013). The principles of experimental design and their application in sociology. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>, 39, 27-49. - Baldassarri, D., & Abascal, M. (2017). Field experiments across the social sciences. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>, 43, 41-73. - Lucas, J. W. (2003). Theory-testing, generalization, and the problem of external validity. <i>Sociological Theory</i>, 21(3), 236-253.

- Pager, D. (2003). The mark of a criminal record. *American journal of sociology*, 108(5), 937-975.

Suggested Reading:

- Alvesson and Sandberg (2011)
- Stinchcombe (2005)

• 10/22 **Sampling and Measurement**

Selecting research subjects (humans, objects, organizations, etc.) requires careful consideration. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches? We will think through random and nonrandom samples and how they might affect conclusions that we draw from our data.

- Luker *Salsa* 99-128 and also 129-154 (but doesn't fit perfectly)
- Babbie Excerpt (2006)
- *Familiarity*: Browning, C. R., Wallace, D., Feinberg, S. L., & Cagney, K. A. (2006). Neighborhood social processes, physical conditions, and disaster-related mortality: the case of the 1995 Chicago heat wave. *American Sociological Review*, 71(4), 661-678.
- Klinenberg, E. (2006). Blaming the victims: Hearsay, labeling, and the hazards of quick-hit disaster ethnography. *American Sociological Review*, 71(4), 689-698.
- Duneier, M. (2006). Ethnography, the ecological fallacy, and the 1995 Chicago heat wave. *American Sociological Review*, 71(4), 679-688.
- *NSF Proposal Due 10/25 via Canvas*

• 10/29 **Research Ethics and Proposal Presentations**

Ethical practice is the first demand of social research.

- ASA Code of Ethics
- Blee, K. M., & Currier, A. (2011). Ethics beyond the IRB: An introductory essay. *Qualitative Sociology*, 34(3), 401.
- *Familiarity*: Boyd, D., & Crawford, K. (2012). Critical questions for big data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon. *Information, communication & society*, 15(5), 662-679.
- Action: Take CITI Course
- Action: Be Prepared to Discuss NSF Proposal

• 11/5 **Theory and Methods Link: Big Picture**

Theory and method are tightly coupled pillars of social research although we talk about them as though they are distinct things. This isn't quite right as our method and theory often follow or lead one another. This can be distilled as a discussion of induction or deduction, but that also isn't quite right and is rarely so simple as we will discuss this week.

- Burawoy, M. (1998). The extended case method. *Sociological theory*, 16(1), 4-33.
- Charmaz, K. (1996). The search for meanings-grounded theory. *Rethinking methods in psychology*, 27-49.
- Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3), 167-186.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. (2001). Causation, statistics, and sociology. *European sociological review*, 17(1), 1-20.
- Daniel, C. (2016). Economic constraints on taste formation and the true cost of healthy eating. *Social Science & Medicine*, 148, 34-41.

Suggested Readings:

- Abbott (1998)
- Corbin and Strauss (1990)

Lieberson (1992)

• 11/12 **Open Science and Peer Review**

Open science is topic of increasing interest to social scientists. Social psychology, for example, is undergoing a “revolution” of sorts regarding principles of open science and the related issues of replication and reproducibility. Sociology is a bit behind the curve, but open science has been on the radar for about a decade. We will read a few overview pieces and also consider/discuss peer review.

- Week 8
- Freese, J. (2007). Overcoming objections to open-source social science. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 36(2), 220-226.
 - Abbott, A. (2007). Notes on replication. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 36(2), 210-219.
 - Tripp, A. (2018) Transparency and Integrity in Conducting Field Research on Politics in Changing Contexts. *Perspectives on Politics*, 16(3), 728-738.
 - Tomkins, A., Zhang, M., & Heavlin, W. D. (2017). Reviewer bias in single-versus double-blind peer review. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(48), 12708-12713.

• 11/19 **Qualitative Analysis**

Silly to discuss qualitative research in a single day, but that’s what we are going to do with a brief overview and several exemplars.

- Week 9
- Luker *Salsa* 155-189
 - Harrison, J. (2012). Methodological Appendix. *Bouyancy on the Bayou*. Cornell ILR.
 - Jerolmack, C. (2007). Animal practices, ethnicity, and community: The Turkish pigeon handlers of Berlin. *American Sociological Review*, 72(6), 874-894.
 - Balogun, O. M., & Hoang, K. K. (2018). Political Economy of Embodiment: Capitalizing on Globally Staged Bodies in Nigerian Beauty Pageants and Vietnamese Sex Work. *Sociological Perspectives*, 0731121418797292.
 - Pascoe, C. J., & Diefendorf, S. (2018). No Homo: Gendered Dimensions of Homophobic Epithets Online. *Sex Roles*, 1-14.

Suggested Reading:

- Desmond, M. (2016). About this Project. *Evicted*. Crown.

• 11/26 **Quantitative Analysis**

Silly to discuss quantitative research in a single day, but that’s what we are going to do with a brief overview and several exemplars.

- Week 10
- Couper, M. P. (2017). New developments in survey data collection. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 43, 121-145.
 - Liévanos, R. S. (2018). Retooling CalEnviroScreen: Cumulative Pollution Burden and Race-Based Environmental Health Vulnerabilities in California. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 15(4), 762.
 - McGee, J. A., & Greiner, P. T. (2018). Can Reducing Income Inequality Decouple Economic Growth from CO2 Emissions?. *Socius*, 4, 2378023118772716.
 - Lee, H., McCormick, T., Hicken, M. T., & Wildeman, C. (2015). Racial inequalities in connectedness to imprisoned individuals in the United States. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 12(2), 269-282.

12/5/2018 • Final Due on Canvas

Being A Good Academic Citizen:

What it means to be a good academic citizen is changing at a rapid pace. Classroom norms differ between departments and professors. Technology and our relationship to it have much to do with these ambiguities. So, being a good academic citizen means following traditional norms of good academic behavior: don't plagiarize, including non-appropriated paraphrasing and quotation (see full statement below), be respectful of others ideas, and so forth. But, it is also worth considering newer norms. For my class your phones should be put away. It is distracting to others to have people fidgeting with their text messages. You can use a laptop, but you should stay on task and respectful of others around you. If someone is being distracting, please contact me or a GTF. Last, you may NOT sell material for this class (notes, study guides, etc.). If you are caught selling material for this class, you will be given a failing grade for the term. Any student who needs help with note-taking should talk to me.

Academic Misconduct:

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students.