

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Sociology/Comm & Envir Sociology 750 – Research Design and Practice in Sociology

(3 credits, 3 50-minute hours of face-to-face instruction plus required readings, homeworks and assignments as detailed below)

Official description: Application of scientific methods to the analysis of social phenomena; methodological orientations in sociology; types of research procedure: nature of sociological variables; lectures and lab. **Requisites:** Grad st, SOC/ C&E SOC 357 and 362 or equiv.; **Course Designation:** Grad 50% - Counts toward 50% graduate coursework requirement.

Spring 2018

Wednesdays 3:30-6:00 in 2435 Sewell Canvas URL: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/87996>

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Learning Objectives

This course provides an overview of major research designs and research techniques that provide the core of contemporary empirical inquiry into social phenomena. The methods of the course title are practices of offering descriptions and drawing inferences about human life from observations of it. Much of the course will therefore involve practicing as well as discussing these designs and techniques. The structure of the course moves basically from the issues involved in (1) asking revealing and answerable questions, (2) to measuring the concepts about which one wants to generalize, (3) to finding an appropriate sample of some population to which one wants to generalize, (4) and to drawing inferences about causality from any relationships one might find.

The research strategies used by sociologists are extraordinarily diverse—which is fitting given the extraordinary diversity of the research questions sociologists pursue—and the course will attempt to provide some appreciation of this diversity. Among the specific methodologies to be considered at least briefly are experiments, quasi-experiments, surveys, analysis of texts and other existing materials, meta-analysis, ethnographies, in-depth interviews, and historical methods. Note that I am not an expert in most of these, nor is it my goal to make you expert in any one of them – there are many courses taught at UW-Madison that can do that for any particular method that you expect to use. This course is most emphatically not intended as a substitute for the more specialized methodological training that successful dissertations demand.

However, to be a discerning scholar implies being able to learn from work that you have not done and would not yourself do, to recognize quality answers to substantive questions outside of your own niche of specialization, and to discuss intelligently the implications of new discoveries for the field as a whole. Most of you will also teach sociology, often to students who do not share your methodological preferences, and to whom you should be able to convey the scope and richness of sociological investigation. Therefore, the focus of this course is on developing your insights into the implications of methodological choices, your constructively critical thinking about diverse methodologies, and your confidence in your ability to discuss, evaluate and learn from work of many types. This course cannot

and will not try to “teach you all you need to know” about methods, but aims instead to increase your ability to continually practice (and so develop) informed judgment about methodology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING INFORMATION

Grades for the course will be based on student performances on written exercises (40%), article evaluations (30%), a final project (10%) and class participation/web participation/ homework preparation/ manifested conscientiousness (20%). Successful completion of the course demands that you be able to evaluate other people’s work in their own terms, make choices about methods to reflect your own theoretical preferences and draw sound conclusions based on consideration of the range of evidence empirically available across multiple methods.

Exercises, homework preparation, article evaluations, and written assignments

This course involves weekly writing, as well as a set of exercises and more formal assignments that provide opportunities for you to develop your thinking about methodological questions, including some pertaining to the research you personally plan to pursue. More detail about each is provided below.

To summarize, your preparation for this class involves:

Weekly:

- (1) A short response to the reading. This response is posted on our discussion board and is not graded but is used to guide our discussion.
- (2) Any assigned homework exercises – these are often brief exercises that complement the reading and engage other materials. These are not graded.
- (3) Preparation to discuss the week’s exemplar. These must be written out (750 word maximum) and posted on our discussion board until you’ve received three exemplars with passing grades. After that, you do not need to post these but must be prepared to discuss the exemplar in class.

Posted materials must be on our class webpage by **NOON on Tuesday before class**. No exceptions. I cannot guarantee that late posts will be graded or read before Wednesdays’ classes.

Over the semester:

- (4) Four written assignments, not exceeding 1000 words each. These are posted in the course Assignments page.
- (5) A final written assignment that is an informed reflection on your own research.

(1) Reading Responses (and homework, all on-line and in-class participation 20%)

To help steer in-class discussion, you are encouraged to post most weeks (not as a part of the

evaluation of the exemplar) those issues you would most like to see considered including – crucially – anything you don't quite "get" and want discussed more in class. It is also a good place for any comments you have about: (1) how the research discussed in the assigned readings relates to things discussed in prior classes/other readings; (2) specific connections between the research discussed in the exemplar and other studies you know about from other courses or your own research; (3) questions the exemplar or the assigned articles raised for you about how research is conducted more generally and how this broad type of research is done more specifically; (4) considerations about why the exemplar authors chose this research strategy but might have pursued a different methodological approach entirely; (5) ways the exemplar did or did not actually exemplify things you see as strengths and weaknesses of its kind of research; (6) specific questions about the assigned articles and the guidelines they present which your study group may have considered.

Such reflections contribute strongly to your participation grade; I rely on postings to know what concerns you have. I encourage you to respond to each other as well. This type of discussion is important, especially in since there is limited "airtime" during the seminar. On-line postings, homework preparation, leading discussion of an exemplar, and in-class participation all contribute to your participation grade (which is 20% of the total, not insignificant).

(2) Homework exercises

Homework is NOT turned in, nor graded, but is part of the preparation you BRING to class and facilitates your participation in class. However, I reserve the right to ask everyone to turn in their homework notes at the end of class and to penalize anyone who comes to class unprepared. Both the primary readings and the homework are part of your preparation for evaluating an exemplar and should be done first.

(3) Exemplar evaluations (30%)

An unusual but essential part of the course work is evaluation of "exemplars." You are also required to post a minimum of THREE evaluations of articles that we will read as exemplars of methodology (chosen not as the best advertisements for a method, because they present relevant methodological issues). You are nonetheless expected to prepare ALL exemplars for discussion. The three written evaluations of "exemplar articles" are due no later than **noon Tuesday** before the seminar in which that article will be discussed. They may never exceed 750 words. Whether or not you are writing an evaluation of a particular exemplar article that will be evaluated, you are expected to have read it and thought sufficiently about it to engage in discussion of it in class (discussion of each exemplar will be led by a student – **I will typically ask for a leader in the morning before class** – a leader both summarizes key points of evaluation as briefly as possible and highlights the controversial/difficult issues most worth discussing in class). Consider passing 3 exemplars as meaning you are now qualified to "do" the exemplars without my need to grade your work. It is advisable to do your written exemplars early and know where you stand.

Written or not, focus your attention on the specific methodological issues in the article (how reliability, validity, generalizability, causal inference, etc. are dealt with, well or poorly, in the particular design

the author chose, and how that design could be improved on to meet the author's goals). The key **question you want to answer is how much sociologists should trust the results**, and the evaluation should be specific and constructive (aimed at producing more trustworthy answers), rather than an attack on the author's choice of problem or epistemology or a suggestion to do some different kind of study altogether! NO research is perfect; ALL papers could be improved without thereby being "bad" (but some certainly may be). Asking "good questions" about the research is the goal and thus the criterion on which you will be graded.

In writing evaluations, you should assume I have read the article you are evaluating, and should provide a very brief – one paragraph or 150 word – summary of what you believe the authors were attempting to do in the paper before going on to consider some aspects of the way they did it in more detail. You should attempt to prioritize your comments to focus on what you believe to be the most significant aspects of the authors' methodological choices. These may include, in various mixes: (1) things you found praiseworthy about what the researchers did; (2) things you thought the researchers might/should have done differently or additionally; (3) things you thought the authors were mistaken about; (4) things about how the research was conducted that you believe they should have said more about; (5) things that enhance or detract from authors' or others' ability to replicate or extend their research; (6) the degree of confidence you have in the conclusions that the authors draw or the conclusions that you think they should have drawn but didn't. Article evaluations will be graded on how well they engage central issues constructively, but they cannot be comprehensive; the goal is to suggest what the authors could do better to answer their own question more credibly. Each evaluation should explicitly raise critiques in the order of priority/seriousness and should draw a conclusion about the overall trustworthiness of the contribution that the article claims. Comments on the clarity of the authors' presentation of their results are part of the evaluation of trustworthiness but are rarely the main issue. Evaluations need to be clear and grammatical but they are not intended to be your most polished prose.

The maximum word count for evaluations is 750 words (strictly enforced). An article evaluation on which you do not do well can be replaced completely (and without any grade penalty) by an evaluation of another article later on – this is a positive incentive to do your evaluations early in the semester so that more choices remain to you for replacements. Modally, students can expect to do four to five evaluations to get three passes, but one can still get an A in the course with a marginal pass (B) grade on some exercises or evaluations. Don't fret about not doing well on "everything" you turn in. Any "no pass" grade, however, should be taken as a signal of a deficiency of understanding that you should remedy in or after class; both pass and marginal pass reflect more or less adequate work. A "no pass" evaluation does not count to your minimum of 3 passes. A marginal pass (B) does still count as a pass, but can be replaced later by another better grade on an additional evaluation, if you wish. Don't hesitate to come and talk to me about exemplars, but also try to pose your questions in class or on Canvas where everyone can benefit.

(4) Written Assignments (40%)

Written assignments will be turned in electronically after we have covered a set of materials. These are intended to have you put the skills we have been discussing to work in a way that complements

your own research interests. The acceptable range of word-count for a written exercise is 750-1000 words. **All assignments on which you have not done well can be redone within the following two weeks**, and will be re-graded accordingly. I grade exercises on a C (not passing) to A+ scale.

(5) Final project (10%)

The final project (maximum length 3000 words, DUE 5 pm May 10 in electronic form) is a more substantial exercise in which you are asked to consider a research project of your own (thesis, dissertation or other) in terms of the methodological issues explored in the course. This is the place to consider the relation between theory, epistemology, methodology and specific choices of method, as well as to work through specific issues you are finding tricky (ethics, samples, generalizations, causation, etc.). It should reflect explicit consideration of readings and issues discussed that affect your own research plans. It will be graded on the usual six point (A+, A, AB, B, BC, C/Fail) graduate scale.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Class Participation

Class participation is crucial. While active discussion is vital, not all participation is necessarily oral, in the seminar meeting itself. Comments POSTED -- thoughts in reaction to other students' postings, queries that come from your reading for the week and are aimed at directing the in-class discussion to certain issues, afterthoughts formed after the seminar session is over, suggestions of other articles that raise similar issues, etc. -- are all effective forms of class participation that complement (but do not wholly replace) speaking up in class. I generally expect all students to post some comments on Canvas at least six times through the semester, either initiating on-line discussion or responding to others' forays, but the point is not my count of postings (though I will count the contributions of low end posters). Engaged and thoughtful consideration of what others have to say, both in and outside the seminar room and the website, is the goal and what earns an A. It is courteous to excuse yourself (by email) in advance if you discover you will be unable to attend a particular seminar meeting. Posting longer comments that you were prepared to make but regrettably unable to deliver in person is an appropriate way to "make up" such absences, but excessive absence (3 or more classes) will be penalized unless there is a compelling reason for which I agree to make an exception.

Word Counts

Written exercises, article evaluations and your final project ALL have a specified word count to which you must adhere; I will truncate documents and not read anything beyond the specified maximum word limit. You might think this overly constraining and you are right—but since much of your subsequent writing will be constrained by strict word counts, this is good training for your professional career. Late work not cleared with me in advance will either be penalized or not accepted, and I only accept serious reasons for lateness. Absence of forethought on your part does not constitute a serious reason.

Submitting work

Written exercises and evaluations should be posted in the appropriate location on the Canvas website

for this course. Exemplar evaluations and responses to the reading go into the “discussion” section **as attachments**, but assignments go into the Assignments page (where only I can read them). Whenever you post an attachment, be sure to **put your name on** the attached document, not just on the file and/or posting itself (I will generally print them and return them to you with written comments). All attachments must be in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or rich text format (.rtf), **with a filename that includes your surname** (e.g., smith_ex3.doc; filenames like 750_ex3.doc or exercise3.doc are spectacularly unhelpful). Same applies to papers deposited in the Assignments page.

Rather than complicated penalties imposed on the grades of individual assignments, the grade for all assignments will reflect the content of that assignment. ALL penalties (for excessive absences, late work that is nonetheless accepted, unwillingness to follow formatting rules, not turning in homework when requested, non-posting, etc.) will be collected and applied proportionately to reduce your overall grade for the course.

Academic integrity

Although I would hope that this paragraph is totally superfluous, for the record please remember that Section 14.03 of the University of Wisconsin System Administrative Code defines academic misconduct as “an act in which a student: (a) seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation; (b) uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise; (c) forges or falsifies academic documents or records; (d) intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others; (e) engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; (f) assists other students in any of these acts.” If you have any questions about what constitutes academic misconduct generally, you must consult <http://www.wisc.edu/students/amsum.htm> before proceeding. Lack of familiarity with these rules in no way constitutes an excuse for acts of misconduct. Any instance of cheating, plagiarism, or other misconduct will be dealt with strictly according to University policy.

But because **I encourage all students to form study groups and work together on thinking through the work for this class**, let me clarify the application of this policy: (a) not only the writing in the sense of literal words, but the decision-making that goes into writing – what is your main point, how are you going to prioritize issues, what is your overall conclusion – should be your own choice and be clearly NOT the same as any other student's work; (b) brainstorming about the wide scope of issues raised in an article or assignment should bring out dissensus as well as common points, and (c) failing to report ideas that you tested and rejected in favor of presenting as if your own what you perceive to be the good ideas raised by someone else in the group misrepresents your own work. In short, do not let fear of plagiarism cause you to “hoard” your ideas or fail to learn from others, but make sure that you present your ideas fairly -- identifying your own thinking, including saying explicitly what you have learned and from whom. Such learning is commendable, and it is not plagiarism, if it is CLEARLY identified as such.

Anyone who needs **accommodation for a disability** should talk with me as soon as possible and be in direct contact with the McBurney Center as well.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Monday, January 22*	Week 1	Introduction, Philosophy of Science, Skills of Constructive Critique
Wednesday, Jan 31	Week 2	Paradigms as Interlocked Theory-Method
Wednesday, Feb. 7	Week 3	Relating to a "Literature" to make a question answerable
Monday, Feb. 12		ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE
Wednesday, Feb. 14	Week 4	Significance is More than Statistical
Wed. Feb 21	Week 5	Measurement: Increasing Validity and Reliability
Wednesday, Feb 28	Wk 6	Coding and Analyzing Text
Wednesday, March 7	Wk 7	Surveys and Interviews: Writing Questions, Interpreting Answers
Monday, March 5		ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE
Wednesday, March 14	Wk 8	Generalization: Thinking Clearly about Samples and Populations
Wednesday, March 21	Wk 9	Ethnographic Analysis: Diverse Approaches
Spring Break	NO CLASS	
Wednesday, April 4	Wk 10	Research Ethics and IRB
Monday, April 9		ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE
Wednesday, April 11	Wk 11	Macrosociological Analysis
Wednesday, April 18	Wk 12	Experimental Designs
Wednesday, April 25	Wk 13	Quasi-Experimental and Natural Experiment Designs
Monday, April 30		ASSIGNMENT 4 DUE
Wednesday, May 2	Wk 14	Meta-Analysis, Triangulation, Combining and Comparing Methods
Thursday May 10		FINAL PROJECT DUE

Readings

All of the primary readings, all of the exemplars, and many of the readings on the "background" list should be on Canvas. There is no printed coursepack, as this would be prohibitively expensive. Use your own judgment about what you read on line, download and save, or print out. I encourage you to download, read, annotate and save the articles electronically when possible.

The category of reading that I call "background" introduces a topic or consideration, and I expect that you would already know it or a similar reading in most but not all cases. When you do not, you should at least skim this source or have someone present it to your study group before tackling the more advanced material so that the language or tools it offers will not be completely new, alien or incomprehensible to you. This is one of many reasons why methodologically diverse study groups serve students well. Since I have no expectation that you will be all rushing out to buy or borrow the same background books or articles, they are neither ordered nor on reserve, but some of the articles are on Canvas.

I encourage development of additional resource lists for particular issues, perspectives, approaches. Some of these additional resources are listed in extra bibliographies, supplemental files or other places on the Canvas website, but I also encourage you to post and share material you found useful for future iterations of the course.

DETAILED SCHEDULE OF READINGS, HOMEWORK AND WRITTEN EXERCISES

WEEK 1 – January 22 - NOTE SPECIAL DATE (MONDAY) BUT SAME TIME & PLACE

Introduction to the class, some ideas about philosophy of science and the skills of constructive critique

Primary:

Naughton, John 2012 “Thomas Kuhn: The man who changed the way the world looked at science” *The Guardian- the Observer*, Saturday 18 August.

Tezcan, Mehmet 2006 “What can critical realism offer us as a conceptual tool for our analysis of society?” *Concepts and Methods* (IPSA section newsletter) 2 (1): 3-6.

Firebaugh, Glenn 2007 “Replication data sets and favored hypothesis bias: A comment on Freese and on King” *Sociological Methods and Research* 36(2): 200-209.

Hirschman, Daniel 2016. “Stylized facts in the social sciences” *Sociological Science*. 3: 604-626.

<http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/>

On reviews and reviewing also consider reading:

Ferree, Myra Marx 2004 “An essay on the art of reviewing: Some guidelines for new reviewers.”

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Academics-Writing-Stinks/148989>

Brunsma, David, Monica Prasad, and Ezra Zuckerman “Strategies for Reviewing Manuscripts” (ASA Report)

Background: Kuhn, 1962, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Ch 6 (anomalies), Ch 11 (the invisibility of scientific revolutions).

To discuss: The syllabus; “science” and “truth” in sociology; variation in epistemologies in sociology, the visible nature of scientific communities, the contested definitions of “replication,” evaluating books and articles/scientific contributions as more or less credible, using the authors’ own goals as the benchmark. Intro to reading and writing reviews for scientific journals and recognizing the rhetoric of persuasion in articles, how “facts” are presented and used.

On Canvas, for epistemologies: Positivism vs. Critical/Fallible Realism (vs. relativism) summary sheet

WEEK 2 –January 31: Paradigms as interlocked theory-method: “scientific” credibility and models of working – whom are you trying to convince and how? How does your epistemology make itself visible in your rhetoric? Reading “method” in single articles.

Primary:

Sprague, Joey 2005. “The field of vision.” Pp. 1-29 in *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers*. NY: Rowman & Littlefield. (issues of disciplinary hierarchy and perspective that apply to all, not just feminist scholars).

Becker, Howard S. 1998. “Tricks.” pp. 1-9 of *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research*

While You're Doing It. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (insight from a master)

Mahoney, James. "Knowledge accumulation in comparative-historical research: the case of democracy and authoritarianism" (paradigms – three of them -- as "meta-theory" in this one subarea)

AND on the structure of social science rhetorics (read and comment on at least one of these):

Giner-Sorolla, Roger 2012 "Science or Art? How Aesthetic Standards Grease the Way Through the Publication Bottleneck but Undermine Science." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7: 562-571.

Teplitskiy, Misha 2016, "Frame search and re-search: How quantitative papers change under peer review" *American Sociologist* 47:264–288.

LaRossa, Ralph 2012 "Writing and Reviewing Manuscripts in the Multidimensional World of Qualitative Research" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74 (August): 643 – 659

Homework: Prepare answers about one "favorite" recent empirical article in your own sub-area (see website for questions about it) published since 2010 and start thinking about what work it "builds on" and challenges/replicates/extends. Next week, you are going to be following up and finding the earlier empirical article it extends/ challenges/ replicates and discussing how it does so.

On Canvas, for writing, see also: Sword, "Zombie Nouns" NYT, July, 2012.

WEEK 3 – February 7: In the beginning was the word: Relating to a "literature" to make a question answerable. Methods as constructing recognizable forms of knowledge.

Primary:

Becker, Howard S. 1986. "Terrorized by the Literature." Pp. 135-149 in *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hargens, Lowell 2000. "Using the Literature: Reference Networks, Reference Contexts, and the Social Structure of Scholarship." *American Sociological Review*, 65 (6): 846-865. (ORLs and cutting-edge)

Freese, Jeremy and David Peterson, 2017 "Replication in Social Science" *Annual Review of Sociology*. 43:147–65. (four varieties of "replication" and their purposes)

Two short links on knowledge accumulation and its opposite:

Stevenson, Betsy and Justin Wolfers 2013 "Six ways to separate lies from statistics" *Bloomberg News* www.bloomberg.com/news/print/2013-05-01/six-ways-to-separate-lies-from-statistics.html

Tyson "how rumors spread by sloppy citation practices" *Inside Higher Ed* Aug 6 2014. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/08/06/how-rumors-spread-sloppy-citation-practices>

Homework: Be SURE you can use Web of Knowledge (and Google Scholar) for citation-based searching, creating citation networks, identifying for WHOM you are writing, what THEIR CONCERNS ARE. Compare Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar counts of citations for one major empirical contribution in your sub-area published in or before 2004 related to your "favorite" recent study that has been well-cited since then. Look at "publish or perish" for h-index of the older article's more

general impact too.

Exemplar: Strang, David and Kyle Siler 2017. "From 'just the facts' to 'more theory and methods, please': The evolution of the research article in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1956–2008" *Social Studies of Science*, 47(4): 528 – 555.

Optional reading:

Rekdal, Ole Bjørn. 2014. "Academic urban legends" *Social Studies of Science*. 44(4) 638–654.

Abbott, Andrew 2016 "The demography of scholarly reading" *American Sociologist*, 47:302–318.

Example of formal replication: Herring article, replication-comment, and reply.

ORIGINAL: Herring, Cedric. 2009. "Does Diversity Pay? Race, Gender, and the Business Case for Diversity." *American Sociological Review* 74(2):208–224.

COMMENT/REPLICATION: Stojmenovska, Dragana, Thijs Bol, and Thomas Leopold. 2017. "Does Diversity Pay? A Replication of Herring (2009)." *ASR* 82(4):857– 867.

REPLY: Herring, Cedric 2017 "Is diversity still a good thing?" *ASR* 82(4) 868 –877

ASSIGNMENT 1 (Due 5pm Monday February 12): Identifying replications and extensions of previous work.

Discuss a recent (post-2012) empirical replication that confirms or challenges at least one of the findings of the classic/paradigmatic (pre-2006) study you have chosen. The classic/well-cited study should be EMPIRICAL (have a basis in data and a method of evaluating data, not necessarily a quantitative one), and the "replication" should be addressing at least ONE of the claimed empirical findings of the classic. The point of this exercise for you is to: (1) Demonstrate clearly that the earlier study offered an influential (which means in part well-cited) and credible claim or claims for the second to address; (2) Compare the two studies closely by discussing what the "replication"/extension actually preserves of the original design and what it changes (whether for better or worse, in your view); (3) Explain the theoretical assumptions and rhetorical strategies that allow the authors of the second to say they are studying the "same thing" as the first, but "better." How do they interpret their results (as an extension, modification, limitation, or ...)? (4) While the authors will claim it is "better," YOU DECIDE whether it really is an "improvement" in your view (do not EVER just parrot back the authors' own claims, evaluate them). Why might you interpret their results differently than they do (e.g. as not studying the same thing, as not measuring it as well as the first did, as failing to replicate a key aspect of scope conditions)? IF you accept their claims, explain why you do as well as point out what another, more skeptical, researcher might question (why do you think they'd be wrong?).

WEEK 4 – February 14: What an answer is depends on the question: Significance is more than statistical

Primary:

Cohen, Jacob. 1994. "The earth is round ($p < .05$).\" *American Psychologist* 49:997-1003. (be SURE you understand his point about NHST. If you don't get it, try Gill and/or Johansson, also on Canvas)

Leahey, Erin 2005. "Alphas and asterisks: the development of statistical testing standards in sociology." *Social Forces* 84(1): 1-24.

Schwab, Andreas, Eric Anderson, William Starbuck and Fiona Fidler, 2011. "Researchers Should

Make Thoughtful Assessments Instead of Null-Hypothesis Significance Tests." *Organization Science*, 22 (4): 1105-1120.

Gelman, Andrew & John Carlin, 2017. "Some Natural Solutions to the p-Value Communication Problem and Why They Won't Work," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 112:519, 899-901,

Freedman, David A. 1991. "Statistical models and shoe leather." *Sociological Methodology* 21: 291-313. (and consider the 'shoe leather surrogates' of descriptive data in new technologies and some more quantitative ways of examining geographical and other patterns in data).

Exemplar: Warner, Warner and Kuhl, 2017. Cut to the Quick. Consequences of Youth Violent Victimization. *American Sociological Review*, 82(6) 1241 –1271

Background: See Ronald L. Wasserstein & Nicole A. Lazar (2016): "The ASA's statement on p-values: context, process, and purpose" *The American Statistician*, and/or McShane, Blakely, David Gal, Andrew Gelman, Christian Robert, and Jennifer L. Tackett, 2017. "Abandon Statistical Significance."

There are additional materials on Canvas discuss the broad NHST issues, including the table of contents for a book making it a central issue ("size-free science" being critiqued). Check them out until you are sure you get it and can talk about your "priors" and alternative hypotheses. "Tune in" to the discussion (radiolab link) of failures to replicate that plague experiments, including RCTs, too. And if you actually are doing model building and testing, look at Aho et al's AIC vs BIC comparison and decide which "worldview" you embrace in your work.

WEEK 5 – February 21: Measurement: trying to increase validity and reliability

Primary:

Maxwell, Joseph A. 1996. "Validity: How Might You Be Wrong?" Pp. 86-98 in *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (some core principles for all)

Schultz, Kenneth and David Whitney, 2005. *Measurement Theory in Action*. Pp 69-85, 313-328 (Module 5, reliability & Module 18, factor analysis)

Duneier, Mitchell, 2011 "How not to lie with ethnography" *Sociological Methodology*

King, Gary, Christopher J. L. Murray, Joshua A. Salomon, and Ajay Tandon. 2004. "Enhancing the Validity and Cross-Cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research." *American Political Science Review* 98:567-583. (using vignettes as anchors; see also King's website for additional examples including WLS)

Lazer, David, Ryan Kennedy, Gary King and Alessandro Vespignani 2014 "The parable of Google Flu: Traps in 'Big Data' analysis" *Science* 343 (MARCH) 1203-1205.

Recommended: Judd, Charles M. and Gary H. McClelland. 1998. "Measurement." in *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, and G. Lindzey. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. (This is HARD but important – I will lecture/highlight key ideas in class but try to read it if you can)

Homework: Measurement of commonly used concepts (see website); See also examples of visual measurement strategies online (slavery, unemployment, etc.) that communicate size of effects

Exemplar: Howell & Emerson 2017 “So What “Should” We Use? Evaluating the Impact of Five Racial Measures on Markers of Social Inequality” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 3(1): 14-30.

Background: If you are not much prepared on formal measurement in general, the basic ideas are very effectively and briefly laid out in Katzer, Cook and Crouch, *Evaluating Information*, (McGraw Hill), in a sometimes overly cute but not-too-simplistic way.

WEEK 6–February 28- Coding & analyzing written content, oral conversations, and other texts

Primary:

Prior, Lindsay. 2004. “Following in Foucault’s Footsteps: Text and context in qualitative research” Pp. 317-333 in Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *Approaches to Qualitative Research*.

Bail, Christopher 2014 “The cultural environment: measuring culture with big data” *Theory and Society* 43:465–482

Krippendorff, Klaus. 2004. “Reliability in Content Analysis; Some Common Misconceptions and Recommendations.” *Human Communication Research*, 30(3):411-433. (see his alpha macro too)

Johnstone, Barbara 2008. *Discourse Analysis* (2nd edition). Blackwell. Ch 1 “What is discourse analysis” pp. 1-31 (the whole book expands on this framework with excellent examples)

Optional (if you are interested in computer based text analysis):

Blei, David 2012 “Probabilistic Topic Models: A review essay” *Communications of the ACM*
doi:10.1145/2133806.2133826 -- or --

Schatten, Markus, Jurica Ševa, and Bogdan Okreša Đurić, 2015 “An Introduction to Social Semantic Web Mining & Big Data Analytics for Political Attitudes and Mentalities Research” *European Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities EQPAM* Volume 4, No.1, 40-62

Optional (if you are more ethnographically inclined):

Naples, Nancy (on discourse analysis as part of institutional ethnography)

DeVault, Marjorie 2006. “What is institutional ethnography” *Social Problems* 53(3): 294-8.

Homework: Try out some sort of qualitative analysis program (Atlas.ti or NVivo at SSCC) or browse the quantitative, computer-assisted content analysis coding programs (on Canvas). Check out visualizations of topic models’ quantifiable codes at the Signs website
<http://signsat40.signsjournal.org/>

Exemplar: Brett Burkhardt, 2018 “Contesting market rationality: Discursive struggles over prison privatization” *Punishment & Society*. Online-before-print.

Background: Neuendorf, Kimberly 2002. *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, Ch 1-4, Ch7 and Ch 9, (a basic how-to and definition of terms) and/or Nancy Naples chapter on discourse analysis as part of institutional ethnography (on Learn@UW).

Assignment 2 – operationalization & measurement issues (Due 5pm Monday March 12)

This is a SMALL venture into the messy “real world” of data collection. Your measures must be “unobtrusive” (don’t do interviews or experiments) but can be any sort of text, interaction, behavior, or artifact (as long as ethical). The point is to operationalize a concept validly and yet creatively, and then to code some data as reliably as possible in line with that operationalization.

Stick primarily to ONE important and tricky coding issue which should take some work to be as refined, clarified, reliable and valid as possible -- and use some OTHER measure(s) to test this one for its validity, reliability and practical usability. Developing an index, improving a scale (and demonstrating what is now better about it), or testing logical constraints on measures is ideal, but other possibilities include working out a coding scheme for as-yet uncoded qualitative data or further validating measures already used by constructing (additional) tests of consistency/reliability and validity/substantive meaning.

In order to make the measure meaningful, you need to be able to state at least one reasonable hypothesis in which it would figure, and explain what the concept is that the measure is attempting to operationalize. You need at least a small pre-test’s worth of data to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your measure. Don’t make this a big project, do connect the measurement issue to some real work you are doing if at all possible, but focus on MEASUREMENT: explaining what your concept is, and what in your operationalization makes your measure maximally VALID for this concept, and how you are taking steps to make the measure as RELIABLE as possible.

WEEK 7 – March 7: Surveys & Interviews: writing questions, interpreting answers

Primary:

Stanley Presser et al. 2004. “Methods for testing and evaluating survey questions” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 68 (1):109-131.

Lee, Raymond 2004. “Recording Technologies and the Interview in Sociology, 1920–2000.” *Sociology*, 38 (5): 869-889.

Webber, Gretchen and Stephanie Byrd 2010 “In-depth interviews.” Sloan Family Network, pp. 1-34.

Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Stanley Presser. 2003. “The science of asking questions.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9: 65-88.

Ansolabehere, Steven, Mark Meredith and Eric Snowberg. 2013. “Asking about Numbers: How and Why” *Political Analysis*, 21: 48–69

Background: Ronald Czajka and Johnny Blair, 1996. *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures*. (Ch 1-6) Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge.;

Homework: Constructive critique of question wordings (see Canvas for wordings to critique)

Exemplar: McLaughlin, Heather, Chris Uggen and Amy Blackstone 2017. "The Career and Employment Effects of Sexual Harassment on Working Women." *Gender & Society*, 31(3): 333-358

WEEK 8 – March 14 - Generalization: thinking clearly about samples and populations

Primary:

Groves, Robert 2011 "Three Eras of Survey Research" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75 (5), 2011, pp. 861–871.

Miles, Matthew B. and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. "Sampling: Bounding the Collection of Data." Pp. 27–34 in *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Small, Mario 2009. "How many cases do I need?" On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research" *Ethnography*, 10(1): 5-38.

Background Ronald Czajka and Johnny Blair, 1996. *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures*. (Ch 17-end) Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge (readable, basic overview).

Becker, Howard S. 1998. "Sampling." pp. 67-108. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Salganik, Matthew. 2017. *Bit by Bit: Social Research in the Digital Age*. Chapter 3: Asking Questions. <http://www.bitbybitbook.com/en/asking-questions/>

Optional: Ansolabehere, Stephen and Douglas Rivers 2013 "Cooperative Survey Research." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16:307–29 (exploring the shift away from "random samples")

Homework: Sampling Problem Review (on Canvas)

Exemplar: Liberman, Peter and Linda Skitka 2017. "Revenge in US Public Support for War against Iraq" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 81 (3): 636–660.

WEEK 9 – March 21 - Ethnographic Analysis: diverse approaches

Primary:

Adler, Patricia and Peter Adler, 2008. "Of Rhetoric and Representation: The Four Faces of Ethnography" *Sociological Quarterly*, 49: 1–30.

Charmaz, Kathy 2000. "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods" Pp. 509-535 in Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd edition). Sage.

Burawoy, Michael. 2009. *The Extended Case Method*. (University of California Press). Prologue and Introduction. (origins and applications of one now-classic approach)

Campbell, Marie and Frances Gregor, *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Institutional Ethnography*, Ch. 1 "Finding a Place to Begin", pp. 11-44. (applying Dorothy Smith's somewhat

different approach)

Thatcher, David "The Normative Case Study" AJS, 2006 111(6): 1631-76. (a very different approach to what case studies can provide).

Homework: Make sure you have already picked your book before class! Choose an ethnography that bears on a topic you are interested in (read enough of the intro at least to KNOW that it is an ethnography) and be prepared to discuss the criteria you use to decide what KIND of an ethnography it IS (and isn't).

Exemplar: Levine, Jeremy "The Privatization of Political Representation: Community-Based Organizations as Non-elected Neighborhood Representatives" ASR 81(6):1251-1275.

See also: Pool R (2017) The verification of ethnographic data. Ethnography 18(3): 281–286.
Port M and van de (2017) The verification of ethnographic data: A response. Ethnography 18(3): 295–299.

Background: Nancy Naples, 2003. Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis and Activist Research.

ASSIGNMENT 3: Book reviewing (Due 5pm Monday April 9):

Addressing methodological debates and concerns in ethnographic data, which is more often published in book than article form. Take the book you have chosen to review as one that deals PRIMARILY with ethnographic data, and read it carefully to see: (a) what ethnographic methods are used, with what conceptual justifications (b) how the ethnographic data collected is analyzed, and with what methodological justifications for the author's interpretations (what makes this data generalizable about what processes or institutions?). What makes empirical support offered for the author's theoretical argument more or less credible? What might make it more (or less) credible than it is? Write this as a methodologically focused book review.

WEEK 10 – April 4 - Research ethics & IRBs

Primary:

ASA Code of Ethics (on line at L@UW and asanet.org)

Hoeyer, Klaus, Lisa Dahlager and Niels Lynøe 2005. "Conflicting notions of research ethics: The mutually challenging traditions of social scientists and medical researchers," Social Science & Medicine, 61(8): 1741-1749.

Blee, Kathleen and Ashley Currier, 2011. "Ethics beyond the IRB: an introductory essay" Qualitative Sociology, 34:401–413

Kirsch, Gesa 2005. "Friendship, friendliness and feminist fieldwork" Signs, 30(4): 2163-2172.

Katz, Jack 2007. "Toward a Natural History of Ethical Censorship" Law & Society Review, 41 (4): 797-810.

And some very short practical discussions (select ANY 2 to read reflecting your own interests):

1) Irvine, Janice 2006. "Sex, lies and research." Mobilization 11 (4): 491-494.

- 2) Hillsman, Sally 2011. "Changes in the common rule: Social and Behavioral sciences on center stage" Footnotes, 39(9)
- 3) "Do economists need a code of ethics?" The Economist, Jan 2011
- 4) Mitch Smith/Laura Stark 2012 (January 8) "Inside the IRB" (short discussion of book), Inside Higher Ed (online link provided)
- 5) Brian C. Martinson, Melissa S. Anderson and Raymond de Vries, 2005. "Scientists behaving badly" Nature 435 (9): 737-8.
- 6) Charles Duhigg 2012 "How companies learn your secrets" New York Times (February 16, Sunday Magazine)
- 7) Zachary Schrag 2011 "Professor Sues Brown University Over IRB Mission Creep" Institutional Review Blog, March 13.
- 8) Vindu Goel, 2014 "As online data overflows, researchers struggle with ethics" NYT

Background: A solid historical/sociological account: Heimer, Carol and JuLeigh Petty 2010. Bureaucratic Ethics: IRBs and the Legal Regulation of Human Subjects Research. Annual Review of Law and Social Science. 6:601–26; see also other ethics codes (AAUP common statement, ISA, COPE procedures, available on LEARN@UW).

Homework: YOU MUST DO the UW ethics training & certification (if you haven't already). This is NOT easy (it takes about 2 hours) and NOT optional. It requires that you know UW's IRB guidelines and can answer the questions about them. ALSO use the problem set Megan Shoji prepared to think through actual research ethics dilemmas --take some notes on what you find most and least helpful in the on-line training for addressing these issues – the point is to consider what "ethics" means, and what is essential about/missing from this sort of institutional process of defining "ethics."

Exemplar: Williams, Matthew, Pete Burnap, Luke Sloan 2017. "Towards an Ethical Framework for Publishing Twitter Data in Social Research: Taking into Account Users' Views, Online Context and Algorithmic Estimation" *Sociology*, 51 (6): 1149 – 1168.

WEEK 11 – April 11 Macrosociological analysis and studying change, archival data

Primary:

Bennett, Andrew and Colin Elman 2006 "Recent developments in qualitative political science" Annual Review of Political Science, 9:455–76. (Very useful review including fuzzy set analyses)

Mahoney, James. 1999. "Nominal, Ordinal, and Narrative Appraisal in Macrocausal Analysis." American Journal of Sociology 104:1154-1196.

Goldthorpe, John H. 2000. "Current Issues in Comparative Macrosociology" Pp. 45-64 in On Sociology: Numbers, Narratives, and the Integration of Research and Theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ragin, Charles 1994. Constructing Social Research. Thousand Oaks. Pine Forge. Chapter 5: Using Comparative Methods to Study Diversity. Pp 105-130.

Ragin, Charles Fuzzy-set Social Science. Thousand Oaks, Sage. Intro & Chapter 1, pp. 3-40.

Background: Charles Tilly, 1984. Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons. New York:

Russell Sage Foundation. OR Pierson, Paul "Big, slow moving and invisible?" (on web)

Exemplar: Limoncelli, Stephanie 2017. "The global development of contemporary anti-human trafficking advocacy" *International Sociology* 32 (6): 814 – 834.

WEEK 12 – April 18: Experimental design in lab, field and political contexts

Primary:

Jackson, Michelle and D.R. Cox 2013 "Principles of Experimental Design and their Application in Sociology" *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39: 27–49.

Sniderman, Paul M. and Douglas B. Grob. 1996. "Innovations in Experimental Design in Attitude Surveys." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:377-399. (Describes some of the different ways in which substantive questions about social attitudes can be pursued using experimental methods in surveys.)

Ganong, Lawrence and Marilyn Coleman, 2006. "Multiple segment factorial vignette designs" *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 68, 455-468. (Innovative combinations of survey, experimental and qualitative design characteristics)

Falk, Armin and James J Heckman 2009. "Lab Experiments Are a Major Source of Knowledge in the Social Sciences" *Science*, 326: 535-538.

Optional: Christian Berndt (2015) Behavioural economics, experimentalism and the marketization of development, *Economy and Society*, 44:4, 567-591. (a critical view of how experimental methods have changed economics and vice versa)

Exemplar: Pedulla, David 2016. "Penalized or Protected? Gender and the Consequences of Nonstandard and Mismatched Employment Histories" *American Sociological Review* 81(2): 262 – 289.

Background: Campbell, Donald T. and Julian C. Stanley. 1963. *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. THE classic source on inferences and inferential problems in experiments and quasi-experimental studies.

ASSIGNMENT 4: Study design: Research topic: Racial Identity and Nationalism (due 5pm Monday April 30)

Imagine that Methods 750 was a two-semester course, and that for the second semester there is a competition to select an actual project on which to practice. The criteria on which the competition will be judged are clarity, feasibility, and integration of key course concepts. You can ask any sort of question about this broad topic.

If you "win," you would be in charge of directing your classmates in conducting a small research project that YOU ALONE have designed. Your classmates would not be co-designers but would be available to help you conduct YOUR study in terms of its logistics. Please limit your discussion to the design aspects of a realistic project (using ethnographic, existing data, interview, survey, quasi or true experimental design) that you believe to be feasible as a part of just this one semester course and with no real budget.

A potentially winning project will be convincing in regard to the specific hypothesis and detailed strategy the class can carry out to test it (including consideration of at least one plausible alternative hypothesis). Provide a justification of what population you propose to represent (and why), what sampling frame and sampling strategy you recommend, and the overall methodological design (based on what specifics you want to know, resource constraints, your preferences for qualitative or quantitative design, etc.). The "semester research scenario" above is only intended to focus your thinking on a time- and money-limited design that will still be good! Creativity and efficiency are thus (as in all research designs) rewarded. Discuss what limits to generalizability are imposed by the design you recommend and how a well-designed student-run study (like the one you are proposing) can still create reliable knowledge about something important. (due by 5 pm Monday April 30).

WEEK 13 – April 25: Quasi-experimental and observational “natural experiment” designs

Primary:

Campbell, Donald T. and Julian C. Stanley. 1963. "Factors jeopardizing validity..." Pp. 5-16 PLUS pp. 34-42 "Quasi-experimental designs" and pp. 61-64 "regression discontinuity" in *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (THE classic source)

Campbell, Donald and David A. Kenny. 1999. "Graphical Introduction" and "Frequently Asked Questions about Regression to the Mean." Pp 1-20, 28-36 in *A Primer on Regression Artifacts*. New York: Guilford. (An authoritative treatment of regression to the mean).

Smith, Herbert L. 1997. "Matching with Multiple Controls to Estimate Treatment Effects in Observational Studies." *Sociological Methodology* 27: 325-353. (This is a fairly accessible introduction to propensity-score adjustment for sociologists; other virtues are that it talks about many-to-many matching and the idea of using a panel-type regression model instead of explicit matching).

Hennigan et al., "Impact of the introduction of television on crime" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1982, 42(3): 461_477. (An interesting regression discontinuity design)

Homework: recognizing and naming parts of the experimental model (problem set on web)

Background: Agresti, Alan and Barbara Finlay. 1997. "Introduction to multivariate relationships." Pp. 356_371 "Comparing dependent samples" Pp. 226-229 and "Adjusted means." 508-516 in *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Exemplar: Legewie, Joscha 2016 "Use of force in police stops" *AJS* 122 (2): 379–424

WEEK 14 –May 2 - Meta-analysis, triangulation, combining & comparing methods and studies to draw stronger conclusions

Primary:

Three readings on meta-analysis:

Schultz, Kenneth and David Whitney, 2005. *Measurement Theory in Action*. Pp 135-151 (Module 9, meta-analysis)

Proulx, Christine M and Heather Helms, Cheryl Buehler 2007. "Marital quality and personal well-being: A meta-analysis." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 69 (3): 576-593. (nice example of how it

is done very well)

Hodson, Randy 2004. "A Meta-Analysis of Workplace Ethnographies: Race, Gender, and Employee Attitudes and Behaviors" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 33(1): 4-38. (applying meta-analysis ideas to qualitative studies)

Three readings on triangulation:

McGrath, Joseph, Joanne Martin & Kulka, Judgment Calls in Research, ch. 1 (pp.17-39) & ch. 3 (pp.69-102).

Axinn, William and Lisa Pearce, 2006. *Mixed Method Data Collection Strategies*. Chapter 8 "Conclusion" pp. 183-197 (you could substitute "course" for "book" and not be wrong)

Brewer, John and Albert Hunter 2006. *Foundations of Multimethod Research*. Sage. Chapter 8 "A postscript on postmodernism" pp. 151-167.

Background: Lieberman, Stanley. 1985. *Making It Count: The Improvement of Social Research and Theory*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Especially Chapters 2 ("Selectivity") & 3 ("Comparisons...");

Janet Hyde's meta-analysis of meta-analyses "Gender Similarities" (on L@UW) is also compelling.

NOTE no exemplar this week.

Keep on learning: check out the diverse methods podcasts at
<https://thesocietypages.org/methods/category/mixed-methods/>

Final Project due Thursday May 10 (deadline 5 pm).

This final project is an outline of the methodological issues raised by your dissertation, MA thesis or other major project, as refracted through the lens of this course. My expectation is that you will be able to demonstrate that you have learned something that is **USEFUL** to you in this course -- although what you find most useful and worth discussing will surely vary! Your choices might include a critical reflection on your choice of method and how it relates to (improves on?) paradigmatic/classic closely related studies. Or how you have re-thought some practical issues of measurement or coding or sampling. Focus ideally on the thorniest methodological questions (measurement, ethics, sample, inference or other) and discuss not only why they are difficult to resolve satisfactorily but also on the plans you now have for addressing them. Have these plans changed because of some issues addressed in this course (why or why not?) What other issues, considerations, problems present themselves to you as tangled up in your choice of methods (gender and generalization? politics of access? interdisciplinarity of audience? etc). I expect references back to the assigned readings (these need no full bibliographic info, just in-text citation) as well as indications that you have understood and are able to apply the conceptual tools they offer. Maximum length 3000 words. Put in Dropbox before deadline and (if you wish) also on discussion board for your fellow students to see and ideally also discuss with you.