

**Sociology 750 – Research Design and Practice in Sociology**  
**Fall 2099**

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*“ ‘Method’ has to do, first of all, with how to ask and answer questions with some assurance that the answers are more or less durable. ‘Theory’ has to do, above all, with paying close attention to the words one is using, especially their degree of generality and their logical relations. The primary purpose of both is clarity of conception and economy of procedure, and most importantly just now, the release rather than the restriction of the sociological imagination.”*

— C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959

**OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION** (date of composition unknown) 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. [“lab” in this case means your own self-organized study groups which are *strongly recommended* although not required]

### **OVERVIEW**

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 “good” (revealing and answerable) questions, (2) to measuring the concepts about which one wants to generalize, (3) finding an appropriate sample of some population to which one wants to generalize, (4) and 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 also 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 archival materials, meta-analysis, ethnographies, in-depth interviews, historical methods, and the analysis of texts. 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 here that can do that for any particular method that you actually expect to use. Importantly: *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

Grades for the course will be based on student performances on written exercises (30%), article evaluations (30%), a final project (20%) and class participation/web participation/ homework preparation/ manifested conscientiousness (20%). I will aim to have the final overall distribution of student grades resemble that of other required graduate courses. But 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, and article evaluations*

There will be both "homework" assignments and written "exercises" over the course of the semester that provide opportunities for you to develop your thinking about methodological questions, including some pertaining to the research you personally plan to pursue.

"Homework" is NOT turned in or 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.

By contrast, written **exercises** will be turned in electronically AFTER the class where they are listed (**NO LATER than 5pm on the date they are due**). These are openly posted for others in the class to read (as well as for me to grade) before class the following week. **The acceptable range of word-count for a written exercise is 750-1000 words.** All exercises on which you have not done well can be redone in the following two weeks, and will be re-graded accordingly. Both exercises and evaluations will be graded HIGH PASS (A+, and rare), pass (A), marginal (B), and no pass (C).

In addition to written exercises, you are also are 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). The three written evaluations of "exemplar articles" are **due no later than 3 pm MONDAY before the seminar in which that article will be discussed.** Whether or not you are writing an evaluation of a particular exemplar article, 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** – you may volunteer, alone or in a pair, in the message to which your exemplar is attached, but I reserve the right of selection). As I think it unlikely that you are "expert" in three different methodologies, this requirement implies writing carefully and critically about methodologies with which you are only marginally familiar. I encourage you to pick articles that will help improve your ability to work through an article in an unfamiliar substantive field or method.

Focus your attention on the specific methodological issues in the paper (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 trust-worthy answers**), rather than an attack on the author's choice of problem or epistemology. NO research is perfect; ALL papers could be improved without thereby being "bad" (but some may be). Asking "good questions" about the paper is the goal and thus the criterion on which you will be graded.

**The MAXIMUM WORD COUNT for evaluations is 750 words (strictly enforced).** An article evaluation that you do not do well on 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 evaluations to get three passes, but one can still get an A in the course with a marginal (B) grade on a few exercises or evaluations. Don't fret about not doing well on "everything" you attempt. Any "no pass" grade, however, should be cause for concern.

The **final project (MAXIMUM length 3000 words, DUE 5 pm Dec 21** in electronic form) will be a more substantial exercise in which you are asked to describe a research project of your own (thesis, dissertation or other) and reflect on its methodology at length. 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 will be graded separately on a six point (A+, A, AB, B, BC, Fail) scale.

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 Learn@UW at least six times through the semester**, either initiating on-line discussion or responding to others forays, but the point is not a mechanical count of postings. **Engaged and thoughtful consideration of what others have to say, both in and outside the seminar room and the website, is the goal.** It is courteous to excuse yourself (by email) in advance if you discover you will be unable to attend a particular seminar meeting. Posting comments that you were prepared to make but regrettably unable to deliver in person is an appropriate way to "make up" some 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. On-line postings as well as homework preparation, evaluation discussion leadership, and in-class participation all contribute to your participation grade (which is 20% of the total, not insignificant).

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 very serious of reasons for lateness. Absence of forethought on your part does not constitute a serious reason.

**Turning exercises/evaluations in.** Written exercises and evaluations should be posted in the appropriate location on the LEARN@UW website for this course. Exercises go into a "discussion" section exclusively, but article evaluations go into a dropbox (where only I can read them) and THEN get posted to the "discussion" section **after the deadline** has passed, so that everyone can look at other people's evaluations before we discuss the article. When you post an attachment, be sure to put your name ON the attached document, not just on the file and/or posting itself (I print them and return them to you with written comments). All attachments must be in Microsoft Word (.doc) or rich text format (.rtf), with a filename that includes *your* surname (e.g., smith\_ex3.doc; filenames like 750\_ex3.doc or ferree\_ex3 or exercise3.doc are spectacularly unhelpful).

**Overall exercise and evaluation grades.** Exercises and article evaluations will graded high pass (A+), pass (A), marginal pass (B), no pass (C). "High pass" is a relatively rare grade, and "no pass" should be taken as a signal of a deficiency that should be remedied if you intend to pass the course; both pass and marginal pass reflect more or less adequate work.

For evaluations, you should assume I have read the article you are evaluating, and should provide a very brief – one paragraph – 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 but they cannot be comprehensive, so **PRIORITIZE**. Evaluations need to be clearly written and fundamentally grammatical but they are not intended to represent your most polished prose.

You are encouraged to **POST** any week (not as a part of the evaluation of the exemplar) issues you would like to see considered (in class or on-line) including any comments you have about (1) how the research discussed in the non-exemplar readings relates to things discussed in class/other readings; (2) specific connections between the research discussed in the exemplar and other studies you know about from this or 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 exemplify things you see as strengths and weaknesses of its kind of research; (6) specific questions of clarification about the non-exemplar articles and the guidelines they present. Such reflections cumulatively contribute to your participation grade; I will attempt to post responses to at least some of your comments and questions on-line, but I strongly urge you to respond to each other as well. This type of discussion is important, especially in since there is limited "airtime" during the seminar. I repeat that I expect to see a **minimum of a half-dozen such remarks/questions/replies/suggestions posted by each student over the course of the semester**.

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, etc.) will be collected in a "penalty box" and applied proportionately to reduce your overall grade for the course.

### ***Academic integrity***

Although I would hope that this paragraph is by now totally superfluous, for the record let me remind you 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, and the penalties recommended to the Dean of Students will be severe.

**BUT** because I **DO** encourage all students to **form study groups and work together** on thinking through the assignments, let me clarify the application of this policy to such joint work: (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 work and be clearly and distinctively **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 some common points, and failing to report ideas that you tested and rejected in favor of seizing on and presenting as 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, but make sure that your presentation of your ideas fairly

represents your own thinking process, including saying what you have learned from others. Such learning is commendable, and is not plagiarism -- but trying to present ideas acquired from others as being your own original insights is academic dishonesty.

### **Readings**

All of the primary readings, all of the exemplars, and many of the readings on the “background” list are available on electronic reserve through the Social Science Library. All the primary readings and exemplars are also linked to the course website and can be downloaded directly there. There is no printed coursepack, as this would be prohibitively expensive. Use your own judgment about what you read on line or print out. Printing things out before you have a firm plan for reading them wastes department resources and kills trees. Feel free to download and save articles as future resources electronically.

There are supplemental lists (not on the syllabus but provided on the course website) intended to be long term resources for your growth and development as a methodologically astute social scientist rather than something that even the most ambitious student should attempt to sample extensively in this semester. There is a long list, sorted by topic, where if you are having trouble with a method or issue, you might find alternative readings that could provide you with the ‘aha moment’ that you are missing in the main reading and would be recommended in such cases. This list also includes a section on debates around methods. There is a list of books and articles on qualitative data, especially the rhetoric associated with writing compelling ethnography – this may be helpful for non-qualitative specialists looking for ethnographies in their field, and for qualitative researchers interested in the rhetoric of persuasion associated with ethnographic data. And there is a list of suggestions for studying new technologies with new methods, especially useful for those considering internet data for projects.

The category of reading that I call “background” introduces a topic or consideration, and I would expect that you would already know it or a similar reading. If you do not, you should at least skim this source or discuss it in your study group so that the language or tools it offers will not be alien or incomprehensible to you. 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 Learn@UW.

## Schedule of readings, homework and written exercises

### **WEEK 1 - Sept 2: Introduction to the class, some ideas about philosophy of science**

#### **Primary:**

Kuhn, 1962, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Ch 3 (the nature of normal science), Ch 6 (anomalies), Ch 11 (the invisibility of scientific revolutions).

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. (you might consider also the Freese, King and Abbott positions in the supplemental readings)

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

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

**Handout:** Positivism vs. Critical/Fallible Realism (and relativism)

**To discuss:** The syllabus; “science” and “truth” in sociology; variation in epistemologies in sociology, the visible nature of scientific communities, writing journal reviews and recognizing the rhetoric of persuasion, how to evaluate articles/scientific contributions as more or less credible.

## WEEK 2 - Sept 9: Paradigms as interlocked theory-method: “scientific” credibility and models of working – whom are you trying to convince?

### 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 feminists*).

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*)

McLaughlin, Eithne. 1991. "Oppositional poverty: the quantitative/qualitative divide and other dichotomies." *The Sociological Review* 39:292-308. (*a sociological look at sociological binaries*)

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*)

**Homework 1:** Prepared answers about questions about paradigms in your area (see website).

### Background:

Barnes, Barry. 1982. *T.S. Kuhn and Social Science*, Ch 1 (Traditions of Research), and selections from chapters 2 (training) and 4 (evaluation), pp. 1-27, 66-67, 86-90 (*a direct application of Kuhn to social science modes of working*).

Howard Becker “The epistemology of qualitative research” From Richard Jessor, Anne Colby and Richard Schweder, eds. *Essays on Ethnography and Human Development*. University of Chicago Press. (*a positivist interpretation of qualitative work and an application of Kuhn’s concept of incommensurability – compare Abbott’s critique of both qualitative and quantitative narrative*).

## WEEK 3 - Sept 16: In the beginning was the word: Starting from a “literature” to make a question answerable

### 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.

Clemens, Elizabeth, Walter W. Powell, Kris McIlwaine and Dina Okamoto, 1995. “Careers in Print: Books, Journals and Scholarly Reputations.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 101(2): 433-494.

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

### Background:

Latour, Bruno. 1987. “Literature.” Chapter 1 of *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (*Sociology of science consideration of the construction of scientific articles, both in relation to other articles and the world itself*).

Linda Liska Belgrave, Diane Zablotzky and Mary Ann Guadagno, 2002. “How do we talk to each other? Writing Qualitative Research for Quantitative Readers” *Qualitative Health Research*, 12 (10): 1427-1439.

Piven, Frances Fox 2003. “Public sociology and politicized sociologists”

**Homework 2:** Be SURE you can use Web of Knowledge for citation-based searching, creating citation networks and citation counts. (*the issue here is identifying for WHOM you are writing, whether or not they are academics*) See also “tips for professional writing” in supplemental section of L@UW webpage.

**Exemplar:** Gabriel Abend 2006 “Styles of sociological thought: Sociologies, epistemologies and US and Mexican quests for truth.” *Sociological Theory*, 24(1): 1-41.

### Exercise 1: Identifying replications and extensions of previous work.

Find a recent (post 2003) empirical replication that confirms or challenges at least one of the findings of the classic/paradigmatic study you have chosen. The classic study should be EMPIRICAL (have a basis in data and a method of evaluating data, not necessarily a quantitative one). Compare the two studies closely;

discuss what the “replication”/extension preserves of the original design and what it “improves.” Is it really an “improvement” in your view (not just that of the authors)? 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. How do they interpret their results (as an extension, modification, limitation, or ...)? Could you interpret their results differently (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)? What would you have to question in order to shift your perspective in this more skeptical way? (**Due by 5pm Friday September 18**)

#### **WEEK 4 – Sept 23: What an answer is depends on the question: Significance is more than statistical**

##### **Primary:**

- Becker, Howard S. 1998. “Concepts” Pp. 109-145 in *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cohen, Jacob. 1994. “The earth is round ( $p < .05$ ).” *American Psychologist* 49:997-1003.
- Freedman, David A. 1991. “Statistical models and shoe leather.” *Sociological Methodology* 21: 291-313.

Also EITHER:

- Duneier, Mitchell. 2004. “Scrutinizing the Heat: On Ethnic Myths and the Importance of Shoe Leather.” *Contemporary Sociology* 33:139-150; Klinenberg, Eric [a student of Wacquant’s]. 2004. “Overheated.” *Contemporary Sociology* 33:522-528.

OR

- Duneier 2006 “Ethnography, the ecological fallacy and the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave” ASR 71 (4): 679-688, Klinenberg 2006 “Blaming the victims: hearsay, labeling and the hazards of quick-hit disaster ethnography” ASR 71(4): 689-698.

AND in either case: Browning et al 2006. “Neighborhood social processes, physical conditions and disaster-related mortality: the case of the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave.” ASR, 71(4): 661-678. (*a quantitative look at SOME of the questions raised in the Klinenberg/Dunier debate*).

**Background:** Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists*. University of Chicago Press. (*the book I always recommend to dissertation writers; Becker explains how it is “really” done*) and Margrit Eichler, Non-Sexist Research Methods ch. 1, 6 and Appendix (*an overview of unfortunately still-too-common errors of framing that make unwarranted assumptions about gender in research design*)

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

**September 30 – no class – rescheduled at end of semester, December 16.**

#### **WEEK 5 –October 7: Measurement: trying to increase validity and reliability**

##### **Primary:**

- 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. (*General overview of measurement from the standpoint of psychologists, who often think about measurement more than sociologists do.*)
- Deacon, Deasley 1985 APolitical arithmetic: the 19<sup>th</sup> century Australian census and the construction of the dependent woman@ Signs: 11(1): 27-47. (*non-scientific concerns that enter into apparently innocuous and “obvious” measures*).
- Brush, Lisa 1990. “Violent acts and injurious outcomes in married couples: Methodological issues in the National Study of Families and Households.” *Gender & Society* 4(1): 156-167. (*how what you choose to*

*measure in a scale matters)*

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

**Homework 3:** Measurement of commonly used concepts

**Background:** Traub, Ross E. 1994. *Reliability for the Social Sciences: Theory and Applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (*overview of classical reliability theory*). **OR**, if you find their statistical presentation daunting, the basic ideas are very effectively laid out in Katzer, Cook and Crouch, *Evaluating Information*, McGraw Hill, in a sometimes overly cute but not-too-simplistic way.

**Exemplar:** Jacob Cheadle, 2008. "Educational investment, family context, and children's math and reading growth from kindergarten through the third grade" *Sociology of Education* 81(1): 1-31.

## **WEEK 6 –October 14: 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*.

Maynard, Douglas W. 2003. "Conversation Analysis: What is the Context of an Utterance?" Pp. 64-87 in *Bad News, Good News: Conversational Order in Everyday Talk and Clinical Settings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Krippendorff, Klaus. 2004. "Reliability in Content Analysis; Some Common Misconceptions and Recommendations." *Human Communication Research*, 30(3):411-433.

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

**Homework 4:** coding sociological discourse

**Background:** Neuendorf, Kimberly 2002. *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, Ch 1-4, Ch7 and Ch 9, (*a very basic how-to and definition of terms*) and/or Nancy Naples chapter on discourse analysis as part of institutional ethnography (on Learn@UW). Try out some sort of content analysis program (see demo of LWIC on Learn@UW (discussed in Pennebaker & King in supplemental reading) and/or Atlas.ti or NVivo at SSCC)

**Exemplar:** Deana Roehlinger, 2007. "American media and deliberative democratic processes" *Sociological Theory*, 25(2): 122-148.

**Exercise 2 – operationalization** -This is a SMALL venture into the messy "real world" of data collection. Your measures must be "unobtrusive" but can be any sort of text, interaction, behavior, or artifact (as long as ethical). The point is to operationalize an idea validly and yet creatively, and then to code some data as reliably as possible in line with that operationalization. You should advance a simple hypothesis, operationalize both an independent and a dependent variable (either can be a scale), introduce at least one control variable or indexing correction, and collect a **small** pre-test's worth of data to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your measure. Don't make this a big project. Connect the measurement issue to some real work you are doing (if at all possible), and focus on what makes what you are doing maximally VALID and how you can make the measures as RELIABLE as possible (**Due 5 pm Monday October 19**).

## **WEEK 7 – Oct 21: Ethnographic Analysis: diverse approaches**

### **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*)

Burawoy, Michael. 1991. "The Extended Case Method." Pp. 271-300 in *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press (*one CLASSIC approach*)

Strauss, Anselm, 1987. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. NY: Cambridge University Press. Ch 1

& 2 (Introduction and Two Illustrations) pp. 1-54. (*the OTHER classic*)  
 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 methods*)  
 Thatcher, David "The Normative Case Study" *AJS*, 2006 111(6): 1631-76. (*a very different approach to  
 what case studies can provide*).

**Homework:** pick your book! 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 an ethnography IS (and isn't). Some suggestions are available in the qualitative bibliography on the website, though NOT ALL the books in this list ARE ethnographic.

**Background:** Miles, Matthew B. and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis (2nd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage and/or Nancy Naples, 2003. *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis and Activist Research*.

Consider also the two official reports on "standards" for qualitative research put out by NSF and NIH (in supplemental list and on website for your future reference).

**Exemplar:** Javier Auyero and Debora Swistun, 2008. "The Social Production of Toxic Uncertainty" *American Sociological Review*, 73: 357-379.

**Exercise 3: Book reviewing:** Methodological debates and concerns in ethnographic data. 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 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 due at 5pm Monday October 26*.

## WEEK 8 –October 28: 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.

Halse, Christine and Anne Honey 2005 "Unraveling Ethics: Illuminating the Moral Dilemmas of Research Ethics" *Signs* 30(4): 2141-2162.

Elliott, Carl 2008. "Guinea-pigging: Healthy human subjects for drug-safety trials are in demand. But is it a living?" *The New Yorker*, January 7, 83(42): 36ff. (*some insights into what is and isn't an "ethical concern"*)

Some short practical discussions (select a few to read):

- 1) Christopher Shea, 2000. "Don't Talk to the Humans: The Crackdown on Social Science Research" *Lingua Franca* 10 (6)
- 2) Monaghan, Peter 1999. "Can scholars protect confidential sources?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 7.
- 3) Rosenbloom, Stephanie 2007. "On Facebook, Scholars Link Up With Data" *New York Times*, December 17.
- 4) Cohen, Patricia 2007, "IRBs extend reach" *New York Times*, Feb 28.
- 5) Irvine, Janice 2006. "Sex, lies and research." *Mobilization* 11 (4): 491-494.
- 6) Kirsch, Gesa 2005. "Friendship, friendliness and feminist fieldwork" *Signs*, 30(4): 2163-2172.

**Background:** other ethics codes (AAUP common statement, ISA, COPE procedures, available on LEARN@UW).

**Homework: YOU MUST DO the NEW (2008) 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. Take some notes on what you find most and

least helpful in the on-line training – the point is not just to do it but to think about what it means, and what is missing from this sort of institutional process of defining “ethics.”

**Exemplar:** David Calvey, 2008 “The art and politics of covert research” *Sociology*, 42(5): 905-918.

### **WEEK 9 – November 4: Macrosociological analysis, historical sociology, archival data**

#### **Primary:**

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.

Laitin, David. 2002. "Comparative Politics: The State of the Subdiscipline." in *The State of the Discipline*, edited by I. Katznelson and H. Milner. New York: Norton. (“tripartite method,” *the disciplined integration of formal models, quantitative research, and in-depth qualitative studies of small numbers of cases*).

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

**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:** Jocelyn Viterna and Kathleen Fallon, 2008. “Democratization, women's movements, and gender-equitable states: A framework for comparison.” *American Sociological Review* 73(4): 668-689.

### **WEEK 10 – November 11: Surveys & Interviews: writing questions, interpreting answers**

#### **Primary:**

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

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

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)

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

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

(see also “new technologies” section in “supplemental readings”)

**Homework:** Constructive critique of question wordings

**Exemplar:** Bonnie Fisher, 2009. “The Effects of Survey Question Wording on Rape Estimates Evidence From a Quasi-Experimental Design.” *Violence Against Women* 15(2): 133-147.

### **WEEK 11 – November 18: Generalization: thinking clearly about samples and populations**

#### **Primary:**

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.

Clendenning, Field and Jenson 2004 “A survey of seasonal and permanent landowners in WI northwoods.” *Society and Natural Resources* 17: 431-442.

Stuart, Alan. 1984. *The Ideas of Sampling*. New York: Macmillan. (this is LONG – four files and not

especially easy, but it is really the core of what you need to know to draw ANY sample)

**Select one based on your own research proclivities:**

(qualitative): 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.

(quantitative): Cohen, Jacob. 1992. "A power primer." *Psychological Bulletin* 112:155-159.

**Background:** Ronald Czajka and Johnny Blair, 1996. *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures*. (Ch 17-end) Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge. **AND** On-line random number generator.

**Homework:** Sampling Problem Set (on Learn@UW)

**Exemplar:** Zi Liang, Miao David Chunyu, Guotu Zhuang, Wenzhen Ye 2008. "Cumulative Causation, Market Transition, and Emigration from China" *AJS*, 114(3): 706-737.

**Exercise 4: study design** – Assume you are a new faculty advisor helping UW undergraduates do a one-semester study of the impact of the economic crisis/recession on UW students (as a small part of just one course). Help them form a specific hypothesis and recommend a detailed sampling strategy to test it. Provide a justification of what (sub)population you advise them to represent (and why), what sampling frame and strategy you recommend to these students, and for the overall methodological design (based on what you want to know, resource constraints, preferences for qualitative or quantitative design, etc.). Discuss what they will learn from the process and what generalizability you think the students' study will have, what ethical concerns you have and how you present these to the students, etc. For example, what are the costs and benefits of the research and do you think the benefits of the study exceed the costs (to the students and/or interviewee)? **(due by 5pm Monday Nov 30)**

**No Class November 25 – Rescheduled to December 16 – Happy Thanksgiving**

**WEEK 12 – December 2: Experimental design in lab, field and survey contexts**

**Primary:**

Aronson, Elliot, Timothy D. Wilson, and Marilynn B. Brewer. 1998. "Experimentation in Social Psychology." in *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, and G. Lindzey. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. (*Reviews many of the main methodological issues in social psychological experiments.*)

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*)

**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.*

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

**Exemplar:** Susan Sorenson and Kristie Thomas 2009. "Views of Intimate Partner Violence in Same- and Opposite-Sex Relationships" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71(2): 337-352.

### **WEEK 13 – December 9: 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.

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*)

**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:** Mahmood Arai and Peter Skogman Thoursie 2009. "Renouncing Personal Names: An Empirical Examination of Surname Change and Earnings." *Journal of Labor Economics*. 27(1): 127-147.

### **WEEK 14 – December 16 (session 1): Meta-analysis, triangulation, combining & comparing methods and studies to draw stronger conclusions**

#### **Primary:**

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*)

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. (*example of how it is done*)

**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...")

**Exemplar:** Robert Groves and Emilia Peytcheva 2008. "The impact of non-response rates on non-response bias: a meta-analysis" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 72(2):167 -189.

### **Week 15 – December 16 (session 2): post class discussion of final projects**

The focus of this class is on YOUR research and your research questions. How do you "translate" general issues of methodology into improving the approach you can take or have taken to a specific project's design or analysis?

**Final Project due Sunday December 20 (10 pm).**

This final project is an outline of the methodological issues raised by your thesis/dissertation. What is your choice of method and how does it relate to paradigmatic/classic closely related studies? How are you improving on existing work methodologically (or not)? What are the thorniest methodological questions (measurement, ethics, sample, inference or other) you face and why are they difficult? What plans do you have for addressing them? What other issues, considerations, problems present themselves as tangled up in methods (gender and generalization? The politics of access? interdisciplinarity of audience? etc). Maximum length 3000 words.

**Post final project on Learn@UW in the appropriate section.**