Graduate Research Methods  
Meet Thursday, 4:40 PM - 7:30 PM  
Location: BA 396  

(Draft: syllabus subject to revision)  

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00-1:00 p.m.  

“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.  


I. Course description:  
This course provides an introduction to research design and methods at the graduate level. We will examine several aspects of research, including:  
1. the relationship between theory and research in the social sciences  
2. methodological issues such as objectivity, the logic of argument, reliability and validity, and  
3. methodological techniques such as experiments, surveys, interviews, archival research, simple quantitative methods, and ethnographic research  

The course is designed to train social scientists to recognize and be capable of conducting rigorous, theoretically informed research.  

II. Course requirements and grading:  

Students must:  
a) Attend all seminar meetings and participate in class discussions and activities  
b) Do all required readings and assignments prior to class  
c) Submit weekly Blackboard postings on the assignments and review peer work  
d) Identify and critique one empirical journal article for the class, and (the same week) lead class discussion once during the semester  
e) Complete research exercises and a formal research proposal
Detailed requirements:

a) Both attendance and participation are vital to the success of the course and to your grade. Absences and tardiness are not taken lightly. If you are unable to attend on a particular day, please let me know in advance.

b) Research methods are many and varied, and the issues raised by social science research are complicated. All course participants are expected each week to allot the time required for reading assigned materials thoughtfully and thoroughly, prior to class. This will provide the basis for your active participation during our in-class discussions.

c) Blackboard postings are due each week, and should follow the guidelines for each weekly assignment. These posting must be online at least 24 hours prior to our weekly meetings and should be posted to the discussion list created for this purpose on Blackboard. In addition to posting your own answers and comments, you are expected to print out and grade the answers and comments posted by your assigned partner prior to class.

d) Article critique and class discussion: 1-2 students will lead class discussion for each week’s assigned readings. Sign-up will take place during the 1st session on August 19th. If you join class after this date, it is your responsibility to contact me in order to sign up for a slot. You will be expected to stop by my office the week before your presentation to discuss how to prepare.

As discussion leader, you will critique the article using the questions posed in Appendix B, as well as address important questions and issues raised by the other readings and the comments posted by students on Blackboard. Try to find common themes, points of divergence or confusion, and observations that can guide the conversation in fruitful directions. You should distribute a handout OR create a PPT presentation that includes at least the title page, abstract, and one or more tables from the article you are critiquing. Do your best to engage the class by posing questions to them or creating activities or exercises for them to complete.

Note regarding Appendix B: The written critique for your presented article should include an answer to question 1 and at least cursory answers to questions 2-4, 7, and 8. Focus mostly on the questions that relate to the chapter(s) assigned for the week you lead discussion (indicated in parentheses after each question). Your presentation does not have to cover all of this. You should turn in a hard (printed) copy of the written critique on the day of your presentation.

e) Research exercises will be given in class and as homework. Details to come for each exercise.

Your final paper will be a research grant proposal of approximately 15 pages. It should include a theoretical framework, a review of relevant literature, a methodological design for answering the questions posed by the research (with a detailed discussion of both data and methods), and the expected contributions of your research. You should also attach two appendices (maybe call them “Instrument” and “Funding”), the first with an example of a research instrument that you could use during data collection, and the second with at least two potential sources of funding for the project. Examples are posted on Blackboard. The final paper is due Thursday, Dec 9th.
Your grade will be based on the following:

- Attendance, participation, and in-class assignments: 10%
- Article critique and leading a discussion: 10%
- Weekly assignments and comments posted to Blackboard: 20%
- Research proposal exercises: 20%
- Final paper (research grant proposal): 40%

Please note that late work will not be accepted.

Important: I expect graduate students to have mastered the basics of writing papers, using a standard social science style and proofreading their work. Please take the time to present professional quality work. Get to know one of the social science style manuals — e.g., *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Kate L. Turabian), *A Manual of Style* (The University of Chicago), or the *APA Manual* — and pay particular attention to the pages that show you how to present bibliographic references. You can lose up to a full grade for sloppiness, noncompliance or inconsistency with an established style, or poor proofreading.

III. Required Text

*Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research* by Schutt (2006). The website of Pine Forge Press, the publisher of this textbook, provides materials to help you review the material covered in the text: [http://www.pineforge.com/isw5/index.htm](http://www.pineforge.com/isw5/index.htm). You might be able to get a used version of this text, but make sure it is the 5th edition, and that it includes the DVD. Do not buy the 6th edition!

IV. Optional Text

*A Short Guide to Writing about Social Science*, Fourth Edition by L. Cuba (New York: Longman, 2002). There is an accompanying website with research links for the Guide: [http://occawlonline.pearsoned.com/bookbind/pubbooks/shortguides_awl/medialib/intro.html](http://occawlonline.pearsoned.com/bookbind/pubbooks/shortguides_awl/medialib/intro.html); There also is an online version that may be up to 50% cheaper than the paperback: [http://www.ablongman.com/catalog/academic/product/0,1144,0321315901,00.html](http://www.ablongman.com/catalog/academic/product/0,1144,0321315901,00.html)

V. Supplementary materials

Several articles are available on the textbook website (preceded by “ISW Web” on the schedule below and found at [http://www.pineforge.com/isw4/learning.htm](http://www.pineforge.com/isw4/learning.htm)), while others will be posted on Blackboard (preceded by “BB” on the schedule below).

VI. Miscellaneous course information:

*Obvious courtesies:*
- Arrive on time
- Turn off your cell phone
- Let me know in advance if you must leave early
Incompletes: “A mark of ‘I’ (incomplete) is given by the instructor only when a student who is otherwise doing acceptable work is unable to complete a course because of illness or other conditions beyond the student’s control” (from the ASU General Catalog). I strongly recommend that you do not take an incomplete unless absolutely necessary! In my experience, incompletes are difficult for students to remedy and they often interfere with degree completion.

Academic integrity: I hope it is unnecessary to inform you that cheating and plagiarism will be dealt with severely. This includes failing to cite sources (whether using direct quotes, paraphrasing, or borrowing ideas); representing others’ work as your own, including other students; or allowing others to represent your work as theirs. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course without explicit, prior permission of both instructors. If you have doubts about what constitutes academic dishonesty, ask me. The School of Social Transformation adheres to university policies regarding academic integrity, which you are encouraged to read and take very seriously: http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity/policy.

Disability Services: If you have a learning disability, need disability accommodations in this class, or have other particular needs, please let me know as soon as possible. All information regarding disability is confidential.
COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1: Aug. 19 and Aug. 26
Overview and Introduction to the Course

WEEK 2: Sept. 2
Topic: Science, Society, and Social Research
Readings, etc. due this week
• ISW Chapter 1
• Appendices A and H (on CD that comes with the book)
• C. Wright Mills, excerpt from The Sociological Imagination:
  http://www.lclark.edu/~goldman/socimagination.html

Assignments due this week
• Practice Exercises 3 & 4 from Chapter 1. Post to BB at least 48 hours before class.
• Developing a Research Proposal from chapter 1 (answer all 3 questions) – write it offline!
• C. Wright Mills, Sociological Imagination (write 1-2 pps). Post to BB 48 hours before class:
  1. What do you believe to be true about your subject/topic? Why? (I believe…)
  2. What are your motives for this research? (My motives…)
  3. How might a “sociological imagination” help you understand your chosen research topic?
  4. What structural, historical, and individual factors that might affect your topic of interest?
     How would you approach studying the structural factors of relevance to your chosen
     issue? The historical factors? The individual factors?

Grading due this week
• Practice Exercise 4 from Chapter 1: do you agree with your partner’s assessment? Why?
• Review your partner’s answers to the Sociological Imagination questions using the grading
  rubric posted under “Course Documents ➔ Grading Rubrics” on Blackboard.

WEEK 3: Sept. 9
Topic: Process and Problems of Social Research
Readings, etc. due this week
• Chapter 2 of new book (HANDOUT)
• Appendices B and C
• BB:
    between Gender and Methods in Sociological Research?” American Sociological Review.
    52(6):856-62.
  o Steinmetz, George. 2004. “Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study,

Assignments due this week
• Ethics question #2 from Chapter 2: post to BB
• Developing a Research Proposal from new Chapter 2 (handout: answer all 4 questions). Post
  to BB 24 hours before class.

Grading due this week
• Write 1-2 paragraphs evaluating the hypotheses given by your partner in question #4 of DRP.
  Does the justification convince you of the hypotheses’ validity, given your partner’s answers
  to questions #2-3? Why or why not?
WEEK 4: Sept. 16  
Topic: Research Ethics and Philosophies  
Readings, etc. due this week  
- Chapter 3 of new book (HANDOUT)  
- Check out the ASU IRB website: http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/humans  
- Look at IRB Powerpoint posted on BB  
Assignments due this week  
- Paper #1: Research Proposal topic due (Research Proposal Guidelines under “Assignments” on BB). Post paper #1 to the SafeAssignment on BB and give me a hard copy.  
- Prepare to debate the relative advantages/disadvantages of positivism/interpretivism in class  
- Developing a Research Proposal from new Chapter 3 (answer all 5 questions); post to BB  
Grading due this week  
- None  

WEEK 5: Sept. 23  
Topic: Conceptualization and Measurement  
Readings, etc. due this week  
- ISW Chapter 4  
- Appendix D  
- BB:  
Assignments due this week  
- Practice Exercise 4 from Chapter 4 (From DVD: don’t post to BB)  
- Developing a Research Proposal Chapter 4 (answer all 4 questions). Post to BB 24 hours before class.  
Grading due this week  
- Review your partner’s answers to the DRP questions using the grading rubric posted under “Course Documents→Grading Rubrics→Week 5” on Blackboard  

WEEK 6: Sept. 30  
Topic: Sampling  
Readings, etc. due this week  
- ISW Chapter 5  
- Appendix E  
- ISW Web:  

- BB:

Assignments due this week
- Sampling homework assignment (under Week 6 assignments on BB). Post to BB 24 hours before class.
- Go over the steps for Practice Exercise 1 in Chapter 5; be prepared to do the exercise in class.

Grading due this week
- Review sampling question #2 (regarding your partner’s proposed research) using the grading rubric posted under “Course Documents → Grading Rubrics → Week 6” on Blackboard

WEEK 7: Oct. 7
Topic: Causation, Research Design
Readings, etc. due this week
- ISW Chapter 6
- ISW Web:
- BB:

Assignments due this week
- Paper #2: Two-page Research Proposal and Outline with 5-10 scholarly references. Post to SafeAssignment on BB and give me a hard copy.
- Discussion question #1 from Chapter 6 (review 4 distinct newspaper or magazine stories). Print two of the stories and bring to class. Post all four answers to Blackboard

Grading due this week
- None

WEEK 8: Oct. 14
Topic: Survey Research
Readings, etc. due this week
- ISW Chapter 8
- ISW Web:
- BB:

Assignments due this week
- Meet with Professor to discuss Research Proposal Outlines
• Developing a Research Proposal (Chapter 8):
  o Question 1 (post to Blackboard)
  o Question 2 (in class)
  o Question 3 (after class)

Grading due this week
• None

WEEK 9: Oct. 21
Topic: Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating, Listening
Readings, etc. due this week
• ISW Chapter 9
• ISW Web:
  o Drumm, René, Sharon Pittman, and Shelly Perry. “Women of War: Emotional Needs of
    Ethnic Albanians in Refugee Camps.” Affilia. 16(4 - Winter): 467-487.
• BB:
    Home Advantage: Social Class, and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education. 197-
• A photocopied handout: Documents of Life

Assignments due this week
• Finish up the questionnaire for DRP question #3 (Ch 8) from last week. Post to BB 24 hours
  before class.
• “Observation study”: bring raw (written or typed) field notes to class

Grading due this week
• Review your partner’s questions from DRP #3 in light of the principles you learned in
  Chapter 8. Write 2-3 paragraphs evaluating the questions, format, and other aspects.

WEEK 10: Oct. 28
Topic: Qualitative Data Analysis
Readings, etc. due this week
• ISW Chapter 10
• ISW Web:
  o SKIM THIS: Tsang, A. Ka Tat, Howard Irving, Ramona Alaggia, Shirley B. Y. Chau,
    and Michael Benjamin. 2003. “Negotiating Ethnic Identity in Canada: The Case of the
• BB:
  o READ THIS CAREFULLY: Stryker, Robin. 1996. “Beyond History Versus Theory:
    Strategic Narrative and Sociological Explanation.” Sociological Methods Research.
    24:304-352.

Assignments due this week
• Hyper-Research Exercise 1-2 (Chapter 10)
• Typed “Observation Analysis” with fieldnotes attached. Post to BB 24 hours before class.

Grading due this week
• Review your partner’s “Observation Analysis” using the grading rubric posted under “Course
  Documents⇒Grading Rubrics⇒Week 10” on Blackboard
WEEK 11: Nov. 4

**Topic: Evaluation Research**

*Readings, etc. due this week*

- ISW Chapter 11
- ISW Web:
- BB:

**Assignments due this week**

- Book exercises (Chapter 11):
  - Practice Exercise 3 (Do not post)
- Paper #3 (Post to SafeAssignment on BB and give me a hard copy): First draft of Research Proposal that includes (not necessarily in this order):
  - Answer: What is your research question or problem?
  - Answer: Why is this an important problem?
  - Answer: How are you going to study this problem?
  - Answer: Why do you think your chosen method/s is/are the best one/s for answering your questions?
  - A brief review of the relevant literature

**Grading due this week**

- None

WEEK 12: Nov. 11

**Topic: Comparative Historical Analysis**

*Readings, etc. due this week*

- ISW Chapter 12
- BB:
- Handout:

**Assignments due this week**

- Document analysis exercise. Bring to class.
- Discussion Question #5 (Ch. 12). Write 1 paragraph on similarities, one on differences, one on strengths, and one on weaknesses (4 total paragraphs). Post to BB.
- Developing a Research Proposal Questions 1-2 (Chapter 12). Post answers to Q#1 on BB.

**Grading due this week**

- Review partner’s “Document Analysis” using the grading rubric posted under “Course Documents⇒Grading Rubrics⇒Week 12” on Blackboard
WEEK 13: Nov. 18
Topic: Quantitative Data Analysis
Readings, etc. due this week
- ISW Chapter 14
- ISW Web:
- BB:

Assignments due this week
- Quantitative Exercise (you must write *your own* explanations for the results). Post to BB 24 hours before class.
- Use chapter 15 to help organize your final proposal, especially Exhibits 15.1 & 15.2

Grading due this week
- Review your partner’s answers to the Quantitative Exercise using the grading rubric posted under “Course Documents→Grading Rubrics→Week 13” on Blackboard. Do their explanations make sense and seem to be valid? Be prepared to discuss this during class.

WEEK 14: Nov. 25
Happy Thanksgiving! No class, but please work on your proposals…

WEEK 15: Dec. 3
Topic: Reporting Research
Readings, etc. due this week
- ISW Chapter 15

Assignment due this week
- [TBD]

Grading due this week
- None

FINAL PAPERS DUE THURSDAY, December 9th
- Final draft of Research Proposal that includes:
  - Revised answer: What is your research question or problem?
  - Revised answer: Why is this an important problem?
  - A *brief* review of the relevant literature
  - Expanded answer: How are you going to study this problem?
    - Details of research design and why these methods are appropriate for answering your questions
    - What information/data you will collect
    - What findings you expect (your hypotheses)
  - Appendices re: funding and instrument
- Post a copy to SafeAssignment on Blackboard as well
### Workload

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