COURSE DESCRIPTION

Mindful of current debates social science methodologies, the course takes a practical, “hands-on” approach to research methods. We begin with a consideration of the fundamental contributions of such scholars as Jane Addams, W.E.B. Du Bois, Max Weber, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett. From there, we trace the proliferation of methodologies that have led to the mixed-methods and digital approaches of the present. In the process, we also draw upon examples offered by Emory Sociology graduate students past and present (those marked below with a * by their names). Their contributions should provide you with both a model of scholarship and a source of encouraging inspiration.

The current incarnation of this seminar also builds on how Dr. Irene Browne has taught it in previous semesters. Hence, with the assistance of the instructor, your advisor, and your peers, you will identify a research question that could develop into a viable second year paper. Through staged assignments throughout the semester, you will design a project to answer your research question—setting up the literature review and methodological design. You will submit that detailed proposal by the end of the semester. As a requirement for our class, you also must become certified in human subjects research at Emory by taking the online CITI course by September 14.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A) Attendance

You are strongly encouraged to attend each weekly seminar, especially because we will use class time to integrate the assigned readings and to present additional information not found in the readings.

Of course, given the current pandemic, some students might become sick or will need to go into isolation or quarantine. If you feel ill or fear that you are sick, please understand that I will be flexible about attendance. Thus, do not put yourself at risk for fear of missing a class.

As we navigate this semester together, let us also stay in touch.
B] Office Hours and Appointment

I will be holding “virtual” office hours via Zoom on Mondays from 1:30 to 3:30 pm (Atlanta time – Eastern Standard Time). The Zoom link for office hours is as at the following link:  https://emory.zoom.us/j/94647323595

Please use my Calendly link to sign up for a specific time: https://calendly.com/tdowd-1-office-hours

I will have other meetings times as needed, please email me to arrange those.

C] Seminar Participation and Discussion

Active participation requires adequate preparation. You therefore must read the assigned materials before class.

Such careful preparation will improve the quality of our seminar discussion. Of course, this discussion should be both informed and respectful; moreover, it should be a forum wherein all can raise questions, explore ideas, and express misgivings.

D] Assignments (Thanks to Dr. Irene Browne for inspiring these)

D1) IRB Certification (prerequisite for passing course)

All students are required to take the online CITI exam and become certified in human subjects research by September 14, 2020. Here are the steps:

2. Towards the top of the screen, click onto “Education” tab.
3. Click onto “Courses” on the panel at the left side of the screen.
4. Click onto “CITI training.”
5. Click onto “Log onto CITI.” This will take you to the online CITI training site.
6. Register on the CITI site.
7. Take the Social and Behavioral Focus course.
8. Note that you can take each quiz multiple times if you do not pass.
9. When you have passed the course (all of the Social Science modules), print your CITI certification document and give a copy to me.

Note that if you intend to use the data that you collect this semester for a publication or as part of a larger research project, you must receive approval for the study from the IRB by submitting an IRB protocol. To fulfill the requirements for SOC 501, you only need to complete the CITI certification – not a full IRB protocol.
**D2) Meetings**

You will work on a proposal for a research project of your own during this course. One of the key aspects of this is picking a project topic that is feasible and that offers a contribution. You will pick that project in consultation with your advisor and with me. This means the following:

1. You are required to schedule a meeting with your faculty advisor to discuss the topic of your research project. You should have that meeting before **September 21, 2020**. This step corresponds with **Memo 1**.
2. Your advisor will need to approve (via email) your research question and the methods that you will employ. This step corresponds with **Memo 4**.
3. You will also schedule two meetings with me to discuss your project. The first meeting should be early in the semester (as you formulate your research question) and the later meeting as you move on to setting up the empirical portion of your project. This corresponds with both **Memos 2 and 3**.

**D3) Memos**

You will have 4 memos that move you along on the research proposal. You can see below the dates for when each assignment is distributed and then due. The logic of the assignments are as follows:

1. Identifying a relevant topic
2. Identifying particular research questions
3. Identifying the relevant literature
4. Identifying the methodological approach

**D4) Final Project Proposal**

This will culminate from your efforts in Memos 1 through 4. For graduate students, this proposal should set you up for the 2nd year paper. For undergraduates, this proposal should set you up for an honors thesis or independent study conducted under faculty supervision.

**E) Final Grade**

My starting assumption is that you will earn an “A” in this seminar. If you do the work and contribute to the class, then all is fine. If you fall below expectations, I will let you know, so that you can adjust accordingly. Of course, if you are having difficulties, please contact me. In short, while my feedback will be detailed, my grading will be done in qualitative fashion (e.g., A, A-, B+, B, etc.).

---

**COURSE RESOURCES**

We will be drawing upon four books for the bulk of our readings, books that I will provide for the class. They are as follows:


We will read additional papers, articles or chapter in addition to those books. Those will be posted on our Canvas site for SOC 501.

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester, and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (for additional information, visit the Emory Office of Accessibility Services website; see [http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html](http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html)).

---

**ABOUT THE COURSE READINGS**

The readings for this class do not constitute an exhaustive review of all possible methods. Rather, they are “gateway” readings that introduce you to the importance (and joys!) of sociological methodology. They should give you a grounding for becoming the sociologist you will be. For many of you, that will include enrollment in later courses that go into depth regarding some of the methods encountered in this course – such as qualitative methods, network analysis, or digital sociologies.

The readings should also drive home a key point: “methodology” entails more than things like statistics. Instead, it is a key element in your scholarship – one that involves linking theory to empirics in compelling fashion. In other words, “methodology” is not just a thing, it is also an ongoing activity.

---

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

*(Subject to Revision)*

**August 24: Introductions**

**August 31: Thinking about the Roots of Sociology and Its Methods**


[Why is it important to understand the roots of contemporary sociology and its methodologies? How is knowledge production and reception intertwined with broader patterns of inequality?]

- **Memo #1 Distributed**

**September 7: Thinking about the “Puzzle” and Research Questions**


Swedberg 2014. Chapters 1 and 2.

[How do you identify a relevant topic, as well as research questions? How do you translate initial observations of everyday life into an argument?]

- **Memo #1 Due**

**September 14: Thinking about Categories / Concepts and Their Usages**


Swedberg 2014. Chapters 3 through 5.

Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008. Chapters 2, 3, and 7.

[What are variables? How are they distinct from categories, let alone “social constructions”? How does your usage of them shape your understandings?]

- **IRB Certification Due**
- **Visit from Dr. Rob O’Reilly (Numeric Data Services Leader, Emory Centry for Digital Scholarship)**
**September 21: Thinking about Explanations**


Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008. Chapters 8, 9, & 20.

[In constructing an argument – an explanation – what do you include and what do you leave unaddressed? How do you balance those?]

- Due Date for First Advisor Meeting
- Memo #2 Distributed

**September 28: Writing a Research Proposal**


[How do you take all your ideas and package them coherently? How do you deal with criticism, review, and revisions?]

- Memo #2 Due
- Visit from Dr. Michael Vaughn (Post-Doctoral Fellow; Columbia University)

**October 5: Doing Digital Research**

Salagnik 2018. Chapters 2 and 5.


[How do you take advantage of the proliferation of digital information in your own research? What types of questions and data does that information allow?]

- **Visit From Dr. Ju Hyun Park (Visiting Assistant Professor, Emory Sociology)**

  **October 12: Doing Quantitative Research (e.g., Surveys)**


[How do survey researchers address issues of “representativeness?” What types of claims can you make when drawing upon surveys and other forms of secondary data? What claims can you not make?]

- **Memo #3 Distributed**

  **October 19: Doing Quantitative Research (e.g., “Surveys-Plus”)**


[How can you use survey data and other secondary data to address the “multi-leveled” nature of social phenomena, as well as the interconnections that occur between individuals and groups?]

**October 26: Doing Qualitative Research (e.g., Intensive Interviews)**


[Why is important to talk to people about their “sense-making”? What is the difference between statistical generalization that survey researchers emphasize and the theoretical generalization that qualitative researchers emphasize?]

- **Memo #3 Due**

**November 2: Doing Qualitative Research (e.g., Ethnography)**


[How does attention to “lived” social life allow you to delve deeply into sociological concerns? How does inductive and deductive reasoning play out in ethnography and other forms of qualitative research?]

- Memo #4 Distributed

**November 9: Doing Experimental Research**


Salganik 2018. Chapter 4.

[What are the hallmarks of a good experimental design? How do experiments allow us to speak to issues of causality in a way that some other methods do not?]

**November 16: Doing Content Analysis**


[What is the difference between the “meaning” of media content and its formal elements? How do you approach both of those? How do you get at underlying patterns of media content?]

- Memo #4 Due

**November 23: Being Ethical and Wrapping Up**

RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE DECEMBER 7th