

Sociology 128: Models of Social Science Research

Mon & Wed 10 - 11 AM
Science Center E

Fall 2013

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Course Description:

This course is intended to help you to develop an understanding of and ability to do social science analysis. These goals are pursued through examination of research monographs and articles selected as representative of different styles of social science as well as through three assignments which have you use various methods. The methods you will use include survey research, geographic information systems, ethnography and in depth interviewing. We will also cover experiments, content analysis and demographic methods. While the majority of our readings and examples will come from sociology we will also use examples from economic, education and psychology.

The skills you will learn in this class will be very useful to you in a variety of situations. This class will teach you to read and analyze research findings, to critically evaluate claims of truth about the social world and to think and write logically and clearly. These are lifelong skills that will be useful in a variety of different endeavors. It also should be fun as you will learn by doing actual social science research with a variety of different methods on a number of interesting substantive topics including the transition to adulthood, social networks and health, race relations, immigration, sports and gender, gangs and crime, and urban neighborhoods.

Section:

There will be a required section for this class. More details on sections will be announced in class.

Computers in Class:

The lectures for class are in PowerPoint and will be posted to the class website after class. I cannot post them before class because I am usually finishing them within minutes of coming to class. I know many students use their computers to take notes during class and occasionally to answer questions that come up during lecture. I also know that having a computer connected to the internet tempts most people to check Facebook, email, etc. Some people also seem to find lecture a good time to shop online. Research has shown that even if you think you are absorbing the lecture and learning while you do this, you are not. I find it disconcerting to teach people who are not paying attention, so I would ask you to please refrain from surfing the internet during class.

Required Readings:

Books

1. Duncan Watts, Everything is Obvious Once You Know the Answer: How Common Sense Fails Us. New York: Crown Business, 2011.
2. Sudhir Venkatesh, Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to The Streets. New York: Penguin Press, 2008.
3. Hilary Friedman, Playing to Win: Raising Children in a Competitive Culture. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
4. Mary C. Waters, Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Articles

Other readings include articles and reports available through the course web page.

Course Requirements:

1. Four short written assignments (*each worth 15% of final grade*).
2. Section participation and attendance (*15% of final grade*).
4. A final exam (*25% of final grade*).

Assignments:

There will be four short written assignments (about 6 pages each) throughout the course of the semester. Details for these assignments will be distributed separately and posted on the course website.

Course Policies:

- Paper assignments should always be submitted on the day they are due, in TWO forms:
(1) at the *beginning of class, in hard copy as well as*
(2) **ONLINE** to your TF's online dropbox folder.
- Paper assignments are due on the date indicated. Late papers will receive a lower grade.
- If you are sick or otherwise absent you will need to contact your TF explaining the reason. Please be prepared to provide a doctor's note if requested.

Academic Integrity

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

At least one assignment will be a team project. These assignments will allow collaboration and the grading policies will be clear in the assignment.

Final Exam

The final exam will be a closed book, three hour, in class exam. It will be cumulative and will include short answer identifications, multiple choice questions and an essay.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Week 1: *Introduction to the course. What is social science research?*

September 4

Week 2: *Theoretical questions and the empirical world. The scientific method.*

September 9 and 11

Readings:

- 1) Frank Furstenberg Jr., Sheela Kennedy, Vonnie C. McLoyd, Ruben G. Rumbaut and Richard A. Settersten, Jr. "Between Adolescence and Adulthood: Expectations About The Timing of Adulthood," 2003.
Available at: <http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu/downloads/between.pdf>
- 2) Laura Hamilton and Elizabeth A. Armstrong. "Gendered Sexuality in Young Adulthood: Double Binds and Flawed Options" *Gender and Society* vol. 23 no. 5 pp. 589-616

Week 3: *Measurement. Theories and Hypotheses. Validity and Reliability.*

September 16 and 18

Readings:

- 1) Samuel A. Stouffer. Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties, pp. 13-108, 131-155.

Week 4: *Using the General Social Survey. Establishing Causation.*

September 23 and 25

Readings:

- 1) Duncan Watts, *Everything is Obvious*. Chapters 1,2,4,8,10.

Week 5: *Experiments in the Lab and in the Field*

September 30 and October 2

Readings:

- 1) Adam R. Pearson, John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner. "The Nature of Contemporary Prejudice: Insights From Aversive Racism," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, vol. 3 (2009), pp. 1-25.
- 2) Devah Pager "The Mark of a Criminal Record" *American Journal of Sociology* vol 108 no. 15 March 2003. Pp. 937-975.

Assignment Number 1: Due Wednesday, October 2

Week 6: Survey Research and Sampling

October 7 and 9

Reading:

- 1) Andrew M. Greeley and Michael Hout "American's Increasing Belief in Life After Death" Religious Competition and Acculturation" *American Sociological Review* 1999. vol. 64 (December) pp. 813-835.

Week 7: Survey Research, Social Networks

October 14 NO CLASS COLUMBUS DAY

October 16

Reading:

- 1) Coren L. Apicella, Frank W. Marlowe, James H. Fowler and Nicholas A. Christakis "Social networks and cooperation in hunter gatherers" *Nature* January 26, 2012. vol 481, pp. 497-502.

Also watch the very brief (5 minute) film about this research:

<http://christakis.med.harvard.edu/av/video/hadza.mp4>

Assignment Number 2: Due Wednesday, October 16

Week 8 Ethnography, Geographic Information Systems

October 21 and 23

Reading:

- 1) Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day* Chapters 1-8.

Week 9: Neighborhoods, Exploring Boston

October 28 Film: Eyes on the Prize

October 30 Using Social Explorer

Reading:

- 1) J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground*, selections

Week 10: In Depth Interviewing, Immigration

November 4 and 6

Reading:

- 1) Mary C. Waters *Black Identities*

Assignment Number 3: Due Wednesday November 6

Week 11: Research Ethics, Analysis of Qualitative Interviews

November 11 and 13

Readings:

- 1) Laud Humphreys. "Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Spaces," pp. 85-114 in M. Patricia Golden (ed.), The Research Experience. Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock, 1976.
- 2) Hillary Friedman *Playing to Win*

Week 12: Demography, Biomarkers and Genetic Analysis

November 18 and 20

Reading:

- 1) George M. Slavich and Steven W. Cole "The Emerging Field of Human Social Genomics" *Clinical Psychological Science* XX (X) 1-18, 2013.

Week 13:

November 25 Writing and Research in Sociology

NO CLASS November 27

NO SECTIONS THIS WEEK

Week 14: Comparative Historical Research, Review for Exam

December 2 and 4

Readings:

- 1) Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson "Cross National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket" *American Sociological Review* vol 70, February 2005 pages 82-110.
- 2) Andrei S. Markovits and Steven L. Hellerman, "Offside: Soccer and American Exceptionalism," pp. 356-370 in Karen and Washington, *Sport and Society*.

Assignment Number 4 Due: Monday December 2

Final Exam Saturday December 14, 2013