

Navigating Research Design

Instructor: Gillian Gualtieri

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Class Meetings: Wednesdays 10-12 in Barrows 475

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2

Who should take this class?

This course equips undergraduate students in the sociology department and other social sciences with the skills necessary to develop and design an independent research project. Students will not conduct the research they propose during the semester but will instead grapple with the challenges of the research design process, from the development of the research question to the extended research proposal phase, by encountering instructive texts, published research by other scholars, and their own ideas and research interests. While students interested in conducting an independent research project, like an honors thesis, will especially benefit from the course material, any student who plans to enroll or is simultaneously enrolled in a course that requires a shorter research paper or who plans to encounter the research process at some point in their academic or professional career will learn from this course.

Course Goals:

The primary goal of this course is to make the sometimes-daunting research process accessible to students in an empowering classroom environment. Students will learn the process of developing a research question, identifying and analyzing relevant sources, incorporating theory into project conceptualization, differentiating between and choosing methods to answer questions, writing, and revising the design of a research project. Students will analyze existing scholarship with research design as a critical focus, cultivate and practice practical research skills (library research, identifying alternative explanations, building an analytical argument), and develop their sociological imaginations as they think about the task of knowledge production from their individual standpoints. Students will encounter the various purposes research serves in the contemporary world (while the focus of this course will be academic research, research that speaks to social justice, activism, market research, journalism, and other pursuits will also be discussed and can be proposed for the final research proposal).

The course functions as a tutorial in research design, a place to engage the epistemological, theoretical, abstract, and practical concerns of developing and conducting research in sociology, exposing students to the conventions of the field and providing a place to ask and answer the questions that every scholar in the social sciences must address when they take on the role of researcher.

Assignments:

There are two kinds of assignments for this course: (1) weekly assignments that inform students' participation grade (15% of total grade) and reflect students' preparation for discussion and (2) substantive graded assignments focused on the development of a student's individual research project. Each week, students will be assigned a mix of readings focused on practical research skills or epistemological/theoretical debates in research design and published research across the subfields and methods of sociological work. Each week, students will be expected to diagram/outline the argument and structure of the research design of an empirical article, with a particular focus on that week's orienting question (see orienting questions in class schedule below). Students will be taught and provided examples of this exercise for the first week's empirical article.

Additionally, students will complete seven assignments that further their personal research project's development throughout the course. They are:

1. 1 page paper answering: "What are you interested in studying? What purpose do you want your work to serve?"
 - a. DUE WEEK 2
 - b. 5% of final grade
2. 1-2 page paper answering: "What is your research question (or questions)? Why is your paper of sociological interest? If the purpose of your research has changed, how?"
 - a. DUE WEEK 5
 - b. 5% of final grade
3. 2 page paper addressing: "What theory or theories offer insight into your project? What do they suggest might be the answer to your research question? What are your theoretically-informed hypotheses or hunches? Pick 1-2 hypotheses/hunches"
 - a. DUE WEEK 7
 - b. 10% of final grade
4. 4-6 page literature review identifying relevant existing research and student's intervention. Incorporates previous assignment and must address alternative explanations or approaches to answering the question at hand.
 - a. DUE WEEK 10
 - b. 15% of final grade
5. 3-5 page paper addressing: "What method(s) best answer your research question? What is your site or case? How will you approach this site? Justify your choices and explain your logic."
 - a. DUE WEEK 12
 - b. 15% of final grade
6. 5-minute presentation of research proposal to class
 - a. PRESENTED TO CLASS in WEEK 14 and RRR WEEK (WEEK 15)
 - b. 15% of final grade
7. Final Research Proposal (15-20 pages)
 - a. DUE WEEK 16
 - b. 20% of final grade

Late Assignments: I must have all papers by the deadline posted on bcourses. For every day the paper is late, your grade goes down by one letter grade. If it's an "A" paper, but it is one day late, the paper earns a "B" unless you have arranged something with me prior to the deadline. If you miss class and it is an unexcused absence, you are still expected to get the paper to me by the deadline. If you do not do this, you will lose points. If your absence is excused, you may turn in the paper to me when you return to class.

Academic Honesty: I expect students to follow the standards of academic integrity as set forth by the university. As a general rule, you should attribute all words and ideas written by published sources and websites. Plagiarism—the act of reproducing in your written work someone else's thoughts, writing or research without explicit acknowledgement or citation—is strictly forbidden, and I will follow the University's guidelines with regard to these issues. For an overview of plagiarism and the proper way to format citations, check out this site: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/citations.html>. Additional information regarding academic dishonesty and how to avoid it can be found in Berkeley's Code of Student Conduct: <http://campuslife.berkeley.edu/code-of-conduct>.

Special Accommodations: If you have special learning needs, please see me as soon as possible. Special needs are defined broadly—this can include a learning disability, athletic participation, work responsibilities, parenthood, high levels of anxiety, or a difficulty stomaching the way I lead discussion. While you are not required to inform me about personal matters, if you are struggling with the course it is crucial that you let me know as soon as possible so I can help you succeed!

Office Hours: Come to office hours! I will have 90 minutes of office hours each week, but I am very open to meeting at other times as you need. I will hold additional hours before bigger written assignments are due. It is better that you come earlier in the semester than later. If you are shy, feel free to come in small groups. If you are unavailable during my office hours and would like to talk with me in person, please send me an email with ample notice (the night before the assignment is due is not a good idea, so try for 3-4 days before) and I will try to schedule another appointment for us to meet. If need be, we may also schedule a Skype or phone conversation.

Email Policy: If you have any questions or concerns about the course, my availability to meet, or special accommodations concerns, please feel free to email me (gualtierig@berkeley.edu). Please be conscientious when you email me. If you have questions about assignments or content covered in class, please check the bcourses page and this syllabus to see if your question can be answered in these locations. Before emailing me, please contact your classmates first (there is space at the bottom of this document for you to take down the name and contact information of at least three classmates; this will be your "network" for the class) to see if they can help you with the information (perhaps I answered the question in class). If you cannot answer your question in these ways, then please feel free to email me or come to Office Hours, and I will be happy to help! Emails about questions that can be answered by reviewing the course syllabi or website and/or by contacting classmates will be answered after emails about other concerns, so please try to use your resources wisely, as I may not be available via email until discussion section!

Computers: Laptops are allowed in section for academic purposes only. If you are checking email, Facebook, etc. I reserve the right to ban laptops for an individual student or the whole class (excluding those students with special accommodations).

Your “Network” This is the space for you to collect and store the contact info of your class network—your classmates who you can email for help and questions throughout the course.

	Classmate 1	Classmate 2	Classmate 3
Name			
Email			
Phone			

Class Schedule:

The asterisk denotes the article to be diagrammed/outlined for discussion.

1/20 WEEK ONE: WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Syllabus overview, introductions, discussion of purpose and structure of research process

1/27 WEEK TWO: WHAT IS RESEARCH IN SOCIOLOGY?

Discuss various purposes of research, what makes a topic sociologically interesting, inductive/deductive approaches, macro/micro, quantitative/qualitative, exploratory/explanatory/descriptive

Adler, Emily Stier, and Roger Clark. 2010. *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing. “The Uses and Purposes of Social Research.” P. 10-16.

Bloemraad, Irene. 2012. “What the Textbooks Don’t Tell You: Moving from a Research Puzzle to Published Findings.” Pp. 502-20 in *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration* edited by Carlos Vargas-Silva. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

*Bloemraad, I. 2004. Who Claims Dual Citizenship? The Limits of Postnationalism, the Possibilities of Transnationalism, and the Persistence of Traditionalism. *International Migration Review* 38(2): 389-426.

Writing assignment 1 due.

2/3 WEEK THREE: WHAT ARE THE METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH?

What are the major methods of sociological research (interviews, ethnography, quantitative methods, comparative historical/archival, content analysis, experiments)?

Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton. Chapter 2. P. 41-79.

*Mora, Cristina G. 2014. "Cross-Field Effects and Ethnic Classification: The Institutionalization of Hispanic Panethnicity, 1965 to 1990." *American Sociological Review* 79(2): 183-210.

2/10 WEEK FOUR: TURNING A TOPIC INTO A QUESTION

How do I formulate a research question? What makes a research question feasible? How do I focus my topical interest? What if my question changes?

Adler, Emily Stier, and Roger Clark. 2010. *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing. "Developing a Researchable Question." P. 88-96.

*Rivera, Lauren. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review*. 77: 999-1022.

2/17 WEEK FIVE: THEORY AND HYPOTHESES/HUNCHES

What is the relationship between theory and research questions? How does theory inform how we approach our work? What is the difference between inductive and deductive approaches?

Becker, Howard S. 1953. "Becoming a Marijuana User." *American Journal of Sociology* 59(3): 235-42.

*Correll, Shelley J, Stephen Benard, and In Paik. 2007. "Getting a job: Is there a motherhood penalty?" *American Journal of Sociology* 112: 1297-1338.

Writing assignment 2 due.

2/24 WEEK SIX: WORKING WITHIN AND ACROSS THEORETICAL TRADITIONS/POLITICAL PROJECTS

What does it mean to research within/across theoretical traditions or schools of thought? What is the relationship between theoretical academic schools and activism? How does research fit in?

Burawoy, Michael. 2005. "2004 ASA Presidential Address: For Public Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 70(1): 4-28.

Cho, Sumi, Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. 2013. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs* 38: 785-810.

*No empirical piece this week.

3/2 WEEK SEVEN: LIBRARY RESEARCH

How do I search for sources strategically online and in the library? What is the difference between primary and secondary sources? How do I use databases, books, Internet sources, and other media?

Abbott, Andrew. 2014. *Digital Paper: A Manual for Research and Writing With Library and*

Internet Materials. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3. P. 36-63.

*A review article relevant to your research (stop by office hours to confirm that the article you pick is relevant and qualifies as a “review” article)

OPTIONAL: Fox, Cybelle. 2010. “Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and Public and Private Social Welfare Spending in American Cities, 1929.” *American Journal of Sociology* 116(2):453-502.

Writing assignment 3 due.

3/9 WEEK EIGHT: LITERATURE REVIEW

How do I think creatively about the literature? How can I avoid getting lost in the literature? How can I use the literature to my advantage?

Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 8, “Terrorized by the literature.” P. 135-49.

* Hamilton, Laura T. 2014. “The Revised MRS: Gender Complementarity at College.” *Gender & Society* 28: 236-264.

3/16 WEEK NINE: RETURN TO THEORY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DATA AND THEORY

How does theory inform my data? What happens when my data doesn't match my theory? What about alternative explanations? How do I address the skeptics?

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. “Rules for Constructing Causal Theories.” P. 99-114.

Rivera, Lauren. 2015. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. “Appendix B: Methodological Appendix.” P. 290-305.

*Schilt, Kristen. 2006. “Just One of the Guys?: How Transmen Make Gender Visible in the Workplace.” *Gender & Society*. 20 (4): 465-490.

3/23 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

3/30 WEEK TEN: FINDING THE METHOD(S) THAT FIT YOUR QUESTION

How do I decide which method to use? Which methods are right for which questions? What are mixed methods? Why use them?

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. “Descriptive Inference.” P. 46-63.

*Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108: 937-75.

4/6 WEEK ELEVEN: SAMPLING, SITE SELECTION, AND CASE SELECTION
How do I decide whom to study? How do I pick a case? What makes a good case? How many cases or subjects do I need?

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. P. 139-49.

*Hoang, Kimberly. 2014. "Competing Technologies of Embodiment: Pan-Asian Modernity and Third World Dependency in Vietnam's Contemporary Sex Industry," *Gender and Society* 28(4) 513-536.

Literature Review due.

4/13 WEEK TWELVE: MEASUREMENT AND VALIDITY
How do I know what we are observing is what we think we're observing? How is this related to the literature? What if I think my concept is different from the literature's dominant point of view?

Becker, Howard. 1998. "Concepts" in *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Pp 109-45.

*Turco, Catherine. 2010. "The Cultural Foundations of Tokenism: Evidence from the Leveraged Buyout Industry." *American Sociological Review* 75(6): 894-913.

Writing assignment 5 due.

4/20 WEEK THIRTEEN: WRITING CLEARLY AND THE ACADEMIC PAPER
What makes a good academic paper? How do I write a clean and clear argument? How does revision work? How do I respond to feedback?

Rosenwasser, David, and Jill Stephen. 2014. *Writing Analytically* Seventh Edition. Wadsworth Publishing. "The Rules of Argument." P. 96-109.

Appendix B: Checklist and Editing Tips from *Writing for Sociology Second Edition* Compiled by Jennifer Jones, Sarah Quinn, and Hana Brown.

*Your partner's paper

4/27 WEEK FOURTEEN: THE RESEARCHER AND THE RESEARCH
Is there space for my voice in my research? How does my positionality and subjectivity inform my research? Am I biased? How do I address bias in my work? What is reflexivity? How do I present myself and my research?

Moore, Cindy. "Finding the Voices of Others Without Losing Your Own." *The Subject is Research*. Ed. Wendy Bishop and Pavel Zemliansky. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, Boynton/Cook, 2001. 119-128

Waters, Mary C. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. "Methodological Appendix." P. 347-71.

Hoang, Kimberly. 2015. *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*. Berkeley: University of California Press. "Appendix." P. 181-195.

Start in-class presentations (5 students).

5/4 WEEK FIFTEEN: PRESENTATIONS

Finish in-class presentations (15 students).

Final research proposal due TUESDAY MAY 10, 2016 AT 4 PM.