

**Sociology 750 – Research Design and Practice in Sociology
Spring 2012**

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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. 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 nor 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 we have covered a set of materials. These are intended to have you put the skills we have been discussing to work in a way that complements your own research interests. **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. I grade exercises on a C (not passing) to A+ scale.

An unusual but essential part of the course work is evaluation of "exemplars." You are also 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 4 pm MONDAY before the seminar in which that article will be discussed. They may never exceed 750 words.** 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** – I will typically ask for a leader in the morning before class – a leader both summarizes key points of evaluation as briefly as possible and points to the controversial/difficult issues most worth discussing in class). 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 article (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 on which you do not do well 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 some exercises or evaluations. Don't fret about not doing well on "everything" you attempt. Any "no pass" grade, however, should be cause for concern, and 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. Any “no pass” evaluation does not count to your minimum of 3 passes. A marginal pass (B) does still count as a pass, but can be replaced later by another better grade on an additional evaluation. Don’t hesitate to come and talk to me about exemplars, but also try to pose your questions on L@UW where everyone can benefit.

The **final project** (MAXIMUM length 3000 words, DUE 5 pm May 11 in electronic form) is a more substantial exercise in which you are asked to consider a research project of your own (thesis, dissertation or other) in terms of the methodological issues explored in the course. 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 on the usual six point (A+, A, AB, B, BC, C/Fail) graduate 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 my count of postings (though I do count them). **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 longer comments that you were prepared to make but regrettably unable to deliver in person is an appropriate way to “make up” such 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, leading discussion of an exemplar, 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. Exemplar evaluations go into the “discussion” section as ATTACHMENTS, but exercises go into a dropbox (where only I can read them). After the class discussion, you may choose (or not) to post them to the “discussion” section for your peers to read. 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 will print them and return them to you with written comments). All attachments must be in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) 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).

For evaluations, you should assume I have read the article you are evaluating, and should provide a very brief – one paragraph or 150 word – 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 **constructively** but they cannot be comprehensive; the goal is to suggest what the authors could do better to answer their own question more credibly. Each evaluation should **explicitly prioritize** critiques and should draw a **conclusion** about the overall trustworthiness of the contribution that the article claims. Evaluations need to be clear and grammatical but they are not intended to be your most polished prose.

Because this is a big class, you are encouraged to POST most weeks (not as a part of the evaluation of the exemplar) those issues you would most 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 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 assigned articles and the guidelines they present. Such reflections cumulatively contribute to your participation grade; I rely on postings to know what concerns you have, and I 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**. This is a minimum that I would expect most of you to surpass easily.

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.

BUT because I **encourage all students to form study groups and work together** on thinking through the assignments, let me clarify the application of this policy: (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 choice and be clearly 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 common points, and failing to report ideas that you tested and rejected in favor of presenting as if 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 or fail to learn from others, but make sure that your presentation of your ideas fairly -- identifying your own thinking, including saying explicitly what you have learned and from whom. Such learning is commendable, and is not plagiarism, if it CLEARLY identified as such.

Readings

All of the primary readings, all of the exemplars, and many of the readings on the “background” list should be on Learn@UW. Regular readings, but not exemplars, should also be available on electronic reserve through the Social Science Library. There is no printed coursepack, as this would be prohibitively expensive. Use your own judgment about what you read on line, download and save, or print out. Printing things out before you have a firm plan for reading them off-line wastes department resources and kills trees. I encourage you to download and save the articles electronically as resources for the future.

There are supplemental lists on the website intended to be long term resources for your growth and development as a methodologically astute social scientist. These are not something that even the most ambitious student should attempt to sample extensively in this semester. The long list, sorted by topic, might provide readings that could provide you with the ‘aha moment’ that you are missing in the main reading if you are having trouble with a method or issue. This list also includes a section on debates around methods. There is another 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 expect that you would already know it or a similar reading in most but not all cases. When 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 – January 25: Introduction to the class, some ideas about philosophy of science and the skills of constructive critique

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.

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

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. (if you have time, you might consider also the Freese, King and Abbott positions in the supplemental reading list)

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

Handout (on web): 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, the contested definitions of “replication,” reading and writing reviews for scientific journals and recognizing the rhetoric of persuasion in articles, how to evaluate books and articles/scientific contributions as more or less credible, using the authors’ own goals as the benchmark.

WEEK 2 – February 1: Paradigms as interlocked theory-method: “scientific” credibility and models of working – whom are you trying to convince and how? How does your epistemology make itself visible in your rhetoric? Reading “method” in single articles.

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 feminist scholars*).

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: Prepare answers about one “favorite” empirical article in your own sub-area (see website for questions about it). If this is a post-2003 article, you are going to be following up and finding an article it extends/ challenges/ replicates; if pre-2003, you will later find one published **since 2006** that extends/challenges/replicates it.

Background: the structure of an academic article and the rhetoric(s) of sociology

Wicked Anomie’s blog on article structure and/or White, Lynn 2005. “Writes of Passage” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(4): 791-798 and/or Matthews, Sarah 2005 “Crafting Qualitative Research Articles” *JMF*, 67 (4): 799-808.

WEEK 3 – February 8: In the beginning was the word: Starting from a “literature” to make a question answerable. Methods as structures of knowledge.

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. (*long but skim for what makes books -and their authors- different from articles*)

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

Exemplar:

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.*)

Homework 2: Be SURE you can use Web of Knowledge (and Google Scholar) 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*). Compare Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar counts of citations for one **major empirical contribution in your sub-area published in or before 2003** (aka your “paradigm” study) that has been **well-cited** since then.

Exercise 1: Identifying replications and extensions of previous work.

Find a recent (post 2006) empirical replication that confirms or challenges at least one of the findings of the classic/paradigmatic (pre2003) study you have chosen. The classic/well-cited study should be EMPIRICAL (have a basis in data and a method of evaluating data, not necessarily a quantitative one),

and the “replication” should be addressing at least one of the claimed empirical findings of the classic. The point of this exercise for you is to (1) Demonstrate clearly that the earlier study offered an influential and credible claim or claims for the second to address; (2) Compare the two studies closely; discuss what the “replication”/extension actually preserves of the original design and what it changes (whether for better or worse, in your view). (3) 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, but “better.” How do they interpret their results (as an extension, modification, limitation, or ...)? (4) While the authors will claim it is “better,” DECIDE whether it really is an “improvement” in your view (do not EVER just parrot back the authors’ own claims, evaluate them). Why might you interpret their results differently than they do (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)? If you accept their claims, explain why you do as well as point out what another, more skeptical, researcher might question. **(Due by 5 pm Sunday February 12)**

WEEK 4 – February 15: What an answer is depends on the question: Significance is more than statistical

Primary:

- Cohen, Jacob. 1994. "The earth is round ($p < .05$)." *American Psychologist* 49:997-1003. *(be SURE you understand his point. If you don't get it, you can try the similar argument in Gill also on L@UW)*
- Leahey, Erin 2005. “Alphas and asterisks: the development of statistical testing standards in sociology.” *Social Forces* 84(1): 1-24.
- Freedman, David A. 1991. “Statistical models and shoe leather.” *Sociological Methodology* 21: 291-313. *(and look at some suggestions for the ‘shoe leather surrogates’ of new technologies and some more quantitative ways of exploring data – EDA and unemployment data on L@UW)*

Also consider this debate that crosses qualitative and quantitative lines for what we “know”:

- 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 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)*

Exemplar:

WEEK 5 – February 22 – 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.
- 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)
- 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.
- AND On-line random number generator (make sure you can access and use one).

Background: Marker, David 2008 “Estimating Iraqi War deaths by household survey” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72(2): 345-363. *(a good review of what makes a sample survey representative or not)*

Ronald Czajka and Johnny Blair, 1996. *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures*. (Ch 17-end) Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge (*readable, basic overview*).

Homework: Sampling Problem Set (on Learn@UW)

Exemplar:

WEEK 6 –February 29: 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. (*This is HARD but very important – read for what questions it raises for you and your work!*)

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

Ragin, Charles 200, *Fuzzy Set Social Science* (Univ of Chicago Press) Intro and Chapter one.

Homework: Measurement of commonly used concepts (see website); See also examples of visual measurement strategies online (slavery, unemployment, etc.)

Background: If you are not much prepared on measurement in general, the basic ideas are very effectively and briefly laid out in Katzer, Cook and Crouch, *Evaluating Information*, (McGraw Hill), in a sometimes overly cute but not-too-simplistic way (a review of these basics may help you read Judd and McClelland's more sophisticated analysis).

Exemplar: Frank et al. latinos?

WEEK 7 – March 7: 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 (2nd edition)*. Blackwell. Ch 1 "What is discourse analysis" pp. 1-31 (*the whole book expands on this framework with excellent examples*)

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 qualitative analysis program (Atlas.ti or NVivo at SSCC) or browse the quantitative, computer assisted content analysis coding programs (on L@UW).

Exemplar:

Exercise 2 – operationalization & measurement issues

This is a SMALL venture into the messy "real world" of data collection. Your measures must be "unobtrusive" (don't do interviews or experiments) 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.

Stick primarily to ONE important and tricky coding issue which should take some work to be as refined, clarified, reliable and valid as possible -- and use some OTHER measure(s) to test this one for its validity, reliability and practical usability. Developing an index, improving a scale (and demonstrating what is now better about it), or testing logical constraints on measures is ideal, but other possibilities include working out a coding scheme for as-yet uncoded qualitative data or further validating measures already used by constructing (additional) tests of consistency/reliability and validity/substantive meaning.

In order to make the measure meaningful, you need to be able to state at least one reasonable hypothesis in which it would figure, and explain what the conceptualization is that the measure is attempting to operationalize. You need at least a small pre-test's worth of data to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your measure. Don't make this a big project, do connect the measurement issue to some real work you are doing if at all possible, but focus on MEASUREMENT: explaining what your concept is, and what in your operationalization makes your measure maximally VALID for this concept, and how you are taking steps to make the measure as RELIABLE as possible (**Due 5 pm, Sunday March 11**).

WEEK 8 – March 14: 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 for all*)

Burawoy, Michael. 2009. *The Extended Case Method*. (University of California Press). Prologue and Introduction. (*origins and applications of one now-classic approach*)

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 (*a competing approach*)

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 somewhat different approach*)

Thatcher, David "The Normative Case Study" *AJS*, 2006 111(6): 1631-76. (*a very different approach to what case studies can provide*).

Homework: Make sure you have already picked 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 KIND of an ethnography it IS (and isn't).

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*.

There are also two official reports on "standards" for writing qualitative research put out by NSF and NIH (in supplemental list and on website for your future reference), though critiqued eloquently by Becker.

Exemplar:

Exercise 3: Book reviewing: Methodological debates and concerns in ethnographic data, which is more often published in book than article form. 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 5 pm Sunday March 25*).

WEEK 9 – March 21 -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 (2011) 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: Barbara Rose Johnston, "Social responsibility and the anthropological citizen" *Current Anthropology* (51) Supp2, S235-S247.

WEEK 10 – March 28 - 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; see also King's website for additional examples including WLS*)
- Lee, Raymond 2004. "Recording Technologies and the Interview in Sociology, 1920–2000." *Sociology*, 38 (5): 869-889. (*see also "new technologies" section in "supplemental readings"*)

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

Homework: Constructive critique of question wordings (see L@UW for wordings to critique)

Exemplar: Singer et al. "the effect of question framing and response options on the relationship between racial attitudes and beliefs about genes" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 3, Fall 2010, pp. 460–476

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 11 – April 11: Macrosociological analysis and studying change, archival data

Primary:

- Bennett, Andrew and Colin Elman 2006 “Recent developments in qualitative political science” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9:455–76. (Very useful review including fuzzy set analyses)
- 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.
- 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:

WEEK 12 – April 18: 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)
- Cohen, Jacob. 1992. "A power primer." *Psychological Bulletin* 112:155-159.(essential ideas for deciding how many cases you need)

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:

WEEK 13 – April 25: 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:

Exercise 4: study design – Assume you are a new faculty advisor helping UW undergraduates do a one-semester study of student racial attitudes and their views of African American politicians, including but not limited to Obama. This does NOT mean real role playing so much as simply designing the outlines of a real project (interview, survey, quasi or true experimental) that you would recommend as feasible as a part of just one course and with no real budget. Assume they need you to form the specific hypothesis and detailed strategy they can carry out to test it (including consideration of at least one plausible alternative hypothesis). Provide a justification of what population you advise them to represent (and why), what sampling frame and sampling strategy you recommend and the overall methodological design (based on what you want to know, resource constraints, your preferences for qualitative or quantitative design, etc.). The "scenario" only needs to be plausible in providing you a way to discuss what researchers can learn with little time or money if they make good (efficient) decisions about focus and process. Discuss what limits to generalizability are imposed by the design you recommend and how a well-designed student study (like the one you are proposing) can still create reliable knowledge about something important. **(due by 5 pm Sunday, May 1).**

WEEK 14 –May 2- Meta-analysis, triangulation, combining & comparing methods and studies to draw stronger conclusions

Primary:

Two readings on meta-analysis:

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*)

Two readings on triangulation:

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*)

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...") and Janet Hyde's meta-analysis of meta-analyses "Gender Similarities" (on L@UW)

Exemplar:

Week 15 – May 9: 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 we have been addressing into improving the approach you can take or have taken to a specific project's design or analysis? What are the "missing pieces" of methodological discussion that would be most helpful to fill in for you now? What are

the “tricky” spots in your methods that you see (or see differently) now?

Final Project due Friday May 13 (deadline 5 pm).

This final project is an outline of the methodological issues raised by your dissertation, MA thesis or other major project, as refracted through the lens of this course. My expectation is that you will be able to demonstrate that you have learned something that is USEFUL to you in this course -- although what you find most useful and worth discussing will surely vary! Your choices might include a critical reflection on your choice of method and how it relates to (improves on?) paradigmatic/classic closely related studies. Or how you have re-thought some practical issues of measurement or coding or sampling. Focus ideally on the thorniest methodological questions (measurement, ethics, sample, inference or other) and discuss not only why they are difficult to resolve satisfactorily but also on the plans you now have for addressing them. Have these plans changed because of some issues addressed in this course (why or why not?) What other issues, considerations, problems present themselves to you as tangled up in your choice of methods (gender and generalization? politics of access? interdisciplinarity of audience? etc). I do expect references back to the assigned readings (these need no full bibliographic info, just in-text citation). **Maximum length 3000 words.** Put in dropbox before deadline and (if you wish) post your final project also on discussion board (for your fellow students to see and ideally also discuss) once the deadline has passed.

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