

Sociology 750 – Freese – Spring 2005

Exercise #6: Book Review

Weight: 3 points

Due date and time: April 7, 5pm (note policy on the syllabus about late exercises).

Overview: The exercise is intended to permit you to explore methodological considerations related to your own research interests by engagement of the research reported in a book.

Task: Select a book that is based on some social scientific research project(s). Read it. Write a short essay that focuses especially on your reactions regarding how the research was report in the book was conducted and whether, consequently, the research compels the conclusions that the book reports.

Unlike your weekly reaction papers, the book review—even while being focused especially on the methods—should be structured *like a book review*. In other words, it should be a short essay as opposed to, for example, a series of numbered points.

My hope is that you will select a book that you believe will be useful to read in terms of your own ongoing research career. Regarding questions along the lines of (1) *Can I use a book I've already read?* (2) *Can I use a book that I'm reading for another class?* (3) *Can I use a book just because it seems easy to read but has no connection methodologically or substantively to anything that I am interested in and so will probably make doing this exercise a complete waste of my time?*, the answer is “yes” —the point of the exercise is to provide a mandatory opportunity for methodological reflection, with the reasons for your selecting the book you do left to your discretion. The only restriction, beyond the work having to be based on some social scientific research project(s), is that **you have to select a book that no one else in class is using for their review** (Q: Why? A: I don't want to read multiple reviews of the same book).

Calling 'dibs' on a book: When you know what book you would like to do your review of, e-mail me (jfreese@ssc.wisc.edu) and, if you are the first to do so, you have the right to write your review on that book. You can change your book later, as long as you e-mail me to call dibs on that. You cannot have dibs on more than one book at once, however.

Hey, can I just copy-and-paste from other people's reviews on the web and turn them in as if it was my own intellectual labor?: No. Indeed, doing this would be academic misconduct and will be dealt with severely. While one might think no graduate student

would actually need to be explicitly warned about this, experience has indicated otherwise. You can make reference to other people's commentary on the book, of course, as long as you follow the practices of appropriate citation. See the paragraph on the syllabus regarding academic misconduct if you have any questions.

Length: Not counting the heading and any references you may include, your book review should be no longer than 1100 words. (Note that this is 300 words longer than you would be allowed for a regular review in *Contemporary Sociology*.)

Turning it in: Before the due date/time, you should e-mail your essay to me at jfreese@ssc.wisc.edu with the subject line "Completed Exercise 6." The document should be submitted as an attached *.pdf* file that includes your surname in the filename. Your name should be on the top of the first page, along with a complete reference (any regular format) to the book that you are reviewing.