Research Methods
Spring 2018
Mondays 2-4:40 (CLJ 025)

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Office Hours: By Appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goals of this course are (1) to examine the steps required for framing an empirical research question guided by theory, (2) to introduce students to the range of research methodologies used by social scientists and (3) to examine the strengths and limitations of each. It is designed for Ph.D. students who wish to undertake research publishable in scholarly social-science journals. Statistics will not be emphasized; however, familiarity with elementary statistical concepts (e.g., mean, variance, and correlation), and particularly sampling, will prove useful.

This course will introduce the techniques of inductive methodologies, including qualitative interviewing and participant observation, and deductive methodologies, including survey research and experimental and quasi-experimental design. At the conclusion of the course, students will have a sound overview of research methodology as well as the tools to pursue specific methods in greater depth.

The readings and the class assignment are designed to give students the opportunity to “get their feet wet” through hands-on learning of research design. While it will be necessary for there to be some lectures, as much time as possible will be devoted to classroom discussion in keeping with a seminar style. All students are expected to participate actively in class discussion to ensure that the seminar style is effectively achieved; all students should expect to be “called on” or asked to contribute their informed considerations. A portion of each person’s grade will be determined based on contributions to class discussion.
The course requirements are designed to achieve the objectives outlined above. Leading discussion and completing supplemental readings will comprise 10% of your grade in this course; the remaining 90% will be devoted to your final paper and assignments. Please note that you cannot receive an A in this course merely by completing an excellent final paper.

- **COMPLETION OF COURSE READINGS (prior to class)**

- **DISCUSSION ORGANIZATION AND PARTICIPATION (10% of your grade)**

  - **LEADING DISCUSSION:** Each student will be required to share responsibility for leading the discussion of at least two seminar sessions (and perhaps more, depending on the number of students enrolled in the course). Students will lead discussion with 1-2 other students and contribute to the seminar style of the class. Discussion leading includes:

    - completing additional recommended readings and presenting them to the class (you should also prepare a short summary for your colleagues to reference). Your synopsis should detail the theory, data, methods, and main argument/findings of the article and provide a summary evaluation as to its quality. You should concentrate on the relationship between the recommended reading and the core readings – remember that this is a methods course and so we are less concerned with the substantive arguments of articles and more concerned about how they develop an argument, whether the argument is well-supported with evidence, and the strengths and weaknesses of the method. A good summary evaluates the quality of the article – a terrible summary offers only a nuts and bolts description without critical commentary. Discussion leader summaries and questions should be emailed to all class members, copying Sara Wakefield and Lauren Wilson, by 5pm on the Friday before class.

    - preparing at least 4 questions for discussion, based on both the core and supplemental readings for the week. Good questions will 1) reference earlier course content (e.g., compare the current week’s method to those that have come before) and 2) be impossible to answer with a mere ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ You ought to prepare answers to these questions and prepare to act as instructor (in partnership with me) for the week that you lead the class.
- **ASSIGNMENTS/SEMINAR PROJECT PAPER (90% of your grade):** Research paper and assignments. The project should contribute to your advancement in your PhD program by furthering your own research agenda. I will allow wide variation in the topics of your seminar projects. **DO NOT WASTE YOUR TIME ON A PROJECT COMPLETED ONLY FOR THIS COURSE.**

Through the mechanisms described above and in-class, each student is responsible for active participation in the seminar discussion. I will begin each session with a brief set-up of the topic at hand but the responsibility for a successful seminar lies equally with the students. This includes completing the core readings and summaries provided by your colleagues, coming to class ready to engage them, and preparing responses to the discussion leader(s) questions.

**GRADING AND ACADEMIC HONESTY**

In keeping with professional standards, you are expected to do all of your own writing and cite sources appropriately. Failure to meet this professional standard will result in a failing (F) grade in the course.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

*Articles:*
- Articles in peer-reviewed journals can be obtained directly from on-line databases. Articles are also available by week via Dropbox.
- Some articles or readings may be modified as the course progresses where, for example, a participant suggests a reading that is particularly germane to the topic of discussion.

*Books:*
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Due Dates/Important Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>Course Introduction and Requirements</td>
<td>Assignment 1 DUE 1/27</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>Elements of Causal Inference and Experiments (Tyler &amp; Whitney)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>Internal and External Validity (Popy &amp; Sarah)</td>
<td>Assignment 2 DUE 2/2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Quasi-Experimental Design I</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>Research Designs Development Meetings with Professor</td>
<td>NO Seminar Class Meeting – Sign up for Individual Meetings</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>Quasi-Experimental Design II (Kate &amp; Christine)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>Ethnography &amp; Intensive Interviewing</td>
<td>NOTE: CLASS TIME SHIFTS 10-12:30 CLJ 572 Assignment 3 DUE 3/2</td>
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<td>3/12</td>
<td>NO CLASS SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>NO CLASS SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3/19</td>
<td>Qualitative and Inductive Designs (Ashley &amp; Genna)</td>
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<td>3/26</td>
<td>Aaron Chalfin (UPenn) Talk</td>
<td>Assignment 4 DUE 3/26 NOTE: CLASS TIME SHIFTS 11-12:30 CLJ 572</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>4/2</td>
<td>Survey Research I (Popy &amp; Tyler)</td>
<td>NOTE: CLASS TIME SHIFTS 10-12:40 CLJ 572</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>4/9</td>
<td>Survey Research II (Ashley &amp; Kate)</td>
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<td>Mixed Methods (Sarah &amp; Christine)</td>
<td>Assignment 5 DUE 4/16</td>
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<td>Other Methods of Social Observation (Whitney &amp; Genna)</td>
<td>Assignment 6 DUE 4/23</td>
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<td>Critique, Translation, &amp; Ethics</td>
<td>Assignment 7 DUE 4/30</td>
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***Final Paper Revision DUE May 9th***
Course Reading Assignments

Week 1
Introduction to Social Research and Course Overview

- Bookkeeping, grading, and discussion leader assignments
- Background on orientations to theory and method

Recommended Background Reading:
Babbie, Earl. The Practice of Social Research. [Basic Undergraduate Text]
Week 2
Elements of Causal Inference and Experiments

- Causal inference and mechanisms
- Introduction to experiments (in theory)
- Issues with replication

Discussion Leaders: Tyler and Whitney

Required Readings:
- Textbook: Shadish et al. Chapter 1-3

Discussion Leader Readings (Tyler & Whitney):

Recommended Readings:

• Kuhn selections (Chapter 3 (the nature of normal science), 6 (anomalies), and 11 (the invisibility of scientific revolutions).

Week 3
Internal and External Validity
Experiments (in practice)

Discussion Leaders: Popy and Sarah

Required Readings:
- Textbook: Shadish et al. Chapters 8-10.

Discussion Leader Readings (Popy and Sarah):

Recommended Readings:
Week 4  
Varieties of Quasi-Experimental Designs I

- Bridges between experiments and quasi-experiments
- Lack of randomization, pre-tests, or shifts in the treatment of interest

Required Readings:

Week 5

NO CLASS SESSION
SIGN UP FOR INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH PROFESSOR TO DEVELOP RESEARCH DESIGNS

Required Readings:
- Bushway and Apel “Instrumental Variables in Criminology and Criminal Justice,”
- Apel and Sweeten “Propensity Score Matching in Criminology and Criminal Justice,”

Recommended Readings:
- Bollen “Instrumental Variable Models in Sociology and the Social Sciences” [All Available on Drobbox]
Week 6
Varieties of Quasi-Experimental Design II

- More on quasi-experiments
- Statistical strategies in observational research (Regression Discontinuity, Time Series, Propensity Score Matching, Fixed/Random Effects)

Discussion Leaders: Kate and Christine

Required Readings:


Discussion Leaders (Kate and Christine):


Other Suggested Readings:

• **Instrumental Variable Models:**

• **Propensity Score Models:**

• **Regression Discontinuity**

• **Fixed Effects, Differences in Differences, Panel Designs**
Week 7
Ethnography and Interviewing

NOTE: CLASS TIME SHIFTS
CLJ 572
10-12:30
Megan Comfort Guest Speaker

Required Readings:


  
  o Briefly skim study description here:
    
    https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/36639?q=mfs-ip#bibcite


Week 8
NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
BEGIN SURVEY DESIGN ASSIGNMENT
Week 9:  
Inductive and Qualitative Design

- Introduction to qualitative and inductive designs
- Historical development of ethnography
- Issues of reliability and inference in qualitative research

Discussion Leaders: Ashley and Genna

Required Readings:

- Geertz, Clifford. 2001 “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”
- Miller, Jody. 2014. Inter-Rate Reliability and Qualitative Research. [Dropbox]

Discussion Leader Readings (Ashley and Genna):

- Choose an ethnography (with a methodological appendix!)

Recommended Readings:

Week 10

GUEST SPEAKER
AARON CHALFIN
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

CLJ 572
11-12:30

Required Readings:

- Additional readings TBD when receive his abstract/paper for his talk
Week 11

******NOTE CLASS TIME SHIFT******
******CLJ 572 10-12:40******

Survey Research I:
- Introduction to survey research
- Survey instruments, recruitment, and difficult topics/populations

Discussion Leaders: Popy and Tyler

Required Readings:


Discussion Leader Readings (Popy and Tyler):

Required Readings:


Discussion Leader Readings (Ashley and Kate):


Week 13
Mixed-Methods and The Feasibility of Integration

- Examples of mixed-methods research
- Difficulties with evaluation of multiple methods

Discussion Leaders: Sarah and Christine

Required Readings:
- Textbook: Shadish et al. Chapter 14. [Skim]

Discussion Leader Readings (Sarah and Christine):

Recommended readings:
Week 14
[TENTATIVE]
Other Examples of Social Observation

Discussion Leaders: Whitney and Genna

Required Readings:


Discussion Leader Readings (Whitney and Genna):

Week 15
[WARNING: Tentative, This often changes]
Critique, Translation, and Ethics

Required Readings:

- Diederik Stapel’s Audacious Academic Fraud – NY Times. [Dropbox]

Choose Your Debate:

- Biosocial Criminology in Criminology (plus Jonathon M. Kaplan “An handy guide to heritability”)
- American Journal of Sociology Debate on Urban Ethnography


Recommended Readings:


- The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.
  

  

- Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics.
  

  