In this graduate-level research methods course we will revisit and extend many of the issues with which you have dealt in conducting your MA and possibly other research. Further, some issues that bear on your (and everyone’s) research will be brought into our discussion. As we revisit, extend, and broaden the material of methods, you will be enabled to use your research experience to interrogate the conflicting ideas of the course, and use various conflicting ideas of the course to interrogate (and enhance the quality of) your research.

Of course, some teach methods purely as a set of practices, implying that their reasoning is either irrelevant, irretrievable, or so obvious as to obviate articulation. This course sees methods as practices ground in contestable logics. It sees methods as applied epistemology. Consequently, in this class we work to become conscious of the deeper epistemological concerns that bear on the moments of problem formulation, data collection, and analysis.

**Course Aim**
Gaining such consciousness and bringing it to bear in one’s research is a life-long task. The course cannot convey a set of “answers” as the final word on many of these issues because the dialogue on these issues continues such that there is no final word to give. Thus, our aim is to deepen your engagement with these issues, to provide an opportunity for deepened reflection on your work and the myriad complexities embedded within.

**Attendance**
Attendance at every class is expected. Please do not make travel plans that interfere with class.

**Assignments and Grading**
There are three types of writing assignments: 1) weekly explorations, 2) a reflective analysis, and, 3) a final paper.

**Weekly Explorations**
Each week students are to write a 1,000-word (max) exploration of one or more aspects of the assigned readings of the week. The pdf file should be e-mailed to socpost@gmail.com by 5:00pm the Monday before class. **Place the label “Grad Methods” in the subject field.**
Reflective Analysis (due November 23)
All work is finite, so all work has limitations. For this short (1500 words or less) paper you are asked to take your own work, select two opposed positions covered in the course, and assess your own work critically from the perspective of those two positions. What strengths and what weaknesses does each perspective see in your work? What could you do (or could you have done) to address at least one of the most serious of those weaknesses, if anything? Could you have done so without weakening your work? This assignment is graded P/NP. A passing Reflective Analysis will be submitted on time, and will critique some important aspects of one’s own work with integrity. The weekly exploration is canceled for November 23.

Final Paper (due December 14)
I will say more about the paper in class but, briefly, there are 2 options for the final paper.

Critical Literature Review – A critical analysis of empirical works (a small set of published papers or 2 books) using material from the course. Whatever else the analysis does, it will critically address the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the works.
Theoretical Exegesis – A theoretical analysis of two ostensibly conflicting positions on a substantive or methodological issue using material from the course. Whatever else the analysis does, it will critically address the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the positions.

Two documents, graded P/NP, related to your final project are due earlier in the term: 1) A 500-word statement of the question/problem that identifies which option you plan to use as well as some focal works and issues for your paper (due October 19) and 2) an outline of the paper (due November 2). A passing question/problem statement will be submitted on time and will convey what the question or problem is and will convey at least one reason why the question or problem is or should be of interest to others. A passing paper outline will be submitted on time and will use the outline form to display the planned (i.e., draft) narrative structure of the paper. Because of these written assignments, the weekly explorations for October 19 and November 2 are canceled.

Grading
Although the final paper is given the greatest weight, the final course grade is also based on attendance, class participation, weekly submitted explorations, and other written work. The grading formula is as follows (on the 4.0 scale):

\[
\text{Course grade} = \text{Paper grade} - (\text{the number of missed classes} \times .1) - (\text{the number of classes without meaningful participation} \times .1) - (\text{the number of unsubmitted or late weekly explorations} \times .1) - (\text{an NP Problem/Question statement} \times .1) - (\text{an NP final paper outline} \times .1) - (\text{an NP Reflective Analysis} \times .5)
\]

Specifically, the paper will be graded on the 4.0 scale. The course grade will be the paper grade
reduced by .1 grade points for every missed class, every class without meaningful verbal participation, every late or unsubmitted weekly exploration, an NP on the Problem/Question statement, and an NP on the final paper outline, as well as .5 grade points for an NP on the Reflective Analysis.

The grading formula reflects the expectation that every member of the class will attend every class, speak meaningfully in class every class without prompting from others, and successfully complete all of the weekly explorations. Late work will not be accepted. No Incompletes will be given in this course (except as allowed by University rules).

**Reading Materials**

Most of the reading is available via JSTOR or Google Scholar. Articles on JSTOR are noted in the syllabus with a bold JSTOR after the citation; those available via Google Scholar have a bold Google Scholar after the citation. A few articles are available at one or more other sites if accessed from a machine on the UC-Berkeley network; in such cases either a correct web-site for the journal will appear in bold after the citation, or the word OskiCat will appear in bold after the citation, signifying that you need to call up the journal on OskiCat, find the issue and then obtain the paper. Other article-length material can be found in a Reader you may purchase at Copy Central, 2411 Telegraph Avenue; such work is labeled Reader below.

In addition, the following nine books are required. Those marked OskiCat were available (the last time I checked) in electronic form through the library web-site. The others can be ordered at local bookstores, through amazon.com, some other online vendor, or directly from the publisher:


READING and ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

PART I – PROBLEM FORMULATION

>> Week 1, Aug 31 – Introduction: Basics and Purposes of Research


>> Week 2, Sep 7 – Casing


>> Week 3, Sep 14 – The Logic of Inquiry


>> Week 4, Sep 21 – Falsification


>> Week 5, Sep 28 – The Structure of Scientific Knowledge Production


>> Week 6, Oct 5 – Programmes and Anarchy


>> Week 7, Oct 12 – Contemporary Considerations of The Nature of The (Social) World and (Social) Analysis


>> Week 8, Oct 19 – Additional Logics of Causality


**Problem/Question Statement Due October 19 (P/NP)**

>> Week 9, Oct 26 – The Graphical Causal Model


**Part II – Data Collection**

>> Week 10, Nov 2 – Design of Experiments and Causal Analysis


**Outline Due November 2 (P/NP)**

>> Week 11, Nov 9 – Complexities of Measurement


Scholar


>> Week 12, Nov 16 – Models


PART III – ANALYSIS

>> Week 13, Nov 23 – Bayesianism/Frequentism


**Reflective Paper Due November 23 (P/NP)**

>>Week 14, Nov 30 – Bringing it All Together In a Way: Evaluating Proposed or Used Analytic/Methodological Innovations

**Sequence Analysis**


**Qualitative Comparative Analysis**


Fiss, Peer C., Axel Marx, and Benoit Rihoux. 2014. "Comment: Getting QCA Right." *Sociological Methodology* 44: 95-100. [Google Scholar](http://www.bmj.com/content/313/7057/603.full)


Seawright, Jason. 2014. "Comment: Limited Diversity and the Unreliability of QCA." *Sociological Methodology* 44: 118-121. [Google Scholar](http://www.bmj.com/content/313/7057/603.full)

Reception of ‘Qualitative Comparative Analysis in Critical Perspective’. "Sociological Methodology 44: 127-158. Google Scholar

Propensity Scores


>> Week 15, Dec 7 – Missing Information


Lewis, Jonathan. 1991. “When We Generalize or Compare, Can We Always Rely on the ‘Absence of Evidence’?: A Sociologist Looks at Historical Methodology.” The History Teacher 24: 455-469. JSTOR

>> Week 16, Dec 14 – Presentations and Exploratory Reflections

No Reading: Student Presentations of Research Papers

Final Paper Due December 14