Who should take this course, and why?

This seminar is designed to guide you through the process of developing, carrying out, and writing up an empirical study that can be submitted to a sociology journal, either a general journal like *AJS*, *ASR*, or *Social Forces* or a specialty journal like *Administrative Science Quarterly, Demography, Gender and Society*, or *Social Networks*. Although it is intended primarily for students working on their MA papers (sociology) or second-year papers (Haas), I also welcome students working on another research project, such as a portion of their dissertation they want to turn into a journal article. Students may find this course helpful at several stages in the research process: when they are preparing to gather data, when they have finished gathering data and are conducting analysis, when they have finished analysis and are starting to write up results, and when they are revising a paper.

This course is **not an applied statistics course**. For advice on statistics, you should talk with the people who taught you statistics. You could also take advantage of a wonderful web resource at UCLA, [http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/](http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/), which has guides for most common statistical software packages – SPSS, SAS, and Stata – and other less well-known ones. Here’s the link to a great online statistics textbook: [http://www.statsoft.com/Textbook](http://www.statsoft.com/Textbook). See also the list of resources at the end of this syllabus.

Everyone who attends the seminar must enroll. I will not accept auditors because this course requires active participation. To really improve your paper or dissertation, you have to complete all the exercises and apply what you’ve learned from them. You won’t benefit much from simply reading the assignments and participating in class discussions because the knowledge transmitted in this course is tacit – it cannot be fully articulated. In other words, you can learn how to do sociological research only by doing it, not reading or talking about it.

Assignments and evaluation

You will complete a series of almost-weekly writing assignments that are designed to help you improve your research by taking you through the process of writing (and rewriting) a journal article. The table on pages 3-4 describes these assignments in detail, along with maximum lengths and due dates. The page limits given assume double-spaced text, 12-point fonts, and 1” margins; the page limits do **not** include tables, figures, or reference lists. Most assignments are due at the start of class. Bring 2 hard copies of each assignment to class – 1 to keep (if you need to refer to it during class) and 1 to give to me.
These writing assignments are designed to be cumulative. They are also designed to be flexible; you are very likely to redraft them as your research project evolves.

The final paper for the course – the culmination of your efforts over the semester – is due one week after the end of our class meetings – on **Friday, 8 May by 5pm**. Email the paper to me at haveman@berkeley.edu as a Word document or Adobe pdf file. Label the file firstname_lastname.ext; e.g., heather_haveman.docx or heather_haveman.pdf. I will return your papers with comments.

Assignments 1-11 will be graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis; assignment 12 (the final paper) will be graded on a letter scale. Your grade for the course will be based on my overall assessment of assignments 1-11 (25%), the quality (more than sheer quantity) of your participation in class discussions (10%), and your final paper (65%).

**Readings**

Three books constitute the intellectual backbone of this course:


The first and second books will guide you toward the development (actually, it’s more often re-development) of your research questions and research design. The third book is a classic on writing style that we will read together to solidify our good writing habits and eradicate some of our bad writing habits.

You should seriously consider purchasing one of these books as references:


I recommend the first book for those of you who do mostly qualitative research and the second for those of you who do mostly quantitative research.

We will also read several articles and chapters from other books that provide important advice on how to design and write research papers, as well as some examples of excellent research. Links to all articles through the UC Berkeley library are given below. All book chapters are on the bcourses page.
Class 1: 20 January: Introduction
♦ What are the goals of the course? How will we achieve them?
♦ Who should (and who should not) take the course?

Class 2: 28 January: Writing: Style and Substance
♦ How can you make your writing better (style, grammar) and more persuasive (rhetoric)?
♦ What makes the excerpts from Susan Shapiro’s article and Pete Younkin’s dissertation good writing?

Readings

Examples of good writing:

Younkin, Peter A. 2010. Extract from A Healthy Business: The Evolution of the US Market for Prescription Drugs. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, UC Berkeley, Department of Sociology. (I have given you just the abstract and the first 8 pages of the introduction.)

Optional: Bring in an example of good academic writing that you’ve actually enjoyed.

Class 3: 4 February: Describing Social Phenomena
♦ What is social science research? What does science do?
♦ What is a (good) social-scientific theory?
♦ What are you interested in explaining – what is your dependent variable?
♦ What is the phenomenon you are studying a case of? To what larger, more general class of phenomena does it belong?
♦ Why is it interesting … to someone other than you?

Readings


Davis, Murray S. 1971. That’s interesting! Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 1 (2): 309-344. (http://pos.sagepub.com/content/1/2.toc)

Examples of describing and justifying cases (read only the introductions):


Due: Assignment 1: Describe what you’re studying (3 pp)

Class 4: 11 February: The Structure of Journal Articles
♦ What is the structure of a typical (empirical) journal article?

Readings
Data to induce your theory of journal article structure: skim these articles:


Due: Assignment 2: Based on these papers and others you’ve read, outline a “typical” empirical paper (1 p)
**Class 5: 18 February: Writing: Style and Substance (Redux)**

♦ How can you make your writing better (style, grammar) and more persuasive (rhetoric)?

**Readings**


**Due: Assignment 3: Revision of Assignment 1: Describe what you’re studying (3 pp)**

**Class 6: 25 February: Causation (I)**

♦ How do we know X causes Y?
♦ How do we know causation doesn’t run the other way – that X is not caused by Y?
♦ How do we know some other variable, Z, doesn’t cause both X and Y – that any association we observe between X and Y isn’t spurious?

**Readings**


Stinchcombe, Arthur L. *Constructing Social Theories* (hereafter, CST), chapter 1, “Introduction,” and chapter 2, “The logic of scientific inference.”


**Due: Assignment 4: Outline your paper (2 pp)**

**Class 7: 4 March: Causation (II)**

♦ How do we know X causes Y?
♦ How do we know causation doesn’t run the other way – that X is not caused by Y?
♦ How do we know Z doesn’t cause both X and Y – that any association we observe between X and Y is spurious?

**Readings**


**Due: Nothing this week (Breathe!!)**

**Class 8: 11 March: Reviewing the Literature**

♦ How do you find out what sociologists (and scholars in nearby disciplines) know about a phenomenon?
♦ How do you join a scholarly conversation? How do you claim to be contributing to the literature on the phenomenon you are studying?
♦ What should you cite?

**Readings**


**Due: Assignment 5: Literature review: We do we already know about what causes your DV? (6 pp)**

**Class 9: 18 March: Thwarting the Skeptics**

♦ Why might your argument be wrong? What else might explain the DV or any observed relationship between the IV and the DV?
♦ How can/should you discount these alternative explanations?

**Readings**


*Example of a paper that received a skeptical response after it was published:*

The debate: Skim the abstracts and introductions to each article, then read Claude’s blog post for a perspective on why this is not just another boring, academic, ivory-tower hair-splitting matter.


Due: Assignment 6: Offer three different/competing explanations for your DV (6 pp)

*********************************************************
****   Spring break 23-27 March    ****
*********************************************************

Class 10: 1 April: Gathering Data: Sampling
♦ What should be your unit(s) of analysis?
♦ How should you select unit(s) to observe – from what universe should you sample?
♦ How can you test for cause-and-effect relationships?
♦ How do you know whether your theories are true or false?

Readings

Reread the Walton chapter on making a case for what you observe (class 3).

Due: Assignment 7: Describe your sampling plan (3 pp)
Class 11: 8 April: Gathering Data: Measurement
♦ How do you know your measures of theoretical constructs are valid?
♦ How do you know your measures of theoretical constructs are reliable?

Readings


Due: Assignment 8: Describe how you (will) gather data and measure key constructs (6 pp)

Class 12: 15 April: Presenting Data
♦ How can/should you describe/show your data in pictures?
♦ How can/should you show your data in numbers?
♦ What should go into a table of statistical results?
♦ How can/should you “build” tables across statistical models?

Readings

Due: Assignment 9: Describe how you (will) analyze your data (4 pp)

Class 13: 22 April: Reformulating Research Questions
♦ What can you do if the data you’ve set out to gather are impossible to find, or if you cannot analyze the data you’ve already gathered in the way you planned?
♦ What can you do if you find different data than you originally expected to find?
♦ What can you do if you don’t find the results you predicted?

Readings
Due: Assignment 10: There are 2 options, depending on where you are in the research process:

1) If you have data, discuss your (preliminary) results (6 pp + up to 4 tables, figures, or charts – whatever you deem necessary)

2) If you don’t have data, prepare a contingency plan – what you would do if the data don’t pan out (6 pp)

Class 14: 29 April: Handling Feedback & Getting Your Work Published

- Whom should you ask for comments on papers? At what stage? How many people should you ask? How many times can you reasonably ask any one person?
- How does the journal review process work?
- How should you respond to those $%^&#@!!! reviewers?

Readings

Reviewer forms for *ASR* and *AJS*. (Note that these journals don’t have forms like this anymore because they have shifted to an online submission and review process, rather than mail and email. But these forms still reflect the interests and goals of these journals’ editors.)


*Empirical example of feedback on a paper:* King, Marissa D., and Heather A. Haveman. 2008. Antislavery in America: The press, the pulpit, and the rise of anti-slavery societies. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53 (3): 492-528. (http://www.jstor.org/stable/27749276) (Re-read the paper, then read the 2 sets of reviews and our response to the first round of reviews. The 2 sets of reviews from ASQ and our letters to the editor and reviewers are on bcourses.)

Due: Assignment 11: Revised outline of your paper (2 pp)

FINAL PAPER due 8 May by 5pm sharp.

As with assignment 11, what you write depends on where you are in the research process:

1) If you have data, hand in a complete draft paper, including at least preliminary results (30pp + tables + up to 4 tables, figures, or charts)

2) If you don’t have data, hand in the front end of a paper – up to and including your proposed research methods (20 pp)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due Date (Class #)</th>
<th>Max Length (# Pages)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1) Describe your DV</strong></td>
<td>4 Feb (class 3)</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Describe what you’re studying: your dependent variable (DV).</td>
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<td>♦ Use no jargon unless it’s absolutely inescapable. Define all terms.</td>
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<td>♦ Explain which sociologists would be interested in the phenomenon you want to study and why it would interest them.</td>
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<td>♦ <strong>Hint:</strong> To do this, you have to know who they are (which subgroup(s) within sociology) and what they do and don’t know from previous research.</td>
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<td><strong>2) Outline the TYPICAL article</strong></td>
<td>11 Feb (class 4)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Outline a typical empirical journal article – for each major section, give the title and a 1-2 sentence description (or a short list of bullet points) of its contents.</td>
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<td>♦ Skim the articles listed on page 6 of the syllabus (class 4). Induce from these articles the structure of a typical empirical journal article.</td>
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<td>♦ <strong>Hint:</strong> For each paper, read the introduction fully, read the first paragraph in each section, and skim the rest. List the main sections in each paper. Note what’s in each section – its purpose. Figure out how the sections are linked logically – why one comes before another.</td>
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<td><strong>3) Describe your DV (redux)</strong></td>
<td>18 Feb (class 5)</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Describe what you’re studying: your DV. (Revised version, incorporating comments from H2 and the class on the first version.)</td>
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<td><strong>4) Outline YOUR paper</strong></td>
<td>25 Feb (class 6)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>♦ Provide a title for each major section and a short list of bullet points for key contents topics within each major section.</td>
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<td><strong>5) Review the literature</strong></td>
<td>11 Mar (class 8)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>♦ Tell us what we know and don’t know about your DV – what is generally accepted, what remains controversial.</td>
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<td>♦ <strong>Be careful and thoughtful</strong> about citations. Cite only what you yourself have read. (You may have to read more for this assignment than you’d read in a 280 or some other substantive course.) Follow citations back to the first work on the topic. Cite only work that is theoretically and methodologically sound, which requires critically evaluating the literature.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6) Offer 3 different explanations for your DV</strong></td>
<td>18 Mar (class 9)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>♦ The 3 explanations can involve either 3 different independent variables (IVs) or 3 different predictions about 1 IV. Tell us why each IV causes the DV.</td>
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<td>♦ Attach a boxes-and-arrows diagram of your theory, including all 3 rival explanations, similar to the one in the Hagan and Rymond-Richmond article. (This is easier to do by hand or in PowerPoint than in Word.)</td>
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<td><strong>7) Describe your sample</strong></td>
<td>1 Apr (class 10)</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Describe your research site and the actors you are studying.</td>
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<td>♦ Explain your unit of observation and analysis: individual, dyad/network tie, organization, residential community, industry, geographic region, nation-state, multi-nation region, or world system.</td>
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<td>♦ Define the universe/population from which you are sampling from and to which you want to generalize.</td>
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<td>♦ Tell me how you will sample – random, stratified, convenience, snowball, ...</td>
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<td>Description</td>
<td>Due</td>
<td>Length</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8)</strong> Describe how you will gather data</td>
<td>8 Apr (class 11)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Describe data sources and measures of all DVs and IVs.</td>
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<td>♦ For qualitative analysis, explain how you control for or dismiss the 2 alternative explanations by design.</td>
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<td>♦ For quantitative analysis, explain how you measure your control variable(s) – the variables that you use to thwart the skeptics, the variables that are central to the 2 alternative explanations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9)</strong> Describe how you will analyze your data</td>
<td>15 Apr (class 12)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>♦ The goal is to fairly test the 3 explanations – to pit them against each other – by revealing the mechanisms underlying each explanation, or by obviating 2 of them by design.</td>
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<td>♦ Explain how you analyze these data to see if your theory, rather than 1 of the 2 alternative theories, is supported.</td>
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<td><strong>10)</strong> Discuss the results of your (preliminary) data analysis</td>
<td>22 Apr (class 13)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>♦ There are 2 alternatives, depending on whether or not you have data:</td>
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<td>♦ <strong>If you have gathered data:</strong> (1) If you are testing competing or complementary explanations, explain how well or to what extent each of the 3 alternative explanations is supported in your data. (2) If you are obviating 2 alternative explanations, explain how well or to what extent the remaining explanation is supported in your data. (3) Provide tables and/or figures, plus paragraphs describing your results.</td>
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<td>♦ <strong>If you don’t have data:</strong> Work out a contingency plan that you can follow if you can’t gain access to the data source (field site, interview subjects, archives, existing survey, etc.) or if when you do gain access to the data, they are very different from what you expected.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>11)</strong> Outline YOUR article (redux)</td>
<td>29 Apr (class 14)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Provide a title for each major section and a short list of bullet points for key contents topics within each major section.</td>
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<td>♦ This should be a greatly revised version of assignment 5, incorporating comments from H2 and the class on the first version, comments on subsequent assignments, new ideas that have developed through your reading for and writing of those assignments, and your preliminary results.</td>
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<td><strong>12)</strong> Final paper for course</td>
<td>8 May (5pm)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ There are 2 alternatives, depending on whether or not you have data:</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ <strong>If you have not yet gathered data</strong> (or have gathered data but have not yet analyzed them), submit the front end of an empirical paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ <strong>If you have gathered data</strong> and done at least some preliminary analysis, submit a complete empirical paper.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Writing: Style and Syntax (highlighted = most highly recommended overall)


Turabian, Kate L. 2010. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th Ed.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ($10)


Research Design  (highlighted = most highly recommended overall)


**Getting Work Done** *(highlighted = most highly recommended overall)*


**Research Methods, Qualitative and Quantitative** *(very incomplete)*


This entertaining book discusses how social scientists use statistics as a method for presenting arguments. His MAGIC criteria are a good basis for evaluating the impact of a piece of research.


*The* primer on how and why to do inductive, qualitative, ethnographic research.


Useful for making literature reviews more systematic and for learning how to do formal meta-analyses.
How Book Publishing Works


A lovely ethnography of how two scholarly book publishers handle manuscripts, both those that are solicited by editors from known authors, and those that come “over the transom.”

Web Resources (very incomplete – I welcome your suggestions)

Finding your way into the literature

**UCB Library Find E-Journals.** To find articles online. This gives results that are broader than jstor in that it includes the most recent issues of the journals in jstor, as well as many journals that are not in jstor. [http://ucelinks.cdlib.org:8888/sfx_ucb/a-z/default](http://ucelinks.cdlib.org:8888/sfx_ucb/a-z/default)

**UC Library Web of Science.** Use this online database to follow citation patterns to a particular book or article forward in time, to see what other studies have cited something cited in what you are reading. Also use it to see the quality of journals, as measured by journal impact factors. [www.webofscience.com](http://www.webofscience.com)

**Annual Review of Sociology.** A great place to start when you want critical summaries of what we know and don’t know about a topic. Some good musings on methods, too. Also insights into related social-science fields. [http://www.annualreviews.org/](http://www.annualreviews.org/)

Help with writing

**ASA Style Guide – summary.** [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/01/)

**Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition online**

Table of Contents: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html)

Citation Guide: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)


**Social Science Research Center – proposal writing.** [http://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/7A9CB4F4-815F-DE11-BD80-001CC477EC70/](http://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/7A9CB4F4-815F-DE11-BD80-001CC477EC70/)

Career advice

Becoming a successful academic: Tips for grad students and junior faculty – time management, writing discipline, mentoring, teaching, etc.  [http://successfulacademic.com/](http://successfulacademic.com/)

Surviving grad school & beyond: Rojas, Fabio. 2011. *Grad Skool Rulz: Everything You Need to Know About Academia from Admissions to Tenure.*  [http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/93455](http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/93455); the cost is only $3.00.

Statistics advice

UCLA stats help website: This has guides for most common statistical software packages (SPSS, SAS, and Stata) and some other less well-known ones. It also has links to many useful online help sites.  [http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/](http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/)

Princeton stats help website: Great links to sources of data as well as advice on statistics and on data-analysis programs (SPSS, SAS, Stata, R).  [http://dss.princeton.edu/online_help/online_help.htm](http://dss.princeton.edu/online_help/online_help.htm)

What statistical analysis to do:  [http://bama.ua.edu/~jleeper/627/choosestat.html](http://bama.ua.edu/~jleeper/627/choosestat.html)


Ways to waste time thoughtfully


Essential grumpiness: The disgruntled sociologist blog. When general humour about graduate school and higher education fails, you can always laugh about sociology…  [http://thedisgruntledsociologist.wordpress.com/](http://thedisgruntledsociologist.wordpress.com/) (TDS has stopped posting, but what he/she said in the past still has great value.)

Non-essential (?) grammar jokes: These may be necessary when you’re grading undergraduate papers.  [http://www.mcsweeneyes.net/articles/seven-bar-jokes-involving-grammar-and-punctuation](http://www.mcsweeneyes.net/articles/seven-bar-jokes-involving-grammar-and-punctuation)