

SENIOR HONORS THESIS SEMINAR
Sociology H190A
Fall 2017
Tuesday 12-2 pm
204 Dwinelle Hall

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466 Barrows Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-5pm
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Course Description

The senior honors thesis seminar gives students an opportunity to experience firsthand what it means to do sociological research. Over the next nine months, you will formulate a research problem, design a research strategy, collect evidence, and write up your findings and analysis. The first semester focuses primarily on the preparation and implementation of a research proposal. During the second semester, we will emphasize data collection and analysis. The culmination of the seminar will be a scholarly study (35-50 double-spaced pages, including notes and bibliography) that contributes to our sociological knowledge.

A thesis project can seem daunting—especially at the inception. To help you build your research skills, the seminar is organized around a series of smaller tasks and projects that build on each other. There are deadlines for each of these tasks and it is *very* important for you to meet these deadlines.

Course readings will be posted in the b-course website for this class in the Readings module. The modules in the website include other important material including writing and citation guides and samples of prior students' work. You will receive an in-progress (IP) grade for the successful completion of your work this semester. A final letter grade for the nine units of the senior honors thesis class will be awarded at the end of the spring semester.

Schedule of Classes

Part I (Weeks 1-4): Selecting a Topic

Week 1: August 29

Meet in 402 Barrows Hall

Introduction to class, classmates, and potential thesis topics

Assigned reading:

1) Howard Becker, "Freshman English for Graduate Students" and "One Right Way" from *Writing for Social Scientists*" (posted on b-course)

Joint Session:

Week 2: September 5

Discussion: How to develop a research question out of a research interest

Assigned reading:

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, (from “Research and Writing” section in Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Research*) Overview and chs. 1-2

Week 3: September 12

Submit Assignment #1: Preliminary Proposal (3-4 pages)

Discussion: How to use existing research to inform your own research project

Required reading:

1) Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, chs. 3-4

Assignment for those doing human subjects research:

Register for eProtocol at the Committee for Human Subjects (CPHS) website:

(<http://cphs.berkeley.edu/>). Follow the instructions for the “Student Investigators Guide” and begin the CITI preliminary training requirement. It takes between 2 – 4 hours to complete this training course (it gives you an overview of how to protect human subjects used in research). Even if you decide not to submit a CPHS application, we recommend that you complete the CITI course.

Week 4: September 19

Meeting with Jim Ronningen in 350C Moffitt to learn about tools and techniques for library research. Attendance required!

Jim Ronningen is the librarian assigned as liaison to the Sociology Department. He is willing to meet individually with students. You can set up an appointment by emailing Jim directly at jronning@library.berkeley.edu

Post library browsing assignment: Before meeting with Jim, use OskiCat to record the call number of a book on your topic (try to find a book in either Moffitt or Main library). After the library session, go to the library stack to find your book. While there, browse through the books located in this section of the library.

Part II (Weeks 5-7): The Literature Review

Week 5: September 26

Discussion: What is a literature review? Why must there be a literature review?

Assigned Reading: Kristin Luker, “Reviewing the Literature” in *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences*

Week 6: October 3

Joint Session in 402 Barrows Hall.

CPHS staff will discuss how to meet CPHS requirements to protect the confidentiality and welfare of research subjects. CPHS will then meet with subgroups of students to discuss individual applications.

Note: For those of you who plan on submitting your research to CPHS for review, please note that the approval process takes about eight weeks, possibly longer for full board review. We recommend that you design your research to meet the standards for expedited review (to be explained in class). Full board reviews of CPHS applications are held the first Friday of every month except for January. We recommend that students who need full-board (rather than expedited or exempt) CPHS approval meet the November 3 deadline for review in December.

Submit Assignment #2: Revised Preliminary Proposal (3-4 pages) due with an annotated bibliography of your most significant sources to date (5-10 sources)

Week 7: October 10

Discussion: How to go about the task of preparing a literature review

For students doing research with living human subjects, submit a copy of the CITI completion report to instructor.

Reminder: Paper proposal for Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Mar 28-31) in Long Beach, California due October 15 (check web site to confirm due date). Go to <http://www.pacificsoc.org> for information, online membership application, and instructions for undergraduates to submit research proposals. In the past, the department has provided some financial support for students who have been invited to present their work at the PSA annual meeting.

Part III (Weeks 8-9): Methodology

Week 8: October 17

Joint session in 402 Barrows: Interview methods with Edwin Lin

Assigned reading: Kristin Luker, "Field (and other) Methods" in *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences*

Week 9: October 24

Joint session in 402 Barrows: Other research methods

Submit Assignment #3: First draft of your literature review due (4-6 pages)

Part IV (Weeks 10-15): The Thesis Prospectus

CPHS applicants: submit all materials to CPHS by or before November 3

Week 10: October 31

Discussion: Trouble shooting – the challenges of launching your research

Week 11: November 7

Joint session in 402 Barrows: 4 students will give 20-minute oral presentation of final prospectus

Week 12: November 14

Submit Assignment #4: Preliminary methodological proposal due (2-3 pages)

Joint session in 402 Barrows: 4 students will give 20-minute oral presentation of final prospectus

Week 13: November 21

Joint session in 402 Barrows: 4 students will give 20-minute oral presentation of final prospectus

Week 14: November 28

Joint session in 402 Barrows: 4 students will give 20-minute oral presentation of final prospectus

Week 15: December 5 (RRR Week)

TBA

Submit Assignment #5: Final Prospectus due (15-20 pages to be submitted electronically—no hard copy required) on December 12

Schedule of Written Assignments

Assignment #1: Due Tuesday September 12 Preliminary Proposal (3-4 pages)

The goal of this assignment is to help you clarify your ideas and to provide you with an opportunity to confront the decisions you will need to make in your research. If you are torn between various paths, just describe the pros and cons of each direction. For example, perhaps your research interest generates two different questions, and you have not yet decided which to pursue. Discuss both. The process of writing this proposal should move you forward toward making your decisions. Feel free to discuss your research interests with not only your senior thesis instructor, but also with other professors and/or graduate students who share your area of interest.

Your proposal should include all of the following:

Statement of your research question

Phrase your question in 25 words or less. The important thing is to make an attempt at moving from an “area of research” or a “topic” to a research question, a statement of a specific puzzle to be solved or question to be answered by your research.

Why is it worth knowing?

Explain why your research question is important and what theoretical implications it might have.

Literature

What are the first two things you think you should read? Why? If you have already done some reading, discuss briefly how your ideas fit in with what you have read so far. What different sociological literatures might be relevant to your project?

Hunches/Hypotheses

What argument would you love to be able to make? Thinking about this can be a useful way of getting your agenda out into the open.

Strategy of Investigation

What kind of evidence are you going to try to gather? Try and be specific here, even if your ideas are hypothetical at this stage. If you want to do fieldwork, name a specific site, and describe the ways you might get access. If you are thinking about interviews, discuss how many people and whom you might interview, as well as the types of questions you might ask. If you are going to do text-based research, say something about where you think you can find what you will need, what kind of sources you expect to examine, and the type of analysis you might use.

Include at least three bibliographical sources you have consulted.

Assignment #2 Due Tuesday October 3
Revised Preliminary Proposal with Annotated Bibliography (4-7 pages)

An annotated bibliography includes a full citation of the source, a brief statement (several sentences or short paragraphs) summarizing the content of the work, and if possible, the author's main line of argument. If you have thoughts about the relevance of this research to your own project, write a short description of this relevance at the end of your summary.

You should have 5-10 sources (or more). While internet posts or news items may be relevant to your research, your annotated bibliography should primarily include scholarly articles and/or books.

Assignment #3 Due Tuesday October 24
Preliminary Literature Review (4-6 pages)

A literature review includes an overview of key arguments and sources that pertain to your topic. Focus primarily on scholarly work that relates to the empirical core of your topic. Some students may also include consideration of studies that shed light on the sociological implications of the proposed study. For example, if you are interested in why the anti-abortion movement has been more successful in some states than in others, your

literature review might include both general works on social movements and more specific works on anti-abortion groups.

To write a literature review, it is absolutely essential to know the key books and articles that have been written on your subject. A lit review summarizes key works, often clustering them in some way around common modes of argumentation or themes.

This is a time when you should be using library and internet databases. Be sure to explore different sources. Draw on books and articles you read in classes that most inspired or interested you. Go back to them. Follow their citations and bibliographies. Your literature review should include 10-15 sources. Use the ASA Style Guide to make sure all quotes are correctly cited.

Assignment #4 Due Tuesday November 14 Preliminary Methodological Proposal (2-3 pages)

Describe the methodological approach(es) you will use to carry out the research for your thesis. How will you proceed? What kinds of sources will you draw on? What kinds of evidence will you collect? Try to be as specific as possible when outlining your research plan. For example, if you are doing interviews, who are you going to interview? You should explain how you intend to locate people to interview, how and where you will conduct the interviews, and how many interviews you plan to undertake. Provide a list of questions you intend to ask. If you are doing ethnographic fieldwork, you should have a research site in place and a set of issues that you want to explore. If you are using archival or database sources, you should examine one or more of these sources to make sure these resources have the material to address your research question. If you were planning to work from published sources, some of them primary sources, it would be best to familiarize yourself with these sources. As you are preparing your research methods, think about the major concepts you will use and why. Does the project have a comparative dimension and if so, what will you compare? Explain what you hope to gain from this comparison.

Assignment #5 Due Tuesday December 12 Final Prospectus (15-20 pages)

The final prospectus should present your research question and explain its importance. It should also include a literature review. How will your thesis specifically address questions within the existing literature? You should state what you hope your research will uncover (working hypotheses) and why your results might be significant. Then discuss the research methods you will use to gather your evidence as well as your plan to gain access to the relevant sources, sites and/or people needed to gather this information. The final prospectus should be about 12-20 pages in length (typed, double-spaced) and should include an introduction (what is your problem and why should we care about it), a literature review (not only what have other people said, but what do you find problematic with this literature), a description of research methods, and some indication of what you have found so far. You should also include citations where appropriate as well as a full bibliography (consult the ASA style guide).