

**SENIOR HONORS THESIS SEMINAR**  
**Sociology H190A**  
**Fall 2019**  
**Tuesday 12-2 pm**  
**210 Dwinelle Hall**

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454 Barrows Hall

Office Hours:  
Tuesday: 2:30 – 4:30 pm  
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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 its inception. To help you build your research skills, the seminar is organized around a series of smaller tasks that contribute to the larger project. 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.

As an honors seminar, we expect that students will show respect for the class by attending regularly and making every effort to arrive on time.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

**PART I: FROM TOPIC TO RESEARCH QUESTION**

***Week 1: September 3***

**Joint Session: 554 Barrows Hall**

Introduction to class, classmates, thesis topics, and writing rituals

Assigned Reading:

- 1) Anne LaMott, "Getting Started," "Small Assignments," and "Shitty First Drafts" from *Bird by Bird*
- 2) Find and read 1 – 2 sources on your topic

### ***Week 2: September 10***

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

Assigned Reading:

- 1) Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, (from “Research and Writing” section in Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Research*) “What Research Is and How Researchers Think about it” (Ch.1)
- 2) Kristen Luker, “What Is This A Case Of, Anyway,” from *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences*
- 3) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Begin taking notes for annotated bibliography

Mini Assignment:

Come to class with the following sentence completed, based on your own topic:

I am working on the topic of X,  
because I want to find out how/why/whether Y,  
so that I can help others understand how/why/whether Z

Suggested Reading:

Skim through chapter 2, “Moving from Topic to Question . . .” in Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Research*

### ***Week 3: September 17***

**Submit Assignment #1: Preliminary Proposal (3-4 pages).** Turn in a hard copy to your instructor and upload an electronic copy to the assignment section in B-course.

### **Joint Session in 405 Moffitt**

Meet with librarian Ann Glusker in to learn about tools and techniques for research using the libraries extensive electronic databases. Attendance required!

Ann Glusker is the library liaison to the Sociology Department. She is willing to meet individually with students. You can set up an appointment by emailing Ann directly at [glusker@berkeley.edu](mailto:glusker@berkeley.edu)

Assigned Reading:

- 1) Wayne C. Booth et al., in “Research and Writing” section of Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Research*, read “Finding Useful Sources” (ch. 3) and “Engaging Sources” (ch. 4).
- 2) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

Mini Assignment:

Before our library session, 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 stacks to find your book. While there, browse through the books located in this section of the library. When you have found your richest stack of relevant literature, send us a selfie to document your library discovery!

**Week 4: September 24**

**Joint Session: 554 Barrows Hall**

Discussion of ethical issues and practices in research; CPHS protocol

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). All students must complete the CITI course and bring their certification of completion to class.

Assigned reading:

- 1) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

**PART II: THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Week 5: October 1**

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

Assigned Reading:

- 1) Kristin Luker, “Reviewing the Literature” in *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences*
- 2) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

Mini Assignment:

Re-read p. 98 of Luker’s text and bring your image of your own “bedraggled daisy” to class.

**Week 6: October 8**

**Submit Assignment #2:** (Give us a Revised Preliminary Proposal if your topic has changed and) **Annotated Bibliography of your most significant sources to date (5-10 sources).** Submit hard copy to your instructor and upload electronic copy to b-course.

Individual meetings with instructor

Assigned Reading:

- 1) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

**Week 7: October 15**

Individual meetings with instructor

Assigned Reading:

- 1) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

**Reminder: Paper proposal for Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting (Mar 26-29) in Eugene, Oregon due October 15.** Go to <http://www.pacificsoc.org> for information, online membership application, and instructions for undergraduates to submit research proposals.

The Sociology Department may be able to reimburse students for membership and registration fees after they have presented their research at PSA.

### **PART III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### ***Week 8: October 22***

##### **Joint session in VLSB 2070**

Assigned reading:

- 1) Kristin Luker, “Field (and other) Methods” in *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences*
- 2) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

#### ***Week 9: October 29***

**Submit Assignment #3: First draft of your literature review (5-8 pages).** Submit a hard copy to your instructor and upload an electronic copy of your assignment to b-course.

##### **Joint session in VLSB 2070: Interview Methods with Edwin Lin**

Assigned reading:

- 1) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

#### ***Week 10: November 5***

Individual meetings with instructor

Assigned Reading:

- 1) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

#### ***Week 11: November 12***

Individual meetings with instructor

Assigned Reading:

- 1) Find and read 1 – 2 more sources on your topic. Add notes to your annotated bibliography.

### **PART IV: THESIS PROSPECTUS**

#### ***Week 12: November 19***

**Submit Assignment #4: Preliminary methodology (2-3 pages)** Submit a hard copy to your instructor and upload an electronic copy of your assignment to b-course.

Workshop for prospectus

Mini assignment

- 1) Prepare 5 minute presentation on 1) research question 2) framing literature 3) proposed methodology and 4) biggest obstacle to your research. Create a visualization of your

project and bring this image to class. We will spend about 10 minutes discussing each project.

**Week 13: November 26**

No Class

**Week 14: December 3**

Workshop for prospectus

Mini assignment

- 1) Prepare 5 minute presentation on 1) research question 2) framing literature 3) proposed methodology and 4) biggest obstacle to your research. Create a visualization of your project and bring this image to class. We will spend about 10 minutes discussing each project.

**December 17**

**Submit Assignment #5: Final Prospectus**

15-20 pages to be submitted as hard copy to instructor and uploaded electronically to b-course

**SCHEDULE/DESCRIPTION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

**Assignment #1: Due Tuesday, September 17  
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 not only with 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 very vague 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 relevant source material.

Include at least three bibliographical sources that you have consulted.

## **Assignment #2 Due Tuesday, October 8 (Revised Preliminary Proposal) and Annotated Bibliography (4-7 pages)**

If you have made any changes to your research topic, update your preliminary proposal accordingly.

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 are particularly struck by a quote, include it in your summary (but limit the total number of quotes per entry to 3 or less). 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.

Try to organize your review thematically, in whatever way makes sense for your project. If you can include subject headings in your annotated bibliography, please do so. For example, your subject headings could address things like the historical development of the field (this section could include "classics" that may or may not be especially relevant to your own study, but reflect your broader knowledge of the field), sources that focus on particular sub-topics, and if there are important competing perspectives in your field, sources that represent differing perspectives. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but to provide examples of how one might organize an annotated bibliography. Do what makes most sense for your project--and reflects available time. You can even leave blank spaces under a subject heading to be filled in later. Think of your annotated bibliography as a living document that will be expanded (and contracted) as your project develops.

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 29 Preliminary Literature Review (5-8 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 arguments 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. Follow their citations and bibliographies. Take a look at any relevant dissertations, as dissertations include (usually the first chapter) an overview of the relevant literature. Your literature review should include at least 10-15 sources. Use the ASA Style Guide to make sure all quotes are correctly cited.

#### **Assignment #4 Due Tuesday, November 19 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, whom 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. Attach (separately) 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 17 Final Prospectus (12-20 pages)**

The final prospectus should present your research question and explain its importance. The prospectus has several sections. The introduction introduces your question and makes a case for its importance. The literature review summarizes what we know about your topic, and ideally, what we have yet to find out, (i.e., an answer to your research question). The methodology section explains 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. Your conclusion might include a working hypothesis (if you have one), some indication of what you

have found so far, and why your results might be significant. The final prospectus should be about 12-20 pages in length (typed, double-spaced). You should also include citations where appropriate as well as a full bibliography (consult the ASA style guide).