

EALUATION OF EVIDENCE

Sociology 5

Professor Sánchez-Jankowski

Fall 2012

Office Hours: Monday 8:30-10:30 in Rm. 470 Barrows

Introduction

Just what the founders of this course had in mind as its purpose in making it a requirement to major in sociology is difficult to reconstruct as it was already a requirement well before I arrived as an Assistant Professor some 26 years ago. Throughout the years, various professors have taught this course in a number of ways. Some have taught it by making students understand the various methods used in sociological research through doing some of the activities themselves, while others, like the present course, have taken the approach of providing the student with some principles that can be used to assess a sociological study's validity without actually doing any of the activities themselves. Thus, the student taking the present course should expect to be introduced to a set of tools that can be used to evaluate the data utilized in a particular study, the analysis employed, and the conclusions drawn. It is my intent to not only provide the student with some evaluative tools that they might use when reading various research for those sociology courses they will need to satisfy the remaining requirements for the major, but also those that can be used in the future to evaluate sociological research.

There are four generalized types of studies used in sociology: (1) those that directly observe people; (2) those that formally ask people questions; (3) those that use archival data (official records, testimonies, diaries, etc.); and (4) those that include a mixture of data from studies using some or all of the methods mentioned. You will be introduced to each of these generalized approaches and the various methods that each uses. Six research monographs representing these various approaches will be used in the course and the student will be provided some conceptual tools to evaluate the validity of the information provided in them. The six areas are: (1) Direct Observation; (2) Experimental Studies; (3) Survey Research; (4) In-Depth Interviewing; (5) Historical Archival Research; and (6) Multi-Source Research.

Readings

Six books representing each approach and method have been selected for you to read. I have chosen to use these books because they served two purposes. First, they are excellent examples, and thus good resources, for introducing students to issues associated with the particular methodological approaches utilized in sociological research, and second, they are readings that have received notoriety in the profession (some have won official awards) as good sociology, social psychology and political science. The books are: (1) *Obedience to Authority* by Stanley Milgram; (2) *City Bound* by Sanchez-Jankowski; (3) *The Price of Poverty* by Daniel Dohan; (4) *A Shopkeepers Millennium* by Paul Johnson; (5) *Lone Pursuit* by Sandra Smith; and (6) *War and Empire* by Paul Atwood. You will need to have full access to these books as they will be read in their entirety.

Requirements and Grading

Each student will be required to read each book and attend section meetings where important instruction concerning the material read and tools for evaluation presented in lecture are discussed in depth. Because the course will cover a great deal of literature on method and analysis, the instruction provided in section meetings is designed to complement that provided in lectures. Secondly, evaluation of any sociological research requires knowledge of the information presented before any assessment as to its validity. In other words, you have to know what the author has given you as factual data and analysis before assessing whether it is valid or not. Thus, there will be three in-class exams on September 27th, November 1st, and December 14th from 7-10 PM (the Final). Each exam will have two parts: Part #1 will have a number of multiple-choice questions related to the facts and argument presented in the book, and Part # 2 will have one or two essay questions asking you to evaluate the analysis each author provides using the tools presented in lecture and section. Since all the exams will be treated equally, your final grade will be the mean numerical score, which is arrived at by adding the scores from each of your exams and dividing by the total of 3 exams taken.

Exams missed will be allowed to be made up if the reason for the absence is due to a health issue that required medical attention. A note from a Doctor or Nurse Practitioner is required to take the exam at a later time.

If for some reason you believe there was an error made in evaluating your exam, then the procedure to address this issue is the

following: (1) Take the exam back to your TA and have them re-grade the exam. If they are able to change the grade they will simply record the change in their grade book. If they say after rereading your exam that they are not able to raise your grade, then (2) you have the option of taking your exam to me for grading. Since the grade assigned to you will be written in pencil, you will tear out the grade from your exam and give it to me to grade. I will not know what you received as a grade and so will not be prejudice in grading your exam. I will read your exam and give it a grade, but I need to inform you that the grade I assign will be new and could be higher, the same, or lower than what you first received. Over the years there have been equal numbers of grades being raised, staying the same, and going lower. My grade will be final.

For each exam the student will be given a point sum. The formula for your final grade is determined by adding up the scores on your three exams, dividing by three to determine your mean score, and then using the following scale to assign a letter grade: A+= 100-96; A= 95-92; A-= 91-90; B+= 89-87; B= 86-83; B-= 82-80; C+= 79-77; C= 76-73; C-= 72-70; D+= 69-67; D= 66-63; D-= 62-60; F= 59-0. There is rounding up, but only if the point total ends with a .9 like 79.9 which will be rounded up to an 80.

Schedule

August 23: Introduction

Week 1a August 28: Experimental

Reading: Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*

Week 1b August 30: Experimental

Reading: Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*

Week 2a September 4: Experimental

Reading: Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*

Week 2b September 6: Experimental

Reading: Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*

Week 3a September 11: Participant Observation

Reading: Dohan, *The Price of Poverty*

Week 3b September 13: Participant Observation

Reading: Dohan, *The Price of Poverty*

Week 4a September 18: Participant Observation

Reading: Dohan, *The Price of Poverty*

Week 4b September 20: Participant Observation

Reading: Dohan, *The Price of Poverty*

Week 5a September 27: **EXAM # 1**

Week 5b October 2: In-Depth Interviews

Reading: Smith, *Lone Pursuit*

Week 6a October 4: In-Depth Interviews

Reading: Smith, *Lone Pursuit*

Week 6b October 9: In-Depth Interviews

Reading: Smith, *Lone Pursuit*

Week 7a October 11: In-Depth Interviews

Reading: Smith, *Lone Pursuit*

Week 7b October 16: Survey Research

Reading: Sánchez-Jankowski, *City Bound*

Week 8a October 18: Survey Research

Reading: Sánchez-Jankowski, *City Bound*

Week 8b October 23: Survey Research

Reading: Sánchez-Jankowski, *City Bound*

Week 9a October 25: Survey Research

Reading: Sánchez-Jankowski, *City Bound*

Week 9b October 30: Survey Research

Reading: Sánchez-Jankowski, *City Bound*

Week 10a November 1: **EXAM # 2**

Week 10b November 6: Historical Sociology

Reading: Johnson, *A Shopkeepers Millennium*

Week 11a November 8: Historical Sociology

Reading: Johnson, *A Shopkeepers Millennium*

Week 11b November 13: Historical Sociology

Reading: Johnson, *A Shopkeepers Millennium*

Week 12a November 15: Historical Sociology

Reading: Johnson, *A Shopkeepers Millennium*

Week 12b November 20: Mixed Methods

Reading: Atwood, *War and Empire*

Week 13a November 22: Thanksgiving

Reading: Atwood, *War and Empire*

Week 13b November 27: Mixed Methods

Reading: Atwood, *War and Empire*

Week 14a November 29: Mixed Methods

Reading: Atwood, *War and Empire*

Week 14b December 4: Review

Reading: No Readings

Week 15a December 6: Review

December 14: Exam # 3/The FINAL EXAM 7-10 PM