

SENIOR HONORS THESIS SEMINAR

University of California, Berkeley (Fall 2024)

Thursday 12:00 - 2:00 420 Social Sciences

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Sign up: wejoinin.com/mkelsey@berkeley.edu

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 question, design a methodology, collect data, and write up and present your findings and analysis. In the first semester, you will focus on designing your project and preparing a research proposal, and in the second semester you will undertake your data collection and analysis. The culmination of the seminar will be a research paper (35-50 pages) that contributes to sociological knowledge.

A thesis project can seem daunting—especially at its inception. To help you incrementally build your research skills, the seminar is organized around a series of smaller assignments that contribute to the larger project. There are deadlines for each of these assignments and it is *very* important for you to meet these deadlines. There are a few assigned readings for this class, all of which are available on bCourses (along with other important material including writing and citation guides and samples of prior students' work). However, your primary work will be to read extensively on your chosen topic of research. You must do at least 1-2 readings on your topic every week, for which you will be regularly submitting an annotated bibliography. This will build your expertise in your field, enabling you to produce a literature review and design a research project that makes an original contribution to existing research.

PART I: FROM TOPIC TO RESEARCH QUESTION

Week 1: August 29 (Joint Session: Meet in 420 Social Sciences Building)

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

Assignment:

- 1) Anne LaMott, “Getting Started,” “Small Assignments,” and “Shitty First Drafts” (Ch.1-3) in *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*

Week 2: September 5

How to develop a research question out of a research interest

Assignments:

- 1) Submit Annotated Bibliography entries for 2 sources (upload to bCourses)
- 2) Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, “The Craft of Research” (Chs.1 & 2) in Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Research*. Read excerpts Pp. 5-8; 12-18.
- 3) Kristen Luker, “What Is This A Case Of, Anyway,” (Ch. 4) in *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences*. Read excerpt Pp. 51-56.

PART II: THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Week 3: September 12

What is a literature review? Why does a project need a literature review?

Assignments:

- 1) Assignment #1: Preliminary Proposal (3-4 pages). Upload to bCourses by 11 am
- 2) Kristin Luker, “Reviewing the Literature” (Ch.5) in *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*
- 3) Re-read p. 98 of Luker’s text and bring an image of your own “bedraggled daisy” to class
- 4) Read example of a literature review – “Don’t Be Ratchet!”

Week 4: September 19 (Joint Session via Zoom)

Zoom session (<https://berkeley.zoom.us/s/93283483189>) with Ann Glusker, the librarian assigned as liaison to the Sociology Department, to learn about tools and techniques for research using the library’s extensive electronic databases.

Ann is also willing to meet individually with students. You can set up an appointment by emailing her directly at glusker@berkeley.edu

Assignments:

- 1) Wayne C. Booth et al., “Finding Useful Sources” (Ch.3) in Turabian’s *A Manual for Research*

- 2) Stack Browsing Exercise: Use the library website to find the call numbers of 2 books on your topic (try to find books in either Moffitt or Main library). Once you've done so, go to the library, find your books and browse through the books located in the surrounding stacks. When you have found your richest stack of relevant literature, email me a selfie to document your library discovery!

Week 5: September 26

Individual meetings

Assignments:

- 1) Assignment #2: Annotated Bibliography (6-10 sources). Upload to bCourses by 10 am

Week 6: October 3

Individual meetings

PART III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Week 7: October 10 (Joint Session: Meet in 420 Social Sciences Building)

Discussion of ethical issues and practices in research; CPHS protocol

Assignments:

- 1) Complete CITI training and upload your certificate of completion to bCourses

Register for eProtocol at the Committee for Human Subjects (CPHS) website:
(<http://cphs.berkeley.edu/>)

Click the "For Researchers" tab at the top of the page, then click the "Education and Training" tab to find the link to the CITI preliminary training requirement. Complete the CITI training for Group 2: Social and Behavioral Research Investigators. This course will give you an overview of how to protect human subjects in research. CITI training takes between 2 – 4 hours to complete. You are allowed to take breaks without losing your work in progress, (i.e., you do not have to complete the course in a single sitting).

Week 8: October 17

Introduction to Research Methods

Assignments:

- 1) Submit Annotated Bibliography entries for 4 new sources (upload to bCourses)

- 2) Kristin Luker, “Field (and other) Methods” (Ch.8) in *Salsa Dancing into Social Sciences*

Week 9: October 24 (Joint Zoom Session)

Panel of former honors students discussing the experience and challenges of research

Assignments:

- 1) Assignment #3: Preliminary Literature Review (5-8 pages). Upload to bCourses by 11am

Week 10: October 31

Individual meetings

Assignments:

- 1) Watch the first 50 minutes of Professor Edwin Lin on Interviewing Methods (in your Media Gallery in bCourses)

November 1st Deadline: Proposals for Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting

(March 27th – March 30th in San Francisco)

Go to <http://www.pacificsoc.org> for information and instructions

for undergraduates to submit research proposals.

Week 11: November 7

Individual meetings

Assignment:

- 1) Submit Annotated Bibliography entries for 2-4 new sources (upload to bCourses)

PART IV: THESIS PROSPECTUS

Week 12: November 14

Workshopping Prospectus

Assignments:

- 1) Assignment #4: Preliminary Methodology (2-3 pages). Upload to bCourses by 11am
- 2) Prepare to speak about your project for 5-10 minutes, specifically addressing:

- Research Question
- Framing Literature
- Proposed Methodology
- Biggest Challenge/Obstacle

*Also bring in a *visualization* of your project to share during your presentation.

Week 13: November 21

Workshopping Prospectus Continued

Week 14: November 28 - NO CLASS MEETING

Week 15: December 5

Concluding the semester by sharing and discussing our designed projects, collectively reflecting on the semester, and celebrating progress!

Assignment:

- 1) Prepare to present a 1 minute “elevator talk”
- 2) Submit Annotated Bibliography entries for 3-5 new sources (upload to bCourses)

****December 19 - FINAL PROSPECTUS DUE (15-20 pages)****

Upload to bCourses by Thursday 12/19

SEMINAR POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS:

You are expected to attend *all* meetings (you should email me if you are ever unable to do so), and to arrive *on time* (given that this is a small seminar, late arrivals are especially disruptive).

You are responsible for keeping up with assignments and meeting all deadlines. Instructions for each assignment are included below.

Grade Distribution:

Annotated Bibliography Entries	20%
Preliminary Proposal	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Preliminary Literature Review	20%
Preliminary Methodology	15%
Final Prospectus	25%

Late Policy: Assignments submitted after the specified deadlines will receive a late penalty and are not eligible for an A.

Final grades for the senior honors thesis seminar are calculated based on both semesters' work at the conclusion of the program. You will receive an In-Progress (IP) grade for the successful completion of your work this semester. Completion and timely submission of all assignments in the fall is required for advancing into the spring semester. A final letter grade for the nine units of the seminar will be awarded at the end of the spring semester.

Annotated Bibliography Entries

An annotated bibliography serves as a tool for researchers to document and organize the relevant scholarship they read. One of the primary tasks of a researcher is to extensively read scholarship that is relevant to their project, giving them the necessary expertise and knowledge to design and implement an original research project. You should be reading at least 1-2 sources relevant to your project every week, and writing up annotated bibliography entries for them, which should include the following:

- 1) Full citation (decide on a citation format and stick to it)
 - 2) Summary of authors' main arguments
 - 3) Comments on relevance for your project
 - 4) List of keywords (which will help you search and organize your annotated bibliography)
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Assignment #1: PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL (3-4 pages)

Due Thursday, September 12 (upload to bCourses by 11am)

The goal of this assignment is to help you clarify your ideas and identify your working research question and corresponding methodology.

Your proposal should include all the following:

Statement of your research question

Phrase your question in 25 words or less. The important thing is to attempt to move from an "area of research" or a "topic" to a research question: a statement of a specific question to be answered by your research.

Why is it worth knowing? ("so what?")

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

Literature

What different sociological literatures might be relevant to your project? What have you read thus far that you think is useful and what are some of the things you think you should read? Why? How do these readings relate to your project?

Proposed Methodology

What kind of data 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 what you will be observing and how you might get access. If you are thinking about interviews, discuss whom you might interview, as well as the types of questions you might ask. If you are going to do text-based research, identify texts you might work with and what you will be looking for.

Include a **bibliography** for any sources you refer to.

Assignment #2: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (6-10 sources)

Due Thursday, September 26 (upload to bCourses by **10am**)

An annotated bibliography entry includes: a full citation of the source; a brief summary of the authors' main arguments; comments on the relevance for your project; and keywords. Submit a complete annotated bibliography that includes all the relevant sources you've read thus far (for a total of 6-10).

Utilize subheadings in your annotated bibliography – this organizes the entries by grouping them under particular sub-topics or different approaches. Do what makes most sense right now for your project – and think of your annotated bibliography as a living document that will be expanded and reorganized as your project develops.

While internet posts or news items may be relevant to your research (and you should document those elsewhere), your annotated bibliography should exclusively include scholarly articles and books.

Also include your current research question at the top of your annotated bibliography.

Assignment #3: PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW (5-8 pages)

Due Thursday, October 24 (Upload to bCourses by 11am)

A literature review includes an overview of key arguments and sources that pertain to your topic, serving to frame your research and its contribution to existing scholarship. Focus on fields of scholarship that are both directly and generally relevant for your project. 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 specific works on anti-abortion groups, as well as general works on social movements.

To write a literature review, it is essential to know the key books and articles that have been written on your subject. A literature 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. Look at any relevant dissertations, as dissertations include an overview of the relevant literature (usually the first chapter). Your literature review should include 8-12 sources. Be sure to include your current research question.

Assignment #4: PRELIMINARY METHODOLOGY (2-3 pages)

Due Thursday, November 14 (Upload to bCourses by 11 am)

A methodology is a plan for gathering data (observations) that will help you answer your research question. Identify the method(s) you will use to gather data for your project. What kind of data will help you answer your research question? 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 the specific questions you intend to ask. If you are doing ethnographic fieldwork, you should identify your field site, specify what you will be observing there, and explain how you will gain access. If you plan to use archival or database sources, identify and examine them to make sure they hold material to address your research question, and specify exactly what you will be looking for. If your project has a comparative dimension, what will you compare and what do you hope to gain from this comparison? The ultimate objective is to lay out the plan for data collection in as much detail as possible.

Be sure to include your current research question.

Assignment #5: FINAL PROSPECTUS (15-20 pages)

Due Thursday, December 19 (upload to bCourses)

The final prospectus presents your research project and thoroughly lays out your plans for implementing it. The prospectus has 4 main sections. The introduction introduces your research question and makes a case for its importance. The literature review summarizes the existing scholarship on your topic in a manner that highlights the contribution of your research. The methodology section explains the research methods you will use to gather your data 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, or why your results might be significant. The final prospectus should be about 15-20 pages in length (typed, double-spaced). It should be thoroughly cited and include a full bibliography (consult the ASA style guide). (consult the ASA style guide).

Pacific Sociological Association (PSA) Conference

(Deadline for submitting proposal is **November 1st**)

The Pacific Sociological Association will hold its annual convention in San Francisco, CA from March 27 – 30. PSA hosts multiple undergraduate roundtables. Participating students will have the opportunity to present their research as a 10 – 12-minute talk. We encourage you to participate in this conference for many reasons. It is an opportunity to present your research in a supportive professional setting. As a registered conference participant you may attend other talks and join events specifically organized for undergraduate students. Conference acceptance rates are exceptionally high, and the Sociology Department will cover your membership and registration fees.

If interested, submit a brief research proposal to PSA by **Friday, Nov 1**.

For more information on PSA, go to <https://www.pacificsoc.org/>

For information on submissions, go to <https://www.pacificsoc.org/PSA2025submissions>

(We recommend applying to be part of an undergraduate roundtable rather than a poster presentation.)