

**Soc. 695**  
**The Graduate Program in Applied Sociology**  
**MASTER'S RESEARCH PAPER SEMINAR**

**Spring 2010**

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Phone: 287-62

Office Hours:  
& by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This intensive six-credit course will guide you in the design and completion of your Master's Paper in the Graduate Program in Applied Sociology. Group work and frequent feedback will facilitate the research and writing process. Special attention will be paid to formulating research questions, reviewing the literature, designing strategies for data collection and analysis, and report writing. The course will operate as an intellectual workshop in which students share the process as well as the results of their research throughout the semester. Each seminar member will choose a research topic, review relevant literature, select an available dataset or collect new data, and analyze that data. Portions of the research paper will be drafted in response to a series of assignments. Each student will develop and present a research proposal in the middle of the semester and his/her research results at the end of the semester. The completed paper must be accepted by the two instructors in order to count as the Master's Paper.

**TEXTS**

- 1) Rudestam, Kjell E. and Rae R. Newton. 2007. *Surviving Your Dissertation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- 2) deVaus, David. 2002. *Analyzing Social Science Data: 50 Key Problems in Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- 3) Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.

- 4) Schutt, Russell K. 2009. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*, 6th ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE/Pine Forge Press.

The Rudestam and Newton text provides a foundation in the research processes that must be mastered in order to complete the MA paper successfully. The Schutt text provides instruction in the key relevant research methods for the course and the de Vaus and Weiss books provide more specialized guidance for secondary data analysis (de Vaus) and interview studies (Weiss). Be sure to read those of the assigned chapters of the Schutt book that you have not already covered in another course and use the entire text as a basic reference throughout the course.

### **EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND GRADING**

#### ***1) Systematic and timely reading of the assigned materials.***

We expect you to take notes and/or to underline systematically. You should plan to discuss the readings in class and to refer to them as you plan your exercises and assignments. Students must volunteer to work in pairs to develop a review to present to the class of one assigned article in the course.

#### ***2) Weekly presentations of your work to the class (as time allows).***

These will be informal presentations in which you will share your approach with your classmates and elicit helpful feedback from them, as well as from the instructors. Although you will not make such a presentation at every class, you will have either a preparatory exercise or an assignment due each week and you should come to each class prepared to discuss this work.

#### ***3) Use of Blackboard.***

We will use Blackboard to post information for the class, to include the entire class in feedback about particular project issues, and to facilitate thorough discussion of readings and related issues. You must post your answers to each exercise in Blackboard (see below for more details). We will comment on exercises through Blackboard, as well as in class. Assignments are to be submitted in hard copy on the due date.

#### ***4) Selection of an appropriate research focus.***

Many students base their research paper on a quantitative analysis of secondary data. These data can be obtained from sources on the Web (see the list at the end, particularly the discussion of the ICPSR), although you can also use data that you obtain from other sources. Some students choose instead to conduct a qualitative study, usually based on a limited number (10-12) of intensive interviews. Either of these types of projects can be completed within one semester and result in a quality product. A project involving collection of extensive original data is unlikely to be feasible within one semester. If you have any interest in developing a quantitative paper, you should plan to spend some time exploring available datasets (perhaps just through the ICPSR site) early in the semester.

The class will split into qualitative and quantitative sections for several sessions after the spring break.

### ***5) Analysis of Sociological articles***

Each week for the first 5 to 6 weeks of the semester several students will be asked to prepare an article related to the week's course content. These articles are listed on the syllabus and can be accessed through e-reserve (password:     ). .

### ***6) Institutional Review Board Procedures***

It is the University's requirement that all studies involving human subjects must have IRB approval. All researchers including students should obtain the online training certificate for Responsible Conduct of Research ([www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org)) BEFORE they submit their IRB application forms. The online course may take about 4.5 hours to complete, but can be done over multiple sittings. Carefully consider ethical implications when selecting your research topic and strategy. IRB revisions or resubmission may postpone your research. Students who have direct contact with subjects should schedule their timelines accordingly.

### ***7) Submission of parts of the research paper and exercises at various stages according to the following schedule and percentages of final grades:***

- I) Initial Research Proposal is due **February 11 (15%)**.
- II) Literature review is due **February 25 (15%)**.
- III) Research design and instrumentation is due **March 11 (15%)**.
- IV) Preliminary data analysis is due **April 8 (15%)**.
- V) Participation: exercises, article presentations (**10%**).
- VI) Final Presentation (**5%**)
- VII) Final Paper (**25%**)

It is important to maintain this schedule in order to be able to participate fully in the seminar and to finish your paper by the end of the semester. You are expected to attend EVERY class, unless you request special permission in advance, as well as to complete all exercises and assignments.

When you write your final paper, you should be able to use much of the work you completed for the assignments, revising this material based on the feedback you have received from us and from other class members (and taking into account your own further thinking and reading). Numerical scores will be given for each assignment comprising 60% of your final grade, but these are only preliminary grades.

Your final grade will be based solely on your final paper grade (85%) and your final presentation grade (5%) and participation grade (10%), *unless taking into account the separate assignment grades would improve your final grade*. In other words, if your average score on the four assignments is higher than your final paper grade, we will count that average assignment score as 60% of your final grade (using the scheme outlined

above). This means that your grades on the four assignments can only help you. Nonetheless, we expect you to do your best work on each assignment so that we can give you the most helpful feedback before your final paper is due. **YOU MUST COMPLETE EACH OF THE FOUR ASSIGNMENTS AND TURN THEM IN ON TIME, UNLESS WE GRANT AN EXCEPTION DUE TO AN UNAVOIDABLE PROBLEM IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS.**

Changes in focus and approach will be allowed after you submit a particular assignment, up to the time that the preliminary draft of the final paper is due, but you must consult with one of us (Leverentz or Schutt) well in advance about major changes to the plan that we have approved in earlier assignments.

We urge you to submit a preliminary draft of your paper to us in class on April 29. If you do so, we will give you feedback that should improve your final paper. *Preliminary drafts will not be graded, but final papers will be.*

We expect the content and form of the final paper to be appropriate for a professional audience. All assignments as well as the final paper must use *American Sociological Review* format for citations and bibliography (see a recent issue or the guidelines on their web site):

### ***7) Presentation of the paper at the end of the semester.***

You will present your paper in the manner appropriate for a standard academic conference. An outline, abstract, and other material must be distributed as a handout and some type of visual display must be used (a PowerPoint show is the usual format, but overheads are acceptable). Each presentation should be 15 minutes in length and each presentation will conclude with a 5-minute discussion in which class members will be expected to participate.

The presentation gives you a chance to showcase your work and to solicit advice for your final revision. Of course presentations in the last week should be more polished than those presented earlier, but in any case you should plan on using the feedback you receive to guide your final revision.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

The course covers a wide range of topics in research methods, statistics, and qualitative techniques. Since you already have studied most of these topics, much of this will be a review and an opportunity to develop firmer mastery of these topics. We also cover some topics that you probably will not have studied before; we do this intentionally, in order to introduce you to some important techniques that are not addressed in other courses in our program. But we do expect that you have acquired a basic background in the major methods and statistics used by applied sociologists before you take this course. If you have not already completed Soc. 650 and 651 when you start this course, you should speak to the instructors to work out an appropriate plan.

**Week 1, Jan. 28**      **Overview: Research Processes, Projects & Goals**

Applied and Scholarly Orientations  
 Exploratory & Explanatory Purposes  
 Validity and Authenticity Goals  
 Primary & Secondary Data  
 Online and Offline Learning (Blackboard)

*Exercise 1 Due, Feb. 4*

**Week 2, Feb. 4**      **Topic Selection, Methods of Inquiry**

Research Questions, Variables, Hypotheses  
 Quantitative & Qualitative Research, Mixed Methods  
 Secondary Data Analysis (quantitative and qualitative)

Miller, Jody. 1998. "Up it Up: Gender and the Accomplishment of Street Robbery." *Criminology* 36 (1): 37-66.

Schieman, Scott, Melissa A. Milkie and Paul Glavin. 2009. "When Work Interferes with Life: Work-Nonwork Interference and the Influence of Work-related Demands and Resources." *American Sociological Review* 74:966-988.

Taylor, Verta, Katrina Kimport, Nella Van Dyke, and Ellen Ann Andersen. 2009. "Same-Sex Weddings and Gay Activism." *American Sociological Review* 74:865-890.

Rudestam & Newton, Chapters 1-2, 13

Weiss, Chapter 1

Schutt, Chapters 1-2 (*except* pp. 31-38), Chapter 13

*Assignment 1: Initial Research Question Due, Feb 11*

**Week 3, Feb. 11**      **Searching the Web, the Literature, ICPSR**

Web & Online Bibliographic Search Techniques  
 RefWorks  
 Using ICPSR

Freese, Jeremy. Secondary Data Analysis of Large Social Surveys.

Luker, Kristin. 2008. "On Sampling, Operationalization, and Generalizability" Chapter 6 in *Salsa Dancing for the Social Scientists: Research in the Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rudestam & Newton, Chapters 9 & 10

Schutt, Chapter 2 (pp. 31-32), Appendixes D, E

***Exercise 2 Due, Feb. 18***

**Week 4, Feb 18**

**Research Ethics & Reviewing the Literature**

Conceptualization

Models & Theories

Meta-analysis

Human Subject Issues and IRB regulations and procedures

Rudestam & Newton, Chapter 4

Weiss, Chapter 5

Schutt, Chapter 2 (pp. 32-38), Chapter 3, Appendix C

Guest: Kristen Kenny, ORSP, IRB

(<http://www.umb.edu/research/orsp/compliance/irb.html>)

***Assignment 2: Review of Literature Due, Feb. 25***

**Week 5, Feb 25**

**Concepts and Operations**

Designing and Finding Instruments

Index Construction

Measurement Reliability and Validity

Concepts in Qualitative Research

Interview Guide Development

Åkerström, Malin. 2006. "Doing Ambivalence: Embracing Policy Innovation -- At Arm's Length." *Social Problems* 53:57-74.

Beller, Emily. 2009. "Bringing Intergenerational Social Mobility Research into the Twenty-First Century: Why Mothers Matter." *American Sociological Review* 74:507-528.

Rudestam & Newton, Chapter 3, 5-6

Weiss, Chapters 2-4

Schutt, Chapter 4, 8, 9 (338-344)

***Exercise 3 Due, March 4***

**Week 6, March 4**

**Generalizability**

Dannefer, Dale and Russell Schutt. 1982. "Race and Juvenile Justice Processing in Court and Police Agencies." *American Journal of Sociology*, 87:1113-1132.

Eliasoph, Nina and Paul Lichterman. 2003. "Culture in Interaction." *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (4): 735-794.

Rudestam & Newton, Chapter 7

Schutt, Chapter 5

***Assignment 3: Proposal with Design & Instrumentation Due, March 11  
Must include IRB forms***

**Week 7, March 11 Modeling & Causality**

Schutt, Chapters 6-7

Tach, Laura. 2009. "More than Bricks and Mortar: Neighborhood Frames, Social Processes, and the Mixed-Income Redevelopment of a Public Housing Project." *City and Community* 8(3): 269-299.

Sampson, Robert J. 2008. "Moving to Inequality: Neighborhood Effects and Experiments Meet Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 114 (1):189-231

***Exercise 4 Due, March 25***

***March 14-21 Spring Break***

**Week 8, March 25 Data Management, Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches**

Data Entry & Cleaning

Descriptive Statistics

Inferential Statistics I

Coding and Memo Writing

Weiss, Chapter 6

Schutt, Chapter 10 (qual.), Appendix F (quant.)

**Week 9, April 1 Testing Hypotheses, Exploring Patterns - (Quant in Healy Blue Lab)**

Crosstabulation

T-tests,

Correlation & Regression

Finding patterns in qualitative data

Schutt, Chapter 14

***Assignment 4: Preliminary Data Analysis Due, April 8***

**Week 10, April 8 Causal Models, Constructing an argument**

Idiographic and Nomothetic Causation

The Elaboration Method

Multiple Regression and Modeling

Schutt, Chapter 14 (cont.)

**Week 11, April 15**    **Writing, Presenting Data,**  
Scholarly Articles, Research Reports, Presented Papers  
Summarizing Descriptive Statistics

Weiss, Chapter 7  
Rudestam & Newton, Chapters 8, 11, 12  
Schutt, Chapter 15

**Week 12, April 22**    **Findings and Discussion, Making a theoretical argument with data**  
Making Sense of Results  
Developing Implications  
Recognizing Limitations

Rudestam & Newton, Chapter 7

**Preliminary Paper Deadline, April 29**

**Week 13, April 29**    **Paper Presentations I – Presentation Room 3, LL Healy Library**

**Week 14, May 6**    **Paper Presentations II – Presentation Room 3, LL Healy Library**

**Final Papers Due, Tuesday, May 11**

**PLEASE NOTE: Late assignments will not be accepted and INCOMPLETE will NOT be given as a grade, except in documented cases of unanticipated, debilitating emergencies. If we do not receive your paper by the end of the semester, you will not receive a passing grade. (You may petition to take the course all over again in the Spring of 2011.)**

### SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Allison, Paul D. 1999. *Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Aneshensel, Carol S. 2002. *Theory-Based Data Analysis for the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hacker, Diana. 1997. *Bedford Handbook for Writers*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. The. Boston: St. Martin's Press.
- Johnson William A., Richard P. Petting, and Gregory M. Scott. 1998. *The Sociology Student Writer's Manual*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Knoke, David and George W. Bohrnstedt, & Alisa P. Mee. 2002. *Statistics for Social Data Analysis*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock.
- Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Norusis, Marija J. 2004. *SPSS 14.0 Guide to Data Analysis*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Pyrczak, Fred and Randall R. Bruce. 1999. *Writing Empirical Research Reports*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing.

### USEFUL WEB SITES

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/>

Interuniversity Consortium for Political & Social Research. (ICPSR). Extensive archive of social science data collected throughout the world. Many datasets are available in SPSS system files; most others are available in separate files with data and data definition information. Major datasets can be analyzed online, without an additional statistical program. The ICPSR site also includes a bibliography of publications from the General Social Survey (GSS) and other projects, as well as questions used in the GSS and some other studies. The Substance and Mental Health Data Archive (SAMMDHA) within ICPSR contains very useful data.

<http://www.asanet.org/>

American Sociological Association. Includes lists of publications, Ethics Code, Employment Bulletin, and summaries of research funding opportunities.

<http://www.ipl.org/>

Argus has been integrated into the Internet Public Library (IPL) Search Engine

<http://alcoholstudies.rutgers.edu/>

Center of Alcohol Studies. Offers links to numerous sites related to alcohol, alcoholism, and so on. A comprehensive index of a wealth of information on the subject.

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/>

Dartmouth College. Sources. A compendium on how to cite sources from a variety of media, with examples.

<http://www.electionstudies.org/>

National Election Studies. Includes responses to questions asked since 1952, test of 1996 NES questionnaire, data for on-line analysis. Searchable by keyword.

<http://lib-www.ucr.edu>

INFOMINE (Scholarly Internet Resource Collections). This is one example of a site that scholars can use to link to other sites containing a wide range of scholarly materials.

<http://www.pineforge.com/isw6/>

Schutt's *Investigating the Social World*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Study site with links to many websites of value for social researchers.

<http://www.electionstudies.org/>

National Election Studies. Includes responses to questions asked since 1952, test of 1996 NES questionnaire, data for on-line analysis. Searchable by keyword.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/roper2006/>

The National Geographic Society's site for their Survey 2006 project. Detailed compilation of findings and many interesting displays.

psidonline.isr.umich.edu

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Provides data and publications

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>

National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, providing many of the most popular measures of substance abuse.

<http://www.umich.edu/~psid>

[psidonline.isr.umich.edu](http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu)

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Provides data and publications.

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/stats.html>

Statistical Resources on the Web. A subject directory compiled by the Documents Center at the University of Michigan.

<http://stats.bls.gov>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor. A significant source of data on employment and earnings.

<http://www.census.gov/>

U.S. Bureau of the Census home page. Contains tables and graphs reporting detailed census data. Population data and economic indicators.

<http://www.worldbank.org>

World Bank resources that are useful for comparative research. Includes detailed maps and statistical data on many countries.

<http://sda.berkeley.edu:7502/archive.htm>

Survey Documentation and Analysis system at UC Berkeley, which allows online analysis of major survey datasets.