Instructor: Alex Stepick
Office: CH 217L; Office Hours: T 12:00PM-2:00PM
Email: stepick@pdx.edu
DO NOT EMAIL ME ON D2L

Course Description
In this course, we will critically explore various research methods in sociology including surveys, content analysis, secondary data, and various qualitative methods (e.g., interviews and participant observation). As you are already familiar with the basics of research methods from your undergraduate coursework (in fact, this course assumes that students have already taken lower-level courses in research methods and basic statistics), in this course you will be (1) reading, understanding, and evaluating PSU sociology faculty’s research, and (2) designing your own research project. While doing so, you will deepen your understanding of general methodological issues such as validity, reliability, correlation, causation, concepts, indicators, sampling, and generalizability.

Course Objectives
• To continue the long process of thinking, writing, and speaking like a competent social science researcher.
• To understand and critically evaluate social science research.
• To design a research project using appropriate research design tools.
• To become familiar with PSU sociology faculty’s research.
• To be able to use bibliographic, citation, and notetaking software

Course Structure
Each week until the last week we will have a guest lecture in the class. The first week will be the PSU social sciences librarian Kim Pendell, who will focus on bibliographies and citation software. Beginning with the second week, each week will have a Sociology Professor. Before class you will read an article(s) or chapter(s) by that professor. You will also read a number of articles or chapters and perhaps watch some videos on that same methodology. You will also look for an article using that same methodology, but applying it to your own research question. Your task will be to understand the methodology and why it was used in that project by the professor and in the article you found on your research question. During class, you will query the professor about how she/he/they conducted the research using that methodology.

During the following week, you will write a short, two page research design using that methodology on your own research.

Also, during the term, you will be working toward a final research proposal using whatever methodology or mixes of methodology you find most appropriate. More details on this are below and in a separate hand-out.

In summary, every week you will read about a particular methodology, query a professor and the following week try to apply that methodology to your own research question. Throughout the term you will have a number of assignments that build toward the final project of a research proposal using whatever methodology(ies) you find most appropriate.

Readings
You should have already accessed a sociology research methods textbook to review basic concepts. A textbook that you used in an undergraduate social science course is fine.


PSU sociology faculty’s research will be available on D2L or in electronic journal form on the library web site: www.library.pdx.edu

Other readings are listed in the syllabus and still others may be assigned throughout the term.

Each week you will have some general readings on the particular methodology of that week and a reading from a Sociology Professor who will come to class to answer questions on the methodology of their project.

Class Requirements
Requirements include but are not limited to readings, class participation, weekly individual assignments, and a final paper and oral presentation that has intermediate assignments through the term. There also may be opportunities for you to attend lectures and Master’s defenses and perhaps PhD defenses that use empirical research. My experience is that graduate students often learn more from each other than anyone else. Accordingly, participation in class discussions is essential. Also, each week you will be paired with someone so that you can each critique each other’s work for the week. These pairs will change each week so that you can get to know different people and have a variety of feedback.

- **20% Attendance/Participation:** Graduate seminars are not lecture classes. Students are expected to read the course material and do the weekly assignments before class so that they are ready and able to discuss the topic of the week in class. Students are expected to attend all of the class sessions (unless they are sick). As a part of participation, students will be asked to prepare and lead discussion in a particular class.

- **30% Assignments:** There will be weekly assignments that will involve reading and writing. All assignments are peer-reviewed and due to myself, Professor Stepick, and a classmate by 5pm the Monday before class. The assignments include routine **weekly assignments:**
  - Find an article in your research area that uses methodology similar to the focus of that week’s class. For example, if that week’s class is on survey research, find an article on survey research in your research area. Use Zotero for storing the citation and any notes you make to yourself on the article. Be prepared to discuss that article in class and (upload the citation for your article to D2L – APA or ASA format – Monday by 5pm.
  - The week of a guest professor’s appearance in class, you will write and share questions you have for the faculty member PRIOR to class, due to D2L Monday by 5pm. You should take advantage of the faculty member’s presence to find the answers to the questions that usually do not appear in published materials. Think of what do I need to know to do research just like this (but on my topic). Questions might include: What emerged during the research that required an adjustment in your methods? What is the strongest methodological part of this project? What didn’t work so well in your methods? What do you think the weakest methodological part of your research is? What would you do differently if you had to do it all over again? Who in the field will not be convinced by this research and why? What advice do you have for us beginning researchers?
  - As these questions are often not advanced in publications, you should be careful and sensitive to how you ask them. Indicate that you are looking for advice that will help you be a better researcher.
For all of the required empirical reading (both assigned and the article you found on your own), you should identify the following prior to class and be prepared to discuss in-class (you are not required to share this on D2L):

- Research Question
- Population, Sample
- Data Gathering Methods: primary or secondary data gathering source(s)
- Validity, Reliability
- Generalizability
- Empirical Findings
- Contributions to literature, extending theory on what general topic and what in particular is new in this contribution.

For your weekly effort to use the same methodology as the professor in the previous week, you should answer the above questions for your research design using that method on your own research question. Each week you will be assigned a partner and you will give constructive criticism to each other on your proposed research design.

You will write and share discussion questions for class each week based on all of the readings/podcasts and the weekly topic (due to D2L Monday by 5pm). Note discussion questions are different from the questions you have prepared for our weekly guest speaker.

Class will generally be a discussion of the readings: the general ones on particular methods, the particular Professor’s article for that week, and what you found using that week’s methodology applied to your research question. There will also be some time devoted to the pairs discussing each other’s research design from last week’s methodology.

For each different method in the course reflect on and discuss in class the methods advantages and disadvantages, what kind of research question and population would it work well on and for what kinds would it be less appropriate.

In addition to the routine weekly assignments, you will work towards writing a research proposal throughout the quarter. You will upload these assignments onto D2L prior to class and bring a paper to class as (time permitting) we will use class time to peer review/workshop. Refer to the syllabus and D2L for these weekly assignments.

50% Final Paper and Oral Presentation: Students will ask a research question(s) and detail a research design to collect data in order to answer that question. We may meet two times during Week 10 to accommodate all of the oral presentations. The final paper is due during exam week.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1, September 25
Introductions, Syllabus and Bibliography, Citation Software
Hand out oral presentation and final paper guidelines.
Librarian Kimberly Pendell at 3:30pm in Library

Week 2, October 2
Partner Ethnography
Due: List the names of three faculty in your Program in whose research you are interested.

Reading/Video/Podcast. These readings apply to this week and Week 5, Single Ethnographer Abroad. Divide them up how you feel comfortable:
How to do Ethnography
- Ethnography: Ellen Isaacs at TEDxBroadway
- How to do ethnography right (Read all the hyperlinks for this one)
- Crang, Mike, “Doing Ethnography”

Professor Aaron Rousell at 3:30 pm:

Week 3, October 9 Mixed Methods
Reading/Video/Podcast.
- Peruse the journal: Mixed Methods: An International Journal of Social Research Methodology. This may also be a good source for finding an article that uses mixed methods and your research topic.

Professor Maura Kelly 4-4:50 to discuss content analysis:

Week 4, October 16 Interviews (with Transgender People)
Reading/Video/Podcast.
- Read as much as you can from: Sage Research Methods Online. If you plan on doing interviews in your research, read even more.
- Do a Google Video Search on: Social Science Research Methods Qualitative Interviewing. Watch at least 3 of these.

Professor Amy Lubitow:

Due: Bring one PSU Master’s thesis or PhD Dissertation citation that you could use in terms of topic and methodology. Be ready to discuss.

Week 5, October 23 Single Ethnographer Abroad
Reading/Video/Podcast: See Week 2

Professor Dan Jaffee at 2:10pm:

Due: Bibliography on your tentative research area

Week 6, October 30 Gathering Valid and Reliable Survey Data
Reading/Video/Podcast:
- Consult Sage Research Methods Online for validity and reliability on surveys
- Video: Lesson 3B – Reliability - Module 3: Surveys | Coursera
- Video: Validity and Reliability: How to Assess the Quality of a Research Study.

Professor Stepick:

Due: Tentative research question(s)

Week 7, November 6 Secondary Data Analysis, Multivariate Multilevel Models
Reading/Video/Podcast:
- Consult Sage Research Methods Online for validity and reliability on surveys
- Video: An Introduction to Secondary Data Analysis - SAGE Research Methods
- Video: What is MULTILEVEL MODEL? What does MULTILEVEL MODEL ...
- Video: Multilevel model - YouTube

Professor Dara Shifrer:

Due: Outline of your literature review

Week 8, November 13 Longitudinal Secondary Data and the Process of Publication
Reading/Video/Podcast:
- Secondary Longitudinal Studies Program - Homepage
- Pros and Cons of Secondary Data Analysis: A Review of the Advantages and Disadvantages in Social Science Research
- PowerPoint: Secondary Data Analysis

Professor Lindsey Wilkinson:

Due: Draft of your introduction and the title of a possible dataset to use in quantitative methods or population and sample for interviewing or location for ethnography.

Week 9, November 20 Longitudinal secondary data and a hybrid panel model
Reading/Video/Podcast:
- Consult Sage Research Methods Online for panel studies
- Video: Introduction to Panel Data Analysis. Warning this is nearly an hour
- Regression with panel data: an Introduction
- Introduction to Regression Models for Panel Data Analysis
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Professor Julius McGee at 2:10:

**Week 10, November 27 & ? [2 days of oral presentations]**

**Exam Week**
**Due:** Final Written Paper due on December 5 at 5pm (in D2L)