

DOCTORAL RESEARCH PRACTICUM
SOC6711Y, 2017-2018
Tuesdays, 11:00-2:00 p.m.
Room 240

INSTRUCTORS

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Two of the most important components of doctoral training include learning how to do research and how to communicate findings to different audiences, including the scientific community. In this course, we take up the challenge of translating your general sociological interests into a research project, including formulating a practical research question, choosing appropriate data and methods, and communicating results in a way that engages with and contributes to the broader scientific literature. Like building a house from the ground up, the research process involves a set of practices that require careful implementation at each stage, but can also bring unforeseen challenges requiring strategic choices, hard thinking, reflection and compromise.

The Doctoral Research Practicum is designed to guide doctoral students through the process of producing an original research paper, from the specification of an appropriate sociological question to the task of writing up one's findings in a defensible, publishable paper, and everything in-between. To accomplish this goal, students will conduct their own research, obtain or produce data, conduct analysis and develop a publishable paper that draws from this research by the Spring of 2018. Along the way, we will meet weekly to discuss each student's progress and suggest ways of improving the research. Toward this end, students will circulate, present and evaluate each other's work in written and oral formats, receiving feedback from their peers, course instructors, and their advisors. Students will also provide response memos regarding how they address feedback with new versions of the paper.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students will receive a (provisional) grade for the fall and an overall grade for the course at the end of the year. The grade components are:

Fall Grade Components

- Class participation during fall term (7.5%)
- Preliminary Research Statement (due June 28, 5%)
- First Research Statement (due September 11, 1st day of class, 5%)
- Second Research Statement (due November 2, 10%)
- Working Paper (due December 15th, 20%)

Winter Grade Components:

- Class participation during winter term (7.5%)
- First draft of complete paper (due February 20, 15%)
- Final Paper (due April 6, 30%)

Late penalty: 5% per day of lateness.

Explanation of grade components:

Class participation: Producing good research is never done in isolation. Rather, it is a communal process wherein researchers consult the existing literature and draw on the feedback of others in crafting their study, developing key arguments and sharpening research findings. Students and professors of the course will serve as the “scholarly community” from which to draw inspiration, constructive criticism, and helpful ideas about each step of the research and writing process. Accordingly, class attendance is crucial. In addition, you are encouraged to have your practicum supervisor attend the presentation of the draft of your final paper in late March or early April. As such, students are expected to participate on a regular basis, including providing constructive written comments on the work of those for whom you are assigned to evaluate and oral comments in class.

Participation also includes learning to recognize excellent research and how it is communicated within our department. To that end, part of your learning experience and class participation through feedback to the class will be attending at least three job talk presentations in the department this fall, and writing up a paragraph assessment about what worked well and what did not work well in the presentation – the logic, argument, and presentation of original research. It is up to you to choose three talks this fall, among the 10 or more that will be scheduled, and to report to the class your observations.

Preliminary Research Statement Due June 28

1. What is your research topic? (e.g. I am going to study X, e.g. child poverty).
2. What is your broad research question? (e.g. how does child poverty affect the life chances of children?).
3. What is the research puzzle or “problem” (e.g. there are three competing explanations regarding the relationship between poverty in childhood and adult SES...).
4. What data are you going to use? Again, feel free to suggest more than one possibility. Make sure you describe: the population you will be studying as well as the source of the data. If you are collecting your own data, briefly describe the methodology. If you are using secondary data, describe the data set.
5. Who will you ask to be your advisor for this paper? You want to pick someone who is going to engage with your work and will play an active role in reading your drafts.

First research statement: (1,000-1,500 words) Due 9 am, September 11

The first research statement will establish the foundation for the subsequent research process and must include the following subheadings with appropriate content:

- a) *Abstract*: (150 words). A complete but very concise description of the paper –one that will entice readers. You may include one sentence with preliminary findings or not mention findings at all. The abstract will change with each draft.
- b) *Introduction*: Here you specify the research problem, provide a rationale for the importance of the problem for sociology, and provide an enumeration of hypotheses or interrelated research questions (no more than three) that will guide the research.
- c) *Literature Review*: A focused, short discussion of how the existing sociological literature on the topic relates to your chosen problem (include a short bibliography for all text citations).
- d) *Methods*: a brief discussion of the major methodological facets of the proposed research, with special attention to data source, method of collection and analysis; and, where necessary, any particular challenges that you may anticipate with regard to data collection and how you intend to remedy them. You should also note if you intend to make generalizations from your research findings to a population and/or to a body of theory. If your data collection is complete, you should include descriptives of your data. See published articles for examples. For interview data, this would be a description, perhaps in table form, of the composition of your sample with relevant socio-demographic information. For survey data, this would be a table that describes the distribution of the dependent variable(s), independent variables, and control variables in your data set.

Second research statement: (2,500-4,000 words) Due October 31

The second research statement will be a more fully developed version of the first that takes into account the comments received from professors and students on the first version. Your second research statement should expand and develop the following sections:

- a) *Abstract*: (150 words). A complete but very concise description of the paper – one that entices an audience to read the entire paper. You should include one sentence with preliminary findings. The abstract will change with each draft.
- b) *Introduction*: Outline the relevance of the defined research problem in relation to key debates and social issues; elaborate the key arguments and unique contribution of paper; and where appropriate, present an outline of analytical and research plan, including discussion of data and preliminary presentation of sample characteristics or case(s).
- c) *Literature Review*: Expanded discussion of the relevant sociological literature with the task of connecting it to your research question and data analysis strategy. Here you will want to show: 1) command of the existing literature on your topic and 2) specify your

intended contribution to the literature—how are you extending or challenging it, specifically.

d) *Methods: Revise section, if necessary.* Be sure to be clear in your discussion of the types of method you are utilizing to address the research question. Where appropriate, discuss analytical and research plan, including discussion of data, and preliminary presentation of sample characteristics or the context of the case study or comparison. If your data collection was not complete earlier, then include in this draft the descriptives of your data.

e) *Data analysis/empirical discussion:* Here, you should also begin to analyze your data and report some preliminary findings and address possible counter-explanations.

f) *Response memo:* When you submit this document, you must also submit a separate document that details how you responded to the feedback you received. This is a standard document that accompanies revised submissions to peer-reviewed journals. If you receive suggestions that you are not following or accommodating, you explain why in this memo. For the feedback that you are incorporating into your revisions, you describe the changes you made and any significant implications of these changes. A good response memo can be time consuming, so be sure to build in time to write this document. It can also be very helpful in clarifying for yourself how your paper is changing.

Working Paper (3,000-4,000 words) Due December 15

The working paper should be about 4000 words, excluding bibliography and tables. This submission should look and feel much like the first draft of a research paper—including your results thus far—except that you should also include notes about unresolved problems regarding theory, data and analysis. In other words, we want to know what still needs to be done. Consult the following for guidelines on crafting a good research paper: 1) Wheaton, Welsh, Kruttschnitt, and Cranford’s “(Some) elements of a good paper”; 2) Adam Green’s research paper instructions; and/or 3) Stephen Porter’s “Writing and publishing a research paper in a peer reviewed journal.” These documents will be posted to Blackboard. Submit again a response memo. The working paper must include the following elements:

a) A well-developed literature review (not an annotated bibliography). We suggest that you look to well-respected sociological journals for guidance.

b) A very clear explanation on how your research will contribute to this. What is the “gift” you plan to give to the discipline? Will you contribute new theoretical or methodological insights? In short, what will you tell us we didn’t know before, and why will you be able to do it?

c) A very clear description of the data and methods. Think in terms of whether or not someone could replicate your work based on how you've described it.

d) A clear write up of your results. In other words, there should be an initial attempt to analyze your data. That is, you should provide clear interpretations of your coefficients, quotes, documents or field notes using the relevant literature or theory.

e) At this point, a discussion section is not expected because it could change after revising the paper yet again.

f) Again, submit a response memo as a separate document.

First draft of complete paper: (7,000-8,000 words) Due February 20

The first draft of your complete paper will look like a journal article. Of utmost importance in this draft is the careful match of evidence to claims and data to argument. At this stage you should have a clearly articulated research problem, a clear and succinct literature review that logically ends with your research question(s), a clear and detailed methodological section, a clear and succinct data analysis section, and a compelling discussion section that hammers home your key points and advances an original contribution to the literature.

Final paper: (7,000-10,000 words) Due April 6

The final paper is due the last day of the spring term. You will be expected to give a 15-minute conference-style presentation on this work. Be sure to proof read your papers extensively, provide proper ASA style citation format (available online and also on any of the many ASA journals, including the *American Sociological Review*, the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, among others.

Workshopping process and deadlines:

The heart of this class is the process of workshopping your papers and getting feedback. The class has been divided into four presentation groups and four reading groups. It will work as follows: the Group 1 Reading Group will provide feedback to the Group 1 Presentation Group; the Group 2 reading Group will provide feedback for the Group 2 Presentation Group, and so on. The people in your reading group are required to provide written feedback on your paper, although everyone is required to read your paper and provide comments during class.

The process will work as follows: The Thursday before your presentation, you will post your work in progress to Dropbox by noon. Members of your reading group will post their written comments by the following Monday at noon.

For the first round, the groupings are as follows:

PRESENTATION DATE	GROUP #	PRESENTATION GROUP	READING GROUP	DRAFT PAPER DUE	COMMENTS DUE
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03-OCT	Group1	Badawy	Figueroa	28-Sep	02-Oct
		Bateman	Jeffers		
		Doff	Kauenhowen		
		Drapeau	Lukk		
10-OCT	Group2	Pagaduan	Badawy	05-Oct	9-Oct
		Perron	Bateman		
		Price	Doff		
		Pritchard	Drapeau		
17-OCT	Group3	Quinn	Pagaduan	12-Oct	16-Oct
		Tecele	Perron		
		Figueroa	Price		
24-OCT	Group 4	Jeffers	Pritchard	19-Oct	23-Oct
		Kauenhowen	Quinn		
		Lukk	Tecele		

COURSE SCHEDULE

Sept. 12: Introduction

Review of syllabus

Discussion of First Research Statements

Explanation of reading groups and research presentations

Sept. 19: Engaging in Social Research

In this class we will discuss the nuts and bolts of good social research and the diverse goals and traditions of social research.

Read and be prepared to discuss the following items:

Abbott, Andrew A. 2004 "Explanation," in *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W.Norton & Co.

Glenn Firebaugh. 2008. *Seven Rules for Social Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 1)

Charles Ragin. 1994. *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Read "The goals of social research" (Chapter 2).

Sept. 26: The Craft of Writing: Puzzles/ Gaps/ Innovations

(Potential guest speakers)

In this class we will discuss how to “frame” a research question, writing style, how to find the right journal for your work, and how to “get it out the door.”

Read and be prepared to discuss the following:

Bartkowski, John P., Carma S. Deem, and Christopher G. Ellison. 2015. “Publishing in Academic Journals: Strategic Advice for Doctoral Students and Academic Mentors.” *American Sociologist* 46:99-115.

Oct. 3: Group 1 Presentations

4 Presentations (1st research statement)

Oct. 10: Group 2 Presentations

4 Presentations (1st research statement)

Oct. 17: Group 3 Presentations

3 Presentations (1st research statement)

Oct. 24: Group 4 presentations

3 Presentations (1st research statement)

Oct. 31: No Class

Second Research Statement Due

Nov. 7 : Group 1 Presentations

4 Presentations (2nd research statement)

Nov. 14: Group 2 Presentations

4 Presentations (2nd research statement)

Nov. 21: Group 3 Presentations

3 Presentations (2nd research statement)

Nov. 28: Group 4 Presentations

3 Presentations (2nd research statement)

Dec. 15: Working Paper Due (includes data analysis/research findings)

WINTER 2017: TBA