

## DOCTORAL RESEARCH PRACTICUM SOC6711Y

Date: Wednesday, 11:30-2:30, 2018/19

Location: Room 240

### INSTRUCTORS

Josée Johnston (full year) josee.johnston@utoronto.ca

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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.

At its heart, 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:

- collect or obtain data
- conduct analysis of data
- develop a publishable paper that draws from this research.

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.

### GRADING

Students will receive a (provisional) grade for the fall and an overall grade for the course at the end of the year.

## Fall Grade Components

- Class participation during fall term (7.5%)
- Preliminary Research Statement (due June 28, 5%)
- First Research Statement (due September 11, 1<sup>st</sup> 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%)

NOTE: Late penalty: 5% per day of lateness.

## 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. 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. You must write a 1 paragraph assessment about what worked well and what did not work well in the talk evaluating logic, argument, and presentation style/efficacy. It is up to you to choose which talks you will attend, and you should be ready to speak to the class about your impressions of these talks.

## SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS & DEADLINES

Here is a listing of what documents you will need to submit as the paper takes shape over the two semesters.

### PRELIMINARY RESEARCH STATEMENT

*DUE Friday JUNE 29TH*

Your research statement should answer these questions:

1. What is my research topic? (e.g. I am going to study X, e.g. child poverty).
2. What is my broad research question? (e.g. how does child poverty affect the life chances of children?).
3. What is the research puzzle or “problem” that I want to address? (e.g. there are three explanations regarding the relationship between poverty in childhood and adult SES...).
4. What data will I 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 be my 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 WED SEPTEMBER 12th*

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

1. *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.
2. *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.
3. *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).
4. *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 sociodemographic 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 WED OCTOBER 31st*

The second research statement will be a more fully developed version 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:

1. *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.
2. *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).
3. *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.
4. *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.
5. *Data analysis/empirical discussion*: Here, you should also begin to analyze your data and report some preliminary findings and address possible counter-explanations.
6. *OPTIONAL: Response memo*: This is a separate, short document that details how you responded to the feedback you received from instructors and peers. Writing response memos is a standard document when submitting revisions to peer-reviewed journals. If you receive suggestions that you are *not* following or accommodating, you can use a response memo to 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 WED December 12th*

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. Also submit a response memo that details your responses to the feedback you received.

The working paper must include the following elements:

1. A well-developed *literature review* (not an annotated bibliography). We suggest that you look to well-respected sociological journals for guidance.
2. A very clear explanation on how your *contribution to the literature*. 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?
3. 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.
4. A clear write up of your *results*. 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.
5. **NOT REQUIRED**: At this point, a discussion section is not expected because it could change after revising the paper yet again.
6. **OPTIONAL**: Submit a response memo as a separate document, if you want to explain to the instructors why you decided to incorporate (or reject) particular pieces of feedback.

FIRST DRAFT OF COMPLETE PAPER (7,000-8,000 words)

*Due WED FEBRUARY 20<sup>th</sup>*

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 WED APRIL 20<sup>th</sup>*

The final paper is due the last day of the spring term. You will be expected to give a 15minute 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 alphabetically divided into reading groups of 3-4 students. You will present and provide feedback alongside as a group. You will present to the class twice in the semester, and you will also provide feedback (on two papers) twice in the semester.

*Group 1*: Anson Au, Olimpia Bidian, Natalia Bittencourt Otto  
Erika Canossini

*Group 2:* Lei Chai, Christopher Cooper, Yvonne Daoleuxay, Julia Ingenfeld

*Group 3:* Patrick Leduc, Laila Omar, Sebastien Parker, Patricia Roach

*Group 4:* Andrea Roman Alfaro, Dana Wray, Catherine Yeh

### Reading Group Process

- When you are *presenting*, you must post your work to Dropbox by noon the *day before class* (Tuesday).
- When you are *commenting* on your classmates papers, you must post your written comments by *the following Monday* at 9:00am.

### Class Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	TO DO	PRESENTING	COMMENTING
<b>May 15</b>	Introductions			
<b>May 30</b>	Finessing research topics & hearing from past students			
<b>June 29<sup>th</sup></b>	NO CLASS	<b>Submit Preliminary Research Statement</b>		
<b>Sept 12</b>	Discuss 1 <sup>st</sup> Research Statement + Reading Group Process	<b>Submit 1<sup>st</sup> research statement</b>		
<b>Sept 19</b>	Engaging in Social Research	<b>Read Assigned Readings</b>		
<b>Sept 26</b>	The Craft of Writing	<b>Read Assigned Readings</b>		
<b>Oct 3</b>			GROUP 1	GROUP 4
<b>Oct 10</b>			GROUP 2	GROUP 3
<b>Oct 17</b>			GROUP 3	GROUP 2
<b>Oct 24</b>			GROUP 4	GROUP 1
<b>OCT 31</b>	NO CLASS	<b>Submit 2<sup>nd</sup> Research Statement</b>		
<b>Nov 7</b>			GROUP 1	GROUP 4
<b>Nov 14</b>			GROUP 2	GROUP 3
<b>Nov 21</b>			GROUP 3	GROUP 2
<b>Nov 28</b>			GROUP 4	GROUP 1
<b>DEC 12</b>	NO CLASS	<b>Submit Working Paper</b>		

## ASSIGNED READING SCHEDULE

*\*NOTE: These are provisional reading selections, and may change.*

September 19<sup>th</sup>. Engaging in Social Research: A diversity of approaches

In this class we will discuss the nuts and bolts of good social research. We will also have a dialogue about the different goals and diverse traditions of sociological research.

*READ (and be prepared to discuss):*

- 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).

September 26<sup>th</sup>. The Craft of Writing: Finding a good question and then making it happen

In this class we will discuss one of the most essential questions facing sociological researchers: *how to "frame" a research question*. We will also important mechanical issues like writing style, finding the right journal, and how to "get it out the door".

*READ (and be prepared to discuss):*

- 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.

## OTHER Information relevant to Graduate Training

### Academic Integrity

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/>.

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) and *Code of Student Conduct* (<http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

#### Accessibility Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>.

#### Equity and Diversity Statement

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated. Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca>.