

## DOCTORAL RESEARCH PRACTICUM

SOC6711Y, 2021-2022

Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (*though some classes will end earlier*)

### 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 2022. 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:

#### *Grade Components*

1. Class participation during fall and winter terms (5% each)
2. Preliminary Research Statement (due June 25, pass/fail)
3. First Research Statement (due on First Class - September 15, pass/fail)
4. Second Research Statement (due November 3, pass/fail)
5. Working Paper (due December 8th, 30%)

6. First draft of complete paper (due February 17, pass/fail)
7. Final Paper (due April 13, 50%)
8. Pass/fail assignments (10%)

***Policy for late assignments:*** We will apply a late penalty of 5% per day for cases of undocumented lateness.

***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.vicereprovoststudents.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.

### ***Explanation of grade components***

**Pass/fail assignments:** Four pass/fail assignments add up to 10% of the final grade. An assignment is considered a pass if it is submitted on time and the work shows evidence of real engagement and effort, as determined by instructors.

**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. 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 and departmental research:** 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 one speaker series talk or job talk presentations in the department in the Fall or Winter. Write 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. You should post your assessment in your individual Dropbox folder.

\*\*If class will be held online: An important part of practicum participation is conveying interest, intellectual engagement, and enthusiasm for your colleague’s research projects. We understand that the online environment poses unique challenges for active participation. Nevertheless, disengagement is especially problematic during student presentations -- a time when students display their hard work to the class and are looking for collective support, encouragement, and fresh ideas. In the spirit of making the class as productive as possible for everyone, we offer the following best practices for the online experience.

- Use a reliable computer or tablet with a working camera and microphone
- Close unnecessary applications to avoid competing sound and computer processing ability
- Mute microphone while not speaking to avoid background noise
- If at all possible, please use video functionality. Feedback from body language and facial expression is an important element of communication, and we want to ensure that presenters have the fullest sense of active support from their peers.
- For more suggestions about how to enhance the video call experience, see this *NYT* article: <https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/blog/professional-video-call-from-home/>

#### Preliminary Research Statement: Due June 25

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? Or, how do parents in households living below the official poverty line manage childrearing and family wellbeing?).
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...; in the existing literature, how is the concept of “poverty” defined and studied? In what contexts, and with what assumptions?)
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. Please also describe the status of your data (do you have access, if collecting what stage are you at and what is your timeline).
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 September 15, 9:00am

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 descriptive 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 November 3, noon.

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:

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. *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 8, noon.

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) Stephen Porter’s “Writing and publishing a research paper in a peer reviewed journal.” These documents will be loaded to Dropbox folder. Submit again a response memo. 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 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, what makes it worth knowing, 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. 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.
5. At this point, a discussion section is not expected because it could change after revising the paper yet again.
6. Again, submit a response memo as a separate document.

First draft of complete paper: (7,000-8,000 words) Due March 3, noon.

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. The paper should include:

1. Title Page with name, date, word count. Include a title page footnote w/ Advisor, potential discussants, and target journals.

2. Abstract that conveys key elements of the research puzzle, sample/data, findings, and contribution (250-word max).
3. Introduction with a clear articulation/framing of the importance of this question for the scholarly literature and/or the welfare of society. Often intros are three paragraphs, with the first two outlining the issue/state of the literature, and the third indicating what this study, with this particular data, will do to extend that literature.
4. A well-developed critical literature review where you use the literature (empirical and/or theoretical) to set up the contribution of your research. Use meaningful headers. Often this section ends with a one-paragraph summary and restatement of your research questions.
5. A clear, concise description of the sample, data and measures.
6. A presentation and analysis of the results that directly address the central question(s) of your research project.
7. Discussion section that demonstrates your contribution by tying findings back to the relevant literature; discusses limitations of the study; and provides avenues for future research.
8. Brief conclusion section summarizing the contribution. This is typically only 1-2 paragraphs.

Final paper: (7,000-10,000 words) Due April 13, noon.

The final paper should be between 7,000-10,000 words. (We won't penalize you for going over, but recognize that many journals have word limits that are shorter than 10,000 words, and these limits include the abstract, endnotes/footnotes, and references.) The paper should include all the elements of the former draft but in a polished, publication-ready fashion in the style of the journal to which you plan to submit it. In this sense, it will be helpful for you to identify a suitable sociological journal for your paper and gain exposure to the structure and style of the range of articles it publishes.

You will be expected to give a 15 minute conference-style presentation on this work at the Practicum Conference. 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. For the fall, the class has been divided into four groups. It will work as follows:

- For fall
  - Group 2 will provide feedback for Group 1
  - Group 3 will provide feedback for Group 2
  - Group 4 will provide feedback for Group 3
  - Group 1 will provide feedback for Group 4

- Groups will be updated for winter, with details available in the Dropbox folder.

Though only one group is assigned to provide written feedback on your paper, everyone is required to read your paper and provide comments during class.

The process will work as follows: You will post your work-in-progress to Dropbox by Thursday at noon, the week before your presentation. Members of your reading group will post their written comments by the following Tuesday 9:00am.

Students will provide written comments on the work of two other students during Fall term (when submissions are shorter). Groups may be re-organized during the Winter term to ensure that students receive the most directed feedback possible as projects near completion.

Groups in the Fall

GROUP # 1	GROUP # 2	GROUP # 3	GROUP # 4
1. TBA	1. TBA	1. TBA	1. TBA

**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>.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at [distressedstudent.utoronto.ca](http://distressedstudent.utoronto.ca); Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

**EQUITY AND DIVERSITY:** 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 course instructors, we will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity 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>.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE (FALL)**

### **Sept. 15: Introduction**

- Review of syllabus
- Brief explanation of reading groups and research presentations
- Time for brief updates about how project has progressed since summer meeting
- For this class, please identify one published article that you find stimulating and inspiring. This article need not be on the same topic as your practicum paper, but it should be an exemplar for the type of intellectual product you aspire to create.

### **Sept. 22: 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:
  1. Kristin Luker. 2008. *Salsa Dancing in the social Sciences: Research in an age of info-glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 4. “What is this a case of, Anyway?”
  2. Charles Ragin. 1994. *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Chapter 2, “The goals of social research.”

### **Sept. 29: The Craft of Writing: Puzzles/Gaps/Innovations**

With 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.” We will especially focus on the challenge of effectively positioning one’s own project in the context of existing literature.
- Read and be prepared to discuss the following:

1. 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. 6: First Round Presentations**

- Group 1 presenting
- Group 2 commenting

**Oct. 13: First Round Presentations**

- Group 2 presenting
- Group 3 commenting

**Oct. 20: First Round Presentations**

- Group 3 presenting
- Group 4 commenting

**Oct. 27: First Round Presentations**

- Group 4 presenting
- Group 1 commenting

**Nov. 3: No Class \*Second Research Statement Due at noon\***

**\*Nov. 10: Second Round Presentations**

- Group 1 presenting
- Group 3 commenting

**Nov. 17: Second Round Presentations**

- Group 2 presenting
- Group 4 commenting

**Nov. 24: Second Round Presentations**

- Group 3 presenting
- Group 1 commenting

**Dec. 1: Second Round Presentations**

- Group 4 presenting
- Group 2 commenting

**Dec. 8: \*Working Paper Due, noon\* (No class)**

**WINTER TERM**

The Winter term is the continuation of Practicum and includes two major written assignments, as well as class attendance and participation, presentations, and written commentaries on others' research as central to the learning experience and the final grade.

The Winter term Practicum culminates in PAC, or the Practicum Annual Conference in the Sociology Department. It is held April 6-8 and faculty and grad students are invited. Students present their research, conference style, for 15 minutes, and discussant and audience members provide feedback.

The new reading groups will be arranged by the end of the Fall term.

For the fourth (final) round of presentations, we encourage you to invite your advisor to class (if they cannot make that date, you may suggest they attend your third round presentation). We hope this will encourage a wider dialogue on your work beyond what the students and faculty of the class have already provided.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE (VERY Tentative)**

#### **Jan 5 Discussion of second term goals; writing and publication strategies**

*Faculty Presentation:* Faculty perspectives on writing and the publication process

*Advanced Student Presentation:* Writing, from practicum to publication

With guest speakers of faculties and graduate students

**Jan 12 Third Round Presentations**

**Jan 19 Third Round Presentations**

**Jan 26 Third Round Presentations**

**Feb 2 Third Round Presentations**

**Feb 9 Placeholder**

**Feb 16 No class comp week?**

**Feb 23 No class; Reading week**

**Mar 2 No class; First draft of complete paper due, noon**

**Mar 9 Fourth Round Presentations**

**Mar 16 Fourth Round Presentations**

**Mar 23 Fourth Round Presentations**

**Mar 30 Fourth Round Presentations**

**April 7, 7 & 8 Practicum Conference (10am-2:10pm each day)**

**April 13 Final Paper Due, noon**