

Soc E 196A
Sociology Honors Program
Fall 2009, Mondays 11-1:50, SSB 414

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Sociology Honors Seminar, Part I

The Sociology Honors Program gives students the opportunity to do original research over two quarters. The main goals are to develop a specific research question; critically confront other scholars' efforts to answer it; collect the necessary data to answer it yourself; and present your findings in a methodologically sound paper of article length. At our seminar meetings, we'll explore the various steps of a research project, as illustrated by work each of us has underway. Along the way, you'll get plenty of help. Each student should discuss their ongoing work with their faculty adviser on a regular basis. You'll also meet frequently (*at least* every other week) with me to discuss problems and progress. You will also benefit from the commentary of other students in the class. In fact, the class will be run as a workshop, with students planning and discussing the various research projects collectively.

There are three books that provide guidance and useful tips over the two quarters of the seminar. I've ordered them all through Groundworks. If you prefer not to buy them, I've also placed them on reserve at the main library.

- The Sociology Writing Group, *Guide to Writing Sociology Papers* (Fifth ed)
- Robert Alford, *The Craft of Inquiry*
- Fred Pirczak and Randall Bruce, *Writing Empirical Research Reports* (Fifth ed)

The bulk for the course, naturally, centers on researching your thesis and writing up your paper. Both to highlight the different stages of research and to keep you on track, I will ask you to hand in "pieces" of the thesis at various points (see schedule below). I will also ask you to exchange drafts and to read, comment on, and (at one point) help edit one another's work. That sort of collaboration is a good way to learn, to support one another, and to rehearse what you will be doing in an academic career, should you choose one.

Grades: You will receive an "In Progress" (IP) grade for the fall quarter. At the end of the winter quarter, I will award a grade for both quarters. This will be based primarily on the quality of the thesis, with your faculty adviser adding his or her assessment to mine. I will also take into account seminar participation and completion of assignments on time. Assuming you maintain the required major and overall GPA, students who receive an "A-" for the seminar graduate with distinction; an "A" means graduation with high distinction, and an "A+," highest distinction.

SCHEDULE

September 28 meeting: Introductions

[Note: I have to leave campus at about 12:30, so this might be a slightly shorter meeting].

October 5 meeting: Discuss research questions.

Reading: *The Craft of Inquiry*, Chapters 1-3

A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, ch. 1

DUE IN CLASS: Bring to class one typed page in which you define your research question, as best you can at this point. Then discuss *at least* two possible answers that a sociologist might predict, depending on his/her theoretical perspective, and the kinds of empirical evidence you might find that would support each of these answers.

October 12 meeting: Literature reviews.

We'll discuss the goals and form of literature reviews, with a look at some samples.

Reading: *Writing Empirical Research Reports*, ch. 6

ANY THREE articles that interest you from the *American Journal of Sociology* (any online issue), scanning them less for their arguments than their format -- how they (1) introduce and justify the question, (2) review the literature, (3) describe their methods, (4) present their evidence and (5) draw their conclusions. Pay particular attention to 1 and 2 and be prepared to describe these for one article when we meet.

DUE IN CLASS: a bibliography of at least a few articles and at least a few books directly relevant to your research project.

October 19: Library workshop.

We'll meet with a library bibliographer to get guidance on search techniques. We'll also talk about how you can use bibliographic sources (e.g., subject guides or journal indexes) to refine and narrow research topics.

Note: meet in the Library Electronic Classroom in Geisel Library.

Reading: *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*, ch. 6

October 26. No seminar meeting. But ...

DUE ON OCTOBER 26: A rough draft of your introduction. Describe your research question and explain why the rest of us should care about the answer (relevance to larger scholarly debates and, if relevant, social policies).

November 2 meeting: Matching questions and research methods

Reading: *The Craft of Inquiry*, ch. 4 and 5 OR 6, depending on your research.

A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, ch. 7 OR 8, depending on your research.

DUE IN CLASS: a substantially expanded bibliography.

November 9. No seminar meeting. But ...

Be working on that literature review.

November 16 meeting: Managing "data" and citations in scholarly research.

Reading: *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*, ch. 3, on acknowledging sources

DUE IN CLASS: A rough draft of your literature review.

November 23. No seminar meeting. But ...

Be working on your methodology section.

November 30 meeting: Reports on progress and plans.

Be prepared to talk about a specific, week-by-week schedule for completing the thesis in the winter quarter.

Reading: *Writing Empirical Research Reports*, ch. 9, 13 (general tips on writing methods sections)

DUE IN CLASS: A rough draft of your methodology section.

