

Syllabus
Energy and Resources Group 290-05
Research Methods for the Social Sciences
3 units; CCN 27745
Tu & Th: 11 – 12:30
144 Barrows Hall
Professor Isha Ray (isharay@socrates.berkeley.edu)

This course aims to give graduate students an introduction to the rich diversity of research methods that social scientists have developed for the empirical aspects of their work. Its primary goal is to encourage critical thinking about the research process: how we “know”, how we match research methods to research questions, how we design and conduct our information/data collection, what we assume explicitly and implicitly, and the ethical dilemmas raised by fieldwork-oriented studies. The course will be broad rather than deep – it is a step towards, and not a substitute for, in-depth courses on interviewing or regression analysis or the philosophy of knowledge.

Most weeks will combine lecture and (student-led) class discussions. If you are one of the students leading the discussion, bring a research design problem to class that is of interest to you, and that is relevant to the material that week. This problem, as well as the readings, will be the focus of the discussion.

If you are not leading the class discussion, you should prepare a 1 page commentary on the readings (this could be your thoughts, questions, criticisms, whatever) to circulate to the entire group by the day before the relevant class.

An (approx) 20 page final paper (either a research design paper which focuses on the methodological issues, or a methodological critique of an existing piece of research) is due *on Friday, 5/23*.

The class can be taken P/NP. If you take it P/NP, there is no final paper (but the weekly commentaries and leading a discussion *are* required).

Books

Jean Converse and Stanley Presser: *Survey Questions*. Sage Publications.

(Can also be “checked out” as an e-book from an on-campus computer:

http://www.netlibrary.com/ebook_info.asp?product_id=24788)

Christopher Jencks: *The Homeless*. Harvard University Press.

John Lofland and Lyn Lofland: *Analyzing Social Settings*. Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Paul Rabinow. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. University of California Press.

C. Ragin and H. Becker: *What is a Case?* Cambridge Univ Press

C. Ragin: *The Comparative Method*. University of California Press (4 chapters assigned)

Books for the course are available at ASUC Bookstore (and also on reserve at Graduate Services, room 208 Doe Library). The reader for the course can be purchased at the Bancroft Street Copy Central.

Week 1

1/21

Introduction to course content (and to one another). Assignment of discussion topics for class-led sessions.

1/23

Overview lecture on ontology, epistemologies, research questions and research methods. (No readings assigned; but start reading ahead for Week 2)

Week 2: Knowledge in the Social Sciences

1/28 & 1/30

David Miller (editor). *Popper Selections*. Ch 7. (originally in *Conjectures and Refutations*); Ch 9, 10 (originally in *Logic of Scientific Discovery*)

Yuri Balashov and Alex Rosenberg (eds.). *Philosophy of Science: Contemporary Readings*. Ch 25 (Dudley Shapere on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* – this is an early review of Kuhn); & Ch 27 (David Bloor on *The Strong Programme in the Sociology of Knowledge*)

Deirdre McCloskey. *The Rhetoric of Economics*. Ch 1, 2.

Week 3: Explanation in the Social Sciences

2/4 & 2/6

Michael Martin & Lee McIntyre (editors). *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*. Ch 8 (H. Kincaid, *Defending Laws in the Social Sciences*); Ch 14 (C. Geertz, *Thick Description*); & Ch 25 (J. Elster, *Functional Explanation in Social Science*)

Daniel Little. *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Ch 3 (*Rational Choice*).

Week 4: Sampling and Data Collection

2/11 & 2/13

Norman Blaikie. *Designing Social Research*, pages 183 – 212

Stephen Devereux & John Hoddinott. *Fieldwork in Developing Countries*. Ch 3 (S. Devereux, *Observers are Worried*); & Ch 4 (W. Olsen, *Random Sampling and Repeat Surveys*)

Robert Wade. On the Sociology of Irrigation: How do we know the truth about canal performance? *Agricultural Administration*, **19**: 63 – 79. 1985

Week 5: Survey Research

2/18 & 2/20

Larry Converse & Jean Presser. *Survey Questions*.

Christopher Jencks. *The Homeless*. (including Appendix 1)

Week 6: Case Studies

2/25 & 2/27

Charles Ragin & Howard Becker. *What is a Case?* Ch 2, 5, 6, 9 & 10

Michael Burawoy et al. *Ethnography Unbound*. Ch 13

Week 7: Confidence Intervals, Hypothesis Testing and Regressions

3/4 & 3/6

Andrew Sayer. *Method in Social Science*. Ch 6 & 9

Deirdre McCloskey. *The Rhetoric of Economics*. Ch 9.

Week 8: Experimental Research Design

3/11 & 3/13

M. Brewer & B. Collins (editors). *Scientific Inquiry and the Social Sciences*. Ch 9 (Louise Kidder, *Qualitative Research and Quasi-Experimental Frameworks*)

David Dooley. *Social Research Methods*. Ch 8 (Quasi-experimentation)

Week 9: Cases, variables and the Comparative Method

3/18 & 3/20

Charles Ragin. *The Comparative Method*, Ch 1, 3, 4 & 5

Vijayendra Rao. Experiments in Participatory Econometrics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 18 2002.

Isha Ray and Jeffrey Williams. Locational asymmetry and the potential for cooperation on a canal. *Journal of Development Economics*, **67**: 129–155. 2002.

Week 10: Archival Methods

4/1

Emile Durkheim on *Suicide*. Introduction, Ch 1-1, 2-1 & 2-2.

[not in the reader. You can buy this book 2nd hand pretty easily; plus it is on reserve; plus I will keep a copy in the ERG Reading Room]

4/3

Amartya Sen on *Poverty and Famines*, Ch 4 & 6.

Week 11: Interviewing (1)

4/8 & 4/10

John Lofland & Lyn Lofland. *Analyzing Social Settings* (pages 66 – 89; 181 – 203)

Stephen Devereux and John Hoddinott (eds): *Fieldwork in Developing Countries*. Ch 8 (G. Christensen, *Sensitive information*)

Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (editors). *Women's Words*. Ch 1 (K. Anderson & D. Jack, *Learning to Listen*); & Ch 4 (K. Borland, *That's Not What I Said*)

Week 12: Interviewing (2)

4/15 & 4/17

No readings this week. Think of a research question for which you would need to conduct interviews. Prepare an interview and conduct this interview with one or two persons.

Write a short report outlining: the research question, why you had to interview and whom you chose to interview, what questions did you ask, what were the responses, what did the responses imply, did the responses make you re-think your research question or the use / limits of the interview... Also say what sort of sample you would have used, had this been a real research project. Send in these papers by Monday 4/7.

In class we will discuss these interviews, their “results” and any problems that arose.

Week 13: Participant Observation

4/22 & 4/24

John Lofland & Lyn Lofland. *Analyzing Social Settings* (pages 16 – 41; 66 – 78; 89 – 98; and re-read 181 – 203)

Michael Burawoy et al. *Ethnography Unbound*. Ch 13 (re-read)

Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (editors). *Women's Words*. Ch 7 (J. Stacey, *Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?*)

Patricia Golden. *The Research Experience*, pages 40 – 84

Week 14: Ethics of Fieldwork

4/29 & 5/1

The UC Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects follow the Belmont Report:

<http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm>

Stephen Devereux and John Hoddinott (eds): *Fieldwork in Developing Countries*. Ch 12 (K. Wilson, *Thinking about the ethics of fieldwork*)

Clifford Geertz. *Available Light*. Ch 2

Diane Wolf. *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*. Ch 1 (D. Wolf, *Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*); Ch 2 (Günseli Berik, *Understanding the Gender System in Rural Turkey*)

Myron Glazer. *The Research Adventure* (pages 59 – 69; 80 – 96; 106 – 115).

Week 15**5/6**Paul Rabinow. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*.**5/8**

Putting it all together. (No readings assigned).