SOCIAL RESEARCH METHODS COMPS EXAM 2007-2008

For the comps exam in social research methods, you will be asked to write an essay reviewing and critiquing an empirical research article that will be selected by the Sociology/Anthropology Department faculty. You will receive the research article on Monday, March 24, and will write your essay during the designated comps exam period on comps exam day (March 29).

To prepare for this exam:

1. Begin by reviewing your materials for SoAn 240, Social Research Methods, and other general research methods resources. (See the list of suggested resources, below.) Review the list of concepts on the attached study guide (“Key Concepts in Research Design”). You should be able to identify all these concepts, and comment on their relevance in social research. You should also read Appendix B, “Questions to Ask About a Research Article,” and Appendix C, “How to Read A Research Article,” in *Investigating the Social World*, 4th Ed., by Russell K. Schutt Pine Forge Press, 2004. You should complete the exercise in Appendix C. This is excellent practice for the methods comps exam!

2. By the end of fall term, you will receive a list of empirical research articles. The article that you will be asked to review for the comps exam will be selected from this list, as well as from a list of three articles that you will submit. An essential part of your preparation for the comps exam should be “practice critiques” of the articles on this list. We will schedule at least two study sessions during winter term, which will include a discussion of your practice critiques.

3. By the end of winter term, you should identify three additional empirical research articles in the area of the substantive field in which you are taking the fourth part of the comps exam (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.). Copies of these articles (or their url’s) should be provided to Professor Nagel no later than the last day of winter term exams, Wednesday, March 14th.

4. In addition to the study sessions, you should also feel free to meet with Professor Nagel for help in preparing for the exam. To schedule a meeting, call Becky Krogh (x4301).

**Suggested Research Methods Texts (including those used in SoAn 240):**


Key Concepts in Research Design

Be able to identify the following and say why they are important in research design:

reactive vs. non-reactive research approaches
reliability
validity
generalizability
establishing causation
dependent vs. independent variables
hypothesis and model
scope conditions
concept
operationalization of concepts
classic deductive model
unit of analysis
unit of observation
ecological fallacy
reductionist fallacy
population
sample
cross-sectional design
longitudinal design
fallacy of inferring change from cross-sectional data
age/period/cohort effects
ethics in research design: especially voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality
decception in research
spurious relationship
association vs. causation
How should a rate ideally be defined?
Sampling frame
Central limit theorem
Random sample
Stratified sample
Systematic sample
Response rate
Pre-test of questionnaire/interview instrument
Closed-ended questions vs. open-ended questions
Level of measurement (e.g., nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio)
Mean, median, and mode - and when should you use them
Standardized regression coefficient
Unstandardized regression coefficient
$R^2$
Tests of probability (chi-squared, t, f)