SOAN 240  Methods of Social Research

Instructor Contact Information
Professor:       Annette Nierobisz  Office:       234 Leighton
Email:           anierobi@carleton.edu  Phone:      (507) 222-4114
Office Hours: T: 9:00-10:30 am / W: 2:30-4:00 pm / additional times by appointment only

Course Objectives
How do we know what we know about the social world? In the next ten weeks, you will learn some of the key research methods that form the “SOAN understandascope.” In reviewing these methods, the underlying logic will be emphasized in addition to the fundamentals of research design, data collection, data analysis, and summary of research findings. By the end of the course you will be more confident about your own research skills, better equipped to assess which methods best answer specific socio-cultural questions, and more knowledgeable about the range of challenges researchers encounter in the field.
Student Learning Outcomes

Methods of Social Research is a foundational course in your SoAn career. You will learn several methods sociologists and anthropologists employ in their research while bonding with your fellow majors. The course provides a civic engagement component that creates opportunities for you to collaborate with the Carleton and Northfield communities. You will also develop and practice important methodological skills, expanding your intellectual prowess.

As a SoAn course, we will concentrate on the following four departmental “student learning outcomes”:

- Formulate appropriate sociological and/or anthropological research questions about socio-cultural phenomena;
- Select appropriate sociological and/or anthropological research methods to study socio-cultural phenomena;
- Describe how sociology and anthropology interact with one another and contribute to various interdisciplinary conversations.
- Engage the world by drawing upon your understanding of historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena.

As a “writing rich course,” these six learning objectives will be emphasized:

- Understand writing as a process and develop an effective process for methodological writing;
- Learn how to seek and use feedback from a variety of sources;
- Gain greater awareness of audience and voice and see yourself as part of a community of scholars;
- Learn how to use SoAn forms of citation;
- Understand accepted guidelines for academic honesty;
- Develop confidence in your methodological writing.

Course Texts

Four books are required for this course:


Additional readings are available electronically. Complete the assigned readings before class. Read the material closely, take effective notes, determine what is clear and what needs further clarification, and consider how core ideas can be connected across readings. Finally, if a link to a reading does not work, let me know so I can fix it. For every online article, however, I have provided the full bibliographic information so that you may retrieve a copy of the reading from JSTOR or another database while waiting for the link to be fixed.

Course Requirements

Assignments

There are four course assignments, all designed to increase your comprehension of the methods and practices used by sociologists and anthropologists. The first assignment, a research proposal, asks you to do some reflective writing while also creating a topic, research question, and specifying a methodological approach for answering your research question. The second assignment asks you and one or two classmates to design a survey. The third assignment asks you and a classmate to write up your multiple regression findings. The fourth assignment asks you and two classmates to each conduct an in-depth interview and then analyze your collective set of transcripts. Be advised that some assignments are due on non-class days. In these instances, a hard copy is required in my SoAn mailbox by 5 pm on the due date. Hard copies of assignments due on class days will be submitted in class (email copies are not accepted).

Methods of Social Research is a writing rich course and thus has a revision requirement. You are welcome to rewrite some sections of your research proposal and the multiple regression paper, but only after we’ve met, discussed our respective reactions, and you’ve shared your plans for rewriting the paper in a timely manner that ensures personal success.

Participation

You participation, worth 10 points, will be evaluated according to mandatory class attendance, punctuality, and completion of the assigned readings so that your comments and questions have solid grounding and advance class discussion. Participation also involves listening when others, both your classmates and me, are speaking. Cell phones and other technology are not welcome in my classroom. You may use your personal computers to pull up class readings but in-class notes should be taken with paper and pen. If you have a personal circumstance that merits exception to this request, please see me about it in advance. Students who meet the standards of class participation at only the most basic level will receive the “default” participation grade of 6 points. Students who miss more than three classes risk forfeiting their participation grade.
Table 1. Summary of Class Requirements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Distribution Date</th>
<th>Due Date*</th>
<th>Points Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>01/06</td>
<td>01/18 (topic &amp; question)</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>01/06</td>
<td>02/01 (exploration of the research literature)</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>01/06</td>
<td>02/22 (Where are you now? Topic, question,</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>literature, and methods)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>01/06</td>
<td>03/08 (methods plan)</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>01/25</td>
<td>02/09</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple regression</td>
<td>02/03</td>
<td>02/19</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth interview</td>
<td>02/19</td>
<td>03/04 (transcript)</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>03/14 (final paper)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>01/04</td>
<td>per requirements</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No extensions will be provided. Late submissions will have a ½ point deducted for each day late.

Grade range: “A” = 90-100%; “B” = 80-89%; “C” = 70-79%; “D” = 60-69%; “F” <= 59%

Course Outline

1. The Fundamentals of Social Inquiry

As a SOAN student at Carleton, I learned to think of myself as a researcher. When I studied the long-term reintegration of former guerrilla fighters for my Comps project, I didn't realize that this was just the first of many research projects I would undertake in my career.”

– Laura Heideman '03, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Northern Illinois University

What is this Course About?

Loseke, Donileen. 2013. Methodological Thinking. Preface

A letter to the 2016 Methods students from SOAN senior, Porter Truax (moodle).

1/6

Epistemological Assumptions of Social Research
Loseke, Donileen. 2013. Methodological Thinking. Chapters 1 and 2


- Research proposal assignment will be distributed

1/8-11

Ethical Requirements of Social Research
1/8
Morris, Alan. 2015. A Practical Introduction to In-Depth Interviewing. Chapter 2

Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (know the main points)

American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (know the main points)

Review the website of Carleton’s Institutional Review Board, specifically the sections How Do I Apply, About the IRB, and Frequently Asked Questions: http://apps.carleton.edu/governance/institutional_review_board/

1/11

- Guests: Professor Constanza Ocampo-Raeder, Assistant Professor of Anthropology; Luisa Rodriguez, SOAN major; and Victoria Rachmaninoff, SOAN major

1/13

Selecting a Topic, Creating a Question

Loseke, Donileen. 2013. Methodological Thinking. Chapter 3

• Question: What research question will guide your methods proposal? Email this question to anierobi@carleton.edu by noon on 1/12.

1/15

Reviewing the Literature (class meets in Library 306)

Loseke, Donileen. 2013. Methodological Thinking. Chapter 4


1/18

Elements of Research Design


• Research topic and question due

1/20

Measurement

Loseke, Donileen. 2013. Methodological Thinking. Chapter 5


1/22

Sampling

Loseke, Donileen. 2013. Methodological Thinking. Chapter 7


2. Quantitative Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

I use social statistics and social theory every day... For example, I recently completed an enrollment model for a small liberal arts college that was designed to predict which admitted students would enroll at the college. This model was grounded in a sociological understanding of how geographic, demographic and socioeconomic variables influence decision making and was built using advanced statistical techniques, which I first learned at Carleton.

- Rich Majerus ’07, Director of Advancement Strategy and Analysis, Colby College

1/25-29  
Surveys
1/25
Andres, Lesley. 2012. Designing & Doing Survey Research. Chapters 1, 2, and 3


• Survey assignment will be distributed

1/27
Andres, Lesley. 2012. Designing & Doing Survey Research. Chapters 4, 5, and 7

1/29
Andres, Lesley. 2012. Designing & Doing Survey Research. Chapters 8 and 10

2/1  
Accessing Survey Data (class meets in Library 306)


• Exploration of the research literature assignment due

2/3  
Analyzing Survey Data with SPSS: First Steps (class meets in CMC 110)

SPSS Statistics Essential Training at lynda.com. Go to https://wiki.carleton.edu/display/itskb/Lynda.com and log on. Search for the SPSS session with Barton Poulson and watch the two sessions associated with “Getting
“Touring the interface” and “Reading data from a spreadsheet.” Total listening
time is approximately 15 minutes).

States] (ICPSR 4549). Review the User Guide (DS0) and the Codebook for the Student
Data (DS4) (moodle).

- Multiple regression assignment will be distributed

2/5 Getting to Know Your Data Better (class meets in CMC 110)
Allison, Paul. 1999. *Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Chapter 1

SPSS Statistics Essential Training at lynda.com. Go to
https://wiki.carleton.edu/display/itskb/Lynda.com and log on. Search for the SPSS
session and watch “5. Descriptive Statistics for One Variable” (total listening time = 15m
14s) and “3. Modifying Data” (total listening time is approximately 44m 45s).

2/8 MIDTERM BREAK

2/09 Survey due

2/10 Analyzing Bivariate Relationships (class meets in CMC 110)

SPSS Statistics Essential Training at lynda.com. Go to
https://wiki.carleton.edu/display/itskb/Lynda.com and log on. Search for the SPSS
session and watch the Correlation, Bivariate Regression, and Two Categorical Variables:
Crosstabulations sections of “8. Statistics for Association: (total listening time
approximately 17 minutes).

2/12-15 Modeling Relationships of Multiple Variables (class meets in CMC 110)
2/12

SPSS Statistics Essential Training at lynda.com. Go to
https://wiki.carleton.edu/display/itskb/Lynda.com and log on. Search for the SPSS
session and watch the Multiple Regression section of “8. Statistics for Association” (total
listening time: 10m 20s)
2/15
Allison, Paul. 1999. *Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Chapters 2 and 6


2/17
Presenting Quantitative Findings (back to our regular classroom)

SPSS Statistics Essential Training at lynda.com. Go to https://wiki.carleton.edu/display/itskb/Lynda.com and log on. Search for the SPSS session and watch the following sections in “9. Sharing results: Formatting Tables for Presentation and Publication & Exporting Charts and Tables” (total listening time approximately 15 minutes).


3. *Qualitative Methods of Data Collection and Analysis*

*Working in international public health there is a tendency to adhere only to the statistical evidence. However, when managing a program dealing with individual's personal and health choices there are many cultural considerations that cannot be quantified. Being perceptive of alternative interpretations or perceptions is critical to creating a program that really addresses the needs of those it is meant to serve.*

- Seth Proctor ’08, HIV Diagnostics Manager at Clinton Health Access Initiative

2/19-24
In-depth Interviewing

2/19
Morris, Alan. 2015. *A Practical Introduction to In-Depth Interviewing*. Chapters 1 and 3


- In-depth interview assignment will be distributed

- Multiple regression paper due

2/22
Morris, Alan. 2015. *A Practical Introduction to In-Depth Interviewing*. Chapters 4, 5, and 6
• Proposal check-in due

2/24
Morris, Alan. 2015. *A Practical Introduction to In-Depth Interviewing*. Chapters 7 and 8

2/26
Participant Observation Fieldwork


2/29
Writing Field Notes

  o Guest: Professor Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg, Broom Professor of Social Demography and Anthropology and Director of African/African American Studies

3/2
Analyzing Fieldnotes and Other Qualitative Data


  o Guest: Carol Trosset, Associate Director, Institutional Research and Assessment

3/4
Practicing Participant Observation Fieldwork

  o Guest: Constanza Ocampo-Raeder, Assistant Professor of Anthropology

• Interview transcript due
Presenting Qualitative Data


Methods plan due

Wrapping up Methods of Social Research

Class Presentation to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (1:00 pm)

In-depth interview paper due