Course Description:
This class is designed to give sociology students an awareness of the diversity and commonalities of methods of sociological analysis, by critically studying exemplary works. Students will do a number of exercises in which they make use of each and every method studied. I hope that at the conclusion you understand (1) how to choose a sociological research project that will not be a dead end; (2) how to choose a method that will help you answer your questions and will also be fun for you; (3) how to critically evaluate the presentation of evidence in support of theoretical claims.

Structure:
We will go through a number of different methods, namely historical, ethnography, experimental, and interviewing, spending time that is roughly in proportion to the distribution of use among Rutgers students. But first we will start with some general aspects of method in sociology. We will also close with a discussion of the presentation of results, which may be different from the process of obtaining results.

Each day will involve a combination of lecture and discussion. Usually I will have something prepared regarding 1) what is distinctive about a certain method, its advantages and disadvantages; 2) who uses these methods and why; 3) how the common methodological themes play out here; 4) how the works we read illustrate the methods. Then we will discuss the works in question, paying attention to 1) do the methods work? 2) were the methods done well? 3) do the methods match the questions? 4) do we see advantages or disadvantages to the method come out in the examples?

Requirements: 1) Active attendance. That means (a) coming prepared (doing “all” the reading); (b) discussing the works and the results of the exercises. 2) Writing up weekly musings on the reading (i.e. you are to keep a journal in which you critically analyze the methods as they whizz past). We’re talking just a two-page reaction to the readings. 3) Completion of exercises. You will have to carry out mini-projects using historical, interviewing, ethnographic, and experimental methods. TAKE ALL OF THESE SERIOUSLY, which means think of a serious topic and how it is linked to the method in question.* THERE IS NO FINAL PAPER, although I would be happy to read any paper you are working on for a different class that employs one of these methods.

YES, there are a lot of books to read, and the price adds up too. But a small investment in terms of the development of a methodological sense repays itself a thousand fold. As they say. The following books are going to be at the Livingston book store. If you can’t afford them, you can

* It might be a good idea to do all your exercises on the same theoretical question—that way, you learn about how to approach the same problem from different sides. But feel free to use these exercises to explore alternative questions.
probably squeeze by using the library and borrowing from other people, but talk to me. Every one of these books is something any sociologist should have anyway. All the other things (marked with a * here; things with ** have yet to be selected and copied) are in a “reader.” Actually, the reader exists only in potential. You’ll make your own—it would have been insanely expensive to get all the copyright permission for a few copies. So instead I’ll either put these readings on reserve at the library, or put in the Sergeant Joyce Kilmer Memorial graduate student lounge. If they’re in the library, each week will have a packet under the last name of the first author used. So for instance, week 3 would be under “Rothenberg.” Just remember the number of the course and my name to get them. Also, the recommended readings given below are to get anyone started who wants to pursue one method in greater detail. They are a combination of classics and personal favorites, and no, I haven’t read each and every one.

Speaking of reading each and every one, in case I forget to say it the first day, I am aware that some weeks the amount of assigned reading exceeds reasonable expectations even for graduate student rite-of-passage overload. For example, week 6 is pretty heavy for someone who isn’t familiar with the problems under consideration. And the book we’re reading in week 7 is gigantic. When, as in week 6, the reading is huge and multiple, it is quite acceptable to focus on a subset of the works, but to try to familiarize yourself with the methods and arguments of the others. Where we read a large book, I will usually suggest parts to concentrate on, but if I don’t, read selectively if you must, so as to focus on the methods, argument, and connection of the two.

**Required Books:**
- Revolution and Rebellion by Jack Goldstone, $19.95
- What is a Case? By Charles Ragin and Howard Becker $?
- TBA
- Making It Count by Stanley Lieberson $15.95
- Street Corner Society by William Foote Whyte $14.95
- Money, Morals, and Manners by Michele Lamont $12.95
- America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone, by Claude Fischer $16.95

**Recommended:**
- Lucky Jim by Kingsley Amis $10.95. This is not a sociological work. It is a work of fiction, occasionally degenerating into a male fantasy. BUT it’s very funny and a quick read, and will pick you up when you’re burned out on the other stuff. AND it may be the best introduction to the academic field there is, to this freakish nightmare you have chosen to call home. This will be at the bookstore, I’m so convinced you’ll like it. Other less silly but more depressing analyses: Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” pp. 129-158 in From Max Weber, espec p. 134, Pierre Bourdieu, Homo Academicus, The State Nobility. They’re not at the bookstore, but are all in print.

**SCHEDULE...**
**Week 1 (September 7):** General Introduction: Rutgers, This Course, Sociology, Methods, Whatever. If there’s time left over after we all get friendly, I’ll start right in on next week’s material, ‘coz there’s a lot to cover!
Recommended reading: Why not take a look at Weber’s “Science as a Vocation” on the ideal ethos of being a professional “scientist.” No one actually lives up to this, but if it really makes you want to hurl, expect some rough times ahead!


Required Reading: Lieberson, Making it Count. Read it all…or as much as you can! Look, this is a critique of the way of thinking that I’m just teaching you! Obviously, it’s a bit tough, but I figured if you had to read anything, you might as well read this. Don’t feel you need to “grok” everything he says. But this will be an invaluable resource in the future….

Further recommended reading:
Regarding selective abstraction, you might want to take a good look at Max Weber’s On the Methodology of the Social Sciences, a collection of three fine polemics. It also gives you a good inoculation against the “variable” language we’ll generally be slipping into. If you need “help” with Weber on concept formation, probably the best secondary treatment is Thomas Burger’s Max Weber’s Theory of Concept Formation. Some may have a few quibbles here and there, but it’s basically spot on. Regarding the normal ways of talking about variables and all that, there are a number of standard works, but all go pretty quickly into survey analysis, statistics, or both (indeed, the more focused they are on survey analysis or statistics, often the better the initial discussions). Classic examples are Hubert Blalock, Social Statistics; Morris Rosenberg, The Logic of Survey Analysis, Earl Babbie, The Language of Social Research. But I thought I might as well just tell you the stuff in the form we need it now. That means you don’t have to read these, but the drawback is you don’t know what Lieberson’s talking about. There are also some books on sociological methodology that are collections of insight and wisdom and all that. The best I’ve read is Howard Becker’s Tricks of the Trade, but there are too few tricks per column inch to justify assigning it. Also, a great collection on sociological methodology—the hows, whys, and is-it-ockyes, (I’m sure long out of print, otherwise I would have assigned it) is Fist-Fights in the Kitchen edited by George H. Lewis. Regarding the issues Lieberson raises, a recent volume: Causality in Crisis, edited by Vaughn McKim & Stephen Turner (U of Notre Dame) might prove helpful.

I. ETHNOGRAPHICAL
Week 3 (September 21): Non-participant Observation: Watching and asking.

Further recommended reading:
A fantastic work is Paul Willis’s Learning to Labor; the problem is that the ethnography is mostly interviewing and he seems to have had the theory before he began (cf. The quantitative study by John Hagan, “Delinquency and Despair…” Social Forces(1997) 76:119-134, to Willis’s book). See Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, Laboratory Life for an example of an attempt to view one’s own culture from the outside, even if it’s a bit silly sometimes. We previously used Mitchell Duneier, Slim’s Table, but it is somewhat quirky in methodology. One form of sociological research that stands somewhat outside of traditional ethnography is called “ethnomethodology,” which can involve the researcher as an anti-participant, one who forces a “breaching” in the construction of local reality, thereby allowing the taken-for-granted to be made visible. I’ve never been able to make head or tails of ethnomethodology beyond this, but you might want to take a look. Harold Garfinkle’s Studies in Ethnomethodology would be the natural place to start, except that it doesn’t seem to have all that much to do with ethnomethodology. Am I missing something?

Week 4 (September 28): Participant Observation: Watching, asking, playing.
Required Reading: William. H. Whyte, Streetcorner Society, Intro, Ch 1, Ch 5, Conclusion, Appendices A and B, Whyte, “Revisiting Street Corner Society.” Selections from Martín Sánchez Jankowski, Islands in the Street.
Not required but available and I’ll briefly mention: You may look at Harriet Whitehead, Renunciation and Reformulation, selection*--it’s one of my favorite examples of ethnography, but it’s hard to get from this excerpt.

Further recommended reading:
Michael Burawoy; Manufacturing Consent is another good example of P-O leading to strong theoretical claims. Come to think of it, so is his Politics of Production. He lays out his manifesto in “The Extended Case Method,” Sociological Theory16(1998):4-33 and in portions of Ethnography Unbound, referred to in Week 8. There are too many great ethnographies to privilege a few here, and also lots of anguished self-analyses of fieldworkers. Look perhaps at Paul Rabinow’s Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco.

BEGIN Ethnographical Exercise: Choose a site and do observations. You may, if necessary, select a site in which you are simply observing people, or one to which you have pre-existing ties, but far, far, better will be participant-observation in a previously unfamiliar site, one chosen because of theoretical interest. Write up the results as follows: 1) did you have a hypothesis or hunch when you began? If so, what was it? If not, why did you pick the site (and here, “convenience” is deadly!)? 2) What did you find that was interesting? 3) If you had a hypothesis or question, was it addressed by what you found? If so, what is the result? 4) If you didn’t have a hypothesis or question when you began, did you get one after the fact? What is it? 5) Ethnographers in contrast to other sociologists are permitted to reflect upon their research in each and every work. Tell about your personal experience as it relates to your conclusions: did you feel phony? Did you establish rapport? Are you confident that people were telling you the truth? Did you have main informants? Due Week 7, i.e. October 9!
**Week 5 (October 5):** Issues in Ethnography: Access, Lying Researchers, Lying Informants, Confidentiality and the Courts, Positional Interpretations.


**Further recommended reading:**
For an example of ethnography without the usual form of rapport, see Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People*, introduction. For a glimpse of the other side, see Frederik Barth’s criticism, “On Responsibility and Humanity: Calling a Colleague to Account.” *Contemporary Anthropology* 15:99-102 (and Turnbull’s non-response on the next page). Leon Festinger’s *When Prophecy Fails* has a classic instance of a serious problem in covert ethnography—the researchers change the evolution of the group they are studying. There is a recent collection of problems like that experienced by Ellis entitled *When They Read What We Write*, edited by Caroline B. Brettell, Bergin and Garvey Publishers 1993. A widely cited guide to organizing ethnographic data is John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland, *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (Wadsworth).

**II. HISTORICAL**
**Week 6 (October 12):** Non-comparative but systematic: History meet sociology, sociology, gobble up history.


**Further recommended reading:**
Kai Erikson’s *Wayward Puritans* is a classic of a different type of historical sociology; Carlo Ginzburg’s *The Cheese and the Worms* is another fantastic exemplar of a different approach, as is Peter Bearman’s *Relations into Rhetorics*. For classics, see Charles Tilly, *The Vendée*, and Ferdinand Braudel’s *The Mediterranean*. You may compare a short piece by Markoff in the *AJS* in 1996 or 7. Another interesting work might be: *City of Capital* by Bruce Carruthers. Most of
the non-comparative but systematic is really done by historians. Some personal faves: Carole Shammas, The Preindustrial Consumer, Michael Katz, Michael Docet, and Mark J. Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism. Hmmm…this is kind of running into the social history that appears in week 13—damn, my typology is falling apart.

**Week 7 (October 19):** Comparative-Historical: The Millsian Method.
**Required Reading:** Charles Ragin’s The Comparative Method, selections**, Goldstone, Revolution and Rebellion, selections** TBA.

*Further recommended reading:*
Some of the most famous comparative-historical works are the following: Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions; Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy; Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, and Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism. My favorite piece of comparative historical sociology is The Fabrication of Labor, by Richard Biernacki. Goldstone also has a nice short version in the American Sociological Review, c. 1989; also see Philip Gorski (“The Disciplinary Revolution”, American Journal of Sociology c. 1996). A collected volume of essays (Skocpol, editor), Vision and Method in Historical Sociology has some interesting contributions in the form of critical analyses of famous guys. (We’ll be taking a bit of that below.) Guy Swanson’s Religion and Regime is also a fascinating comparative study. Mary Fulbrook, Piety and Politics is also a meso-classic.

BEGIN Historical Exercise: Formulate a theoretical question with a (potentially or intrinsically) historical answer, whether comparative or non-comparative. Lay out a research design that would address the question. Explain (1) the cases to be used; (2) the data to be analyzed; (3) the sources to be consulted; (4) how this addresses the question with which you began. Take a look at one of the sources you list in (3) (yes, they must be real). Does it turn out to contain what you thought it would (2)? **DUE WEEK 9, i.e. November 9.**

**Week 8 (October 26):** Historical Logic and Methods: How do you get data? How do you get findings?
**Required Reading:** Theda Skocpol, “Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology,” in Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, Stanley Lieberson, “Small Ns, big conclusions”*, What is a Case?, pieces by Abbott, Platt (skim), Becker; Bourdieu, Homo Academicus, postscript (p. 194-225).

*Further recommended reading:*
Jennifer Platt’s Articles on “Evidence and Proof in Documentary Research I and II” (Sociological Research (1981:31-66) are well regarded and widely cited, but you don’t need to read these “Plattitudes” until you’re a little further along—if ever. (There’s a bit too much about antiques for scholars of your tender years.). Her History of Sociological Research Methods in America (Cambridge) might be interesting. On the problem of small Ns, see Charles Tilly, Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons. (Selections from this may be added to this weeks reading.) Before I used Goran Ohlin, “No Safety in Numbers: Some Pitfalls of Historical Statistics,” in Henry Rosovsky, ed, Industrialization in Two Systems. (NY: Wiley, 1966), p. 68-90 (it’s boring, but it shows how nit picky you have to be…. and Hyman Mariampolski and Dana C. Hughes, “The Use of Personal Documents in Historical Sociology” The American

III. INTERVIEWING

Week 9 (November 2): In-depth interviewing: Tell me everything!

Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, Becoming an Ex, selections and Appendix B**, Michele Lamont, Money Morals Manners: This is a fun book, and a quick read, but if you don’t want to read it all, read the note to the reader, prologue, chapters 1 through 4, and the Appendixes. That’s skipping the explanatory stuff and the what-does-this-say-about-Bourdieu part.

Further recommended reading:

James Spradley’s The Ethnographic Interview is an interesting manual for question-asking, but the technique advocated really is focused around interviewing informants when one doesn’t know much, as opposed to the more focused interview style. Robert S. Weiss, Learning from Strangers might be a better one for most purposes. Ann Swidler, Talk of Love will be a great book that uses some interesting interview techniques such as vignettes; the theory, however, isn’t all from the interviewing.

BEGIN Interviewing exercise. Think of a question that you might be able to answer by asking people. And not a whole bunch of people, just some. Who would you interview? How would you get this information? Do two in-depth interviews. The first should be with someone who is not a sociologist. I understand you’ll probably have to hit on someone you know pretty well, but the more distant the better. For the second, interview someone in the class (I will assign your interviewee). For both, try to get the information you want to answer your question. (I suggest you tape record the interview, unless you are an expert note-taker. Give yourself an hour or so for each interview.) When you’re done, write up your report as follows: 1) the question or hunch; 2) whom you would interview if this was a real project; 3) whom you actually chose to interview; 4) how you think the interview went; 5) what you learned. Do you think you could answer your question with more of these interviews? Give snippets. NOW ATTACH A SECOND PART—tell me about the interview in which you were the subject. Did you think it went well? Did the questions make sense? Did the interviewer establish rapport? Did they get information that was misleading? Did you ever withhold information or lie?

Due Week 12, i.e. November 21!

Week 10 (November 9): Surveys: Race, Class, Sex, Religion.

Further recommended reading:
A note on question writing. The course will focus on those methods that graduate students are likely to use. It is not likely that many students will write closed-choice questionnaires (standard surveys), and hence I haven’t focused on writing them. If you ever go on to do that, you will have to learn this—it’s not easy. The best book on this is still Payne’s The Art of Asking Questions. One of my favorite works of survey research is Sal Oropesa, “Consumer Possession, Consumer Passions, and Subjective Well Being.” 1995 Sociological Forum.

IV. DEMOGRAPHIC
Week 11 (November 16): Money, Population, and other things.
Required Reading: Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer, The Female Labor Force in the United States (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1970), 1-27, 52, 56-63, 141-189; Emile Durkheim, Suicide, [41-46], 46-52, 104-122, 152-160, 171-202 (especially), [208-216], [246-258], 259-276 (especially). Note that it is assumed that students have read much of Suicide for their theory class. The assigned page numbers are to brush up on the methodological aspects. Those who have not already read Suicide should add the page numbers in brackets.

Further recommended reading:
Eric Oliver’s dissertation includes a lovely analysis of the causes of decreased civic participation in the suburbs. is a definitive study of the reasons for the growth in female labor force participation, basically using economic statistics and a few reasonable assumptions about human motivation.

V. MULTIMETHOD
Week 12 (NOTE: SPECIAL DATE: MEETS November 21): Social and cultural data, sales and what have you!

Further recommended reading:
This kind of brings us back to the social history that falls under “systematic but non-comparative,” but I see a special method required when you have to assemble a wide variety of different types of data. I haven’t included any social-intellectual history because the method is too hard to teach, but some good sociological examples are Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, David Zaret, The Heavenly Contract.

VI. EXPERIMENTAL
Week 13 (November 30): Social-Psychological Experiments: Do you have society in a tin?
Further recommended reading:
Classic experiments are by Solomon Asch (see his Social Psychology for a bunch of them), Muzafer Sherif (“The Autokinetic Effect,” a version is in his Social Interaction), and Stanley Milgram, Obedience to Authority. Regarding a discussion of the uses and limitations of experiments, I am fond of “Can You Really Study an Army in the Laboratory?” by Morris Zelditch, Jr., in Amitai Etzioni and Edward Lehman, eds., A Sociological Reader on Complex Organizations. One of my favorite experimental studies is the incredibly bold sociology of knowledge by Breer and Locke, Task Experience as a Source of Attitudes.

BEGIN Experimental exercise: Take a question that you’ve already examined in one of your other exercises, and consider some aspects that seemed difficult to answer using the method(s) previously tried. Write a proposal that would suggest how some other method could be used to answer these questions. I recommend an experimental proposal, but if it doesn’t look like it will be as useful as a different method you haven’t used for this question, you may choose a different method, as long as it is sociological and systematic. Start with a theoretical question, explain why other methods wouldn’t work, and then design a research project (e.g. an experiment) that would answer this question. Describe it in detail—if this is an experiment, say who are the subjects, what are the procedures, how are the data collected, how are they analyzed, and defend your claim that what is measured in the experiment is the same as whatever you were talking about in your theoretical question.

Due Week Omega, i.e. December 14!

VII. RHETORIC
Week 14 (December 7): The Rhetoric of Sociology
NOTE: That I am including a section on rhetoric his should not be taken as an invitation to cynicism. But there are conventions of presentation and argumentation which are necessary (though not sufficient) for scholarly communication in sociology. We will read some different analyses of this rhetoric and an example or two.

Further recommended reading:
Donald McCloskey, The Rhetoric of Economics, Michael Lynch, “Pictures of Nothing? Visual Constructs in Social Theory” Sociological Theory 9 (1991):1-21 has a nice analysis of the rhetoric of visual presentation. Bruno Latour, in “Visualization and Cognition” (Knowledge and Society 6:1-40) stresses the importance of distilling complexity into visual form so as to triumph in agonistic encounters with competing would-be truth-tellers. And in fact, in his Pasteurization of France, he has some great examples of this, but not for sociology. You also might want to look at Alvin Gouldner’s explanation for Talcott Parsons’s rhetorical style in The Coming Crisis in Western Sociology. There is a growing body of explicit work on rhetoric and/in sociology. In the Hunter edited volume, The Rhetoric of Social Research, you might want to look at James Bennett’s analysis of the rhetoric of Merton’s paper on anomie; in the same volume Kai Erikson has a nice and reasonable discussion of the pros and cons of scientific-y voice. (Which reminds me of Ira Cohen’s analysis of “Voice as Method,” comparing the rhetorical strategies of Goffman and Garfinkle.) Other things I haven’t read: Richard H. Brown, A Poetic for

Have a nice life ☺!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: This course is based on a methods course I took with Claude Fischer.