

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**  
**Social Sciences 13300 (04)**  
**Practices of Social Inquiry**  
**Spring Quarter, 2008**  
**Cobb 119, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 - 4:20 p.m.**

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Welcome to the third and final installment of Social Inquiry. In the Autumn quarter of this sequence you explored the role of social scientific research in society. Last quarter, you learned to conduct, present, and interpret basic statistical analyses of social scientific survey data. This quarter we will delve more deeply into the practice of social science research, and consider a variety of quantitative and qualitative research frameworks, which will culminate in your final research proposal.

Two related principles guide this class: learning by doing and community of scholars.

*Learning by doing.* The idea is that the knowledge you obtain as you prepare for class and participate in class has implications for your work, and your work, in turn, further deepens your knowledge. Our class is designed to help you learn social science inquiry and to aid you with your work. It is therefore structured to place you in the shoes of the social science researcher from day one. We will begin by identifying seeds of good ideas for research; consider ways for germinating these ideas into a meaningful articulation of problems; and evaluating theory and evidence that relate to these problems. We will devote a considerable part of the course to exploring and practicing qualitative and quantitative research methods that include theoretical statements as well as exemplary empirical works. Finally, you will ground this knowledge by finding empirical data for your proposal, exploring these data following the methods of your choice, presenting your work to your colleagues, and honing a research proposal.

*Community of scholars.* Academic research is never possible without the support of colleagues. We will work together to foster such a community in our class. As a member of the community you will receive formal and informal feedback on your work from your peers. While these comments may be critical, it will be constructive to your work. In return, you will support the work of other scholars by *actively* contributing to the discussions and commenting on their work. You are encouraged to draw upon your personal experiences, utilize your academic orientation, and implement your creative imagination in formulating these contributions. (See additional details in the Logistics section under “Attendance and Participation”).

## REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

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Grades to this class will be determined as follows:

<u>Learning by doing grades</u>	<u>65%</u>	<u>Number of pages</u>
- Find and justify a problem	3	2
- Essay	15	6
- Prospectus	7	2-3
- Presentation	10	[and a modified prospectus]
- Final Project	30	12-15
<u>Community of scholar grades</u>	<u>35%</u>	
- Class participation	20	
- Peer reviews:*		
o problem	3	1x 2
o prospectus	6	1-2 x 2
o presentation	6	1-2 x 2

\* Encouraged to be submitted as a group submission. Please include the names of the student originally assigned to review the work, as well as others who have helped formulating the review.

**Grading.** With the exception of the full proposal which will be ranked on the usual A-F scale, all of your work will be scored on a 4-level scale where: 4 points=Exceptional: a thought provoking and insightful work, creatively applying the readings; 3=Good: the default grade for a solid assignment that integrates the readings and demonstrates a critical assessment of the martial; 2=Reasonable: an assignment that did not demonstrate engagement with the readings or has not included a critical assessment; 1=Poor: inadequate work.

### Assignments

*Problem.* This is a moment to revisit old ideas, or establish new ones. Either way, I ask that you give thoughtful consideration to a social science problem that relates to your interests to the degree that will engage your imagination and harness your potential throughout this quarter (and hopefully later on, as well). Your essay should address the following “what” questions: *What* puzzle do you want to address? *What* makes your problems interesting and important? *What* theories might be relevant? If you are experiencing difficulties addressing these questions the best aid is the literature. I therefore ask you to identify *and refer* to at least two works that have addressed your problem. Go thoroughly through their first part (i.e. “introduction”) and their final part (i.e. “discussion” and/or “conclusion”) and explain how they have approached your problem and in what ways your articulation is different from theirs.

*Essay.* Integrating the problem you address in your research write a positive *or* a negative evaluation of *at least two* approaches based on the readings. In the last part of the essay speculate upon how these scholars may respond to your arguments. Write a few of the main points to yourself and bring them to class for a debate.

*Prospectus.* *After consulting with your instructor,* please summarize your research agenda including the research problem, its justification, theories you consider addressing,

the research methods, data sources, and, where suitable, preliminary analysis. As the prospectus will be read by your colleagues—think of them as your grant application reviewers—it should be provocative, demonstrating a keen interest in the problem, and an excellent research potential.

*Presentation.* Prepare a 20-minute presentation of your research. Your presentation should include all the components of your research, including preliminary findings. The presentation should be sent to your reviewers along with a modified prospectus *at least* 48-hours prior to the class in which you are presenting—and without any subsequent alterations—to enable them to thoroughly review your work and to discuss it in class.

*Final Project.* The primary product of this course is a fully developed research proposal. Instead of a term paper in which you are required to reach conclusions based on your analysis, in the proposal you are expected to focus more on developing and justifying the research problem, evaluating theories, and considering *at least two methods* that address your research question. (If you believe that it is not feasible to address your research query with more than one method elaborate this limitation.) Your proposal should detail the data you propose using—databases, primary sources, observations—the type of analysis you suggest, preliminary analyses of these data relating to the research question, and a conclusion that considers the strength and the limitations of your proposal. The proposal should include 12-15 double spaced pages *not* counting references, tables, and figures.

The following sources offer useful guidelines and examples on writing research proposals:

- (1) Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon. 1995 (revised). “The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions.” Social Science Research Foundation.
- (2) <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/DissPropWorkshop/examples/>

Note. As you may have already used GSS data I ask that you seek other sources. You are free to change your topic until your prospectus submission (and with the instructor’s approval). However, since the course is structured as a cumulative process, you will need to work much harder to catch up should you change your research objective.

### Summary of Course Assignments

	Submission	Review
Problem	April 6	April 8
Prospectus	May 9, 3PM	May 11, 3PM
Essay	May 13	—
Presentation + modified prospectus	48-hours prior to your presentation	During scheduled presentation
Final Paper	June 4, 1PM	—

## LOGISTICS

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**Attendance and participation.** For our commitment to developing a community of scholars much of this class will involve various types of discussions. Thus, class attendance and participation are essential for your overall success in this course and they constitute a significant portion of your grade. I ask you that you arrive fully prepared to each session—having read all the materials, taking critical notes as you go along. Class is a venue for exploring new ideas. I ask that you not hesitate to raise questions or to vocalize criticism you may have about the readings, or with other comments you wish to make. These contributions need to be thoughtful and related to the readings, or be based on your own observations. Also make sure that you respect your peers and listen to what they have to say. Considering their responses in your comments is a winner. In addition to your verbal comments in class, we will organize at least one debate, we will go around the room to collect insights, and we may also divide class into groups to consider these ideas.

Note. If you will not be able to attend class, it would be courteous of you to send me an email. Inadequate attendance will adversely influence your grade.

**Assignments.** All assignments should be submitted in a hard copy at the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted. The final project should be submitted in hard copy to the instructor's office (GB 128) at or before the deadline listed in the syllabus. To ensure that you get your assignment back in a secure and convenient fashion I ask that you *submit all assignments—including the final project*—via Chalk's Assignment Manager prior to the deadline. Peer-reviewed work should be submitted to your reviewers. It is your responsibility to establish a preferable method of communication with your reviewers and to ensure that they have received your work in a timely manner. (That means that assignments may not be handwritten). For help with Chalk see NSIT's website. For instruction on Assignment Manager see: <http://nsit.uchicago.edu/services/chalk/atoz/AssignmentManager.pdf>  
All submissions should be written in 11-12 pt. standard font with standard paging of approximately 1" margins, and in either a PDF or DOC format.

Note. Late submission will make the review process more challenging, and will therefore be penalized at the rate of a full grade for every delayed day. No late submissions will be allowed for the final project.

**Peer reviews.** One of your main contributions to our community of scholars will be critically but constructively evaluating your colleagues' work. You will have the opportunity to respond to the work of other scholars at three stages of their research: generation of an idea (problem), placement of that idea in a broader conceptual and empirical discussions and evaluation of data sources (prospectus), and the presentation of preliminary findings (presentation). Each student will review two other works. I will match students randomly during the first week of class. Because it is easier to follow other people's work, this assignment will not change until the end of the course.

**Collaboration.** Discussion of readings, assignments, and research among classmates is allowed and recommended. This might include sharing tips, troubleshooting, addressing questions of style and format, and providing feedback on particular ideas and approaches. However, with the exception of comments of peers' work, all written work submitted must be entirely independently prepared.

**Electronic devices.** Please do not use laptops and turn off all cell phones during class.

## MATERIALS

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All required textbooks for this course are on reserve in the Regenstein Library and available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore. Several readings are drawn from other sources, and these items will be made available on the Chalk website.

### Required books

Andrew Abbott. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton. ISBN: 0393978141. (MOD)

## SCHEDULE

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**April 1 Introduction**

**April 3 Paradigms**

Kuhn, Thomas. 1970. "The Priority of Paradigms", "Revolutions as Changes of World View." In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**April 8 Problems and Arguments**

Alford, Robert R. 1998. "Chapter 1" and "Chapter 3" in *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence*. Oxford University. MOD. Chapter 7.

**April 10 Classical Puzzles**

Durkheim, Emile. 1979 [1897]. "Introduction" and "Egoistic Suicide" in *Suicide*. NY: The Free Press.  
Weber, Max. 2002 [1906]. "Churches and Sects in North America." In *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and other Writings*. New York: Penguin Books.

**-Problem and Comments Due-**

## II. Variety of Paradigms in Social Inquiry

**April 10 Range of Theory, Plethora of Evidence**

Liebersohn, Stanley. 1992. "Einstein, Renoir, and Greeley: Some Thoughts About Evidence in Sociology" *American Sociological Review* 57:1-15.  
Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1968. "The Logic of Scientific Inference." *Constructing Social Theories*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

**April 15 Observing and Interacting**

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight." In *The*

*Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.  
Latour, Bruno. 1987. "Laboratories." *Science in Action*. Cambridge, MA:  
Harvard University Press.

**April 17 Historical Approaches**

David, Paul. 1985. "Clio and the Economics of QWERTY." *American Economic Review* 75:332-37.  
Biggart, N. W. and M. F. Guillén. 1999. "Developing Difference: Social Organization and the Rise of the Auto Industries of South Korea, Taiwan, Spain, and Argentina." *American Sociological Review* 64:722-47.

**April 22 Multivariate Approaches (a refresher)**

Allison, Paul D. 1999. "What are the Assumptions of Multiple Regression?" *In Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.

**April 24 Regression II**

Allison, Paul D. 1999. "How Do I Interpret Multiple Regression Results?", "What are the Assumptions of Multiple Regression?" *In Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.

**April 29 From individuals to Relations (Social Networks)**

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 1940. "On Social Structure." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 70:1-12.  
Travers, Jeffrey, Stanley Milgram. 1969. "An Experimental Study of the Small World Problem." *Sociometry* 32: 425-443.  
Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78:1360-1380.

**May 1 Analyzing Networks**

Hanneman, Robert A. and Mark Riddle. 2005. "Social Network Data", "Using Graphs to Represent Social Relations", "Working with Network Data", "Ego Networks", "Two-mode Networks." *In Introduction to Social Network Methods*. Riverside, CA: University of California, Riverside [<http://faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman/nettext/>]

**May 6 Analyzing Networks II**

McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin and Matthew E. Brashears. 2006. "Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades." *American Sociological Review*. 71: 353-375.

**May 8 No class. Meet to discuss proposal**

**May 13 Mixing approaches**

MOD. Chapter 6.

Uzzi, Brian. 1996. "The Sources and Consequences of Embeddedness for the Economic Performance of Organizations: The Network Effect." *American Sociological Review*. 61: 674-698.

**Research Prospectus Due May 9, 3PM**

**May 15 Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches**

MOD. Pp. 60-80.

Abbott, Andrew. "Transcending General Linear Reality." *Sociological Theory* 6: 169-186.

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory* 16: 4-33.

**Essay Due, Debate**

**III. Your Project**

**May 20 Troubleshooting Lab/Presentations**

Bring your data and preliminary analysis

**May 22 Presentations**

**May 22 Presentations**

**May 27 Presentations**

**May 29 Summary and Finalizing Papers**

**Final Project Due June 4, 1PM**

**Happy Summer Break!**