

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Seminar in Sociological Research Methods  
Sociology 613.01  
Winter 2010

**Instructor:** Dr. Jean E. Wallace  
**Class:** Wednesday, 10:00-12:50  
Social Sciences, Room 856  
**Lab:** Wednesday, 1:00-2:50  
Social Sciences, Room 856  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-1:45, or by appointment

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a graduate-level seminar on sociological research methods. It is assumed that all students have successfully completed an introductory course in social research methods at the undergraduate level. If it has been a while since you completed such a course, I would recommend that you review a text such as W.L. Neuman's *Social Research Methods*.

Throughout the term, we will examine the fundamental principles and logic governing research design. In doing so, we will address many of these issues as they relate to survey methods and mixed methods from a more quantitative perspective. It is expected that upon completion this course, students will have a good understanding of the central methodological debates in sociology and a good foundation in practical sociological research skills.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your grade in this course will be based on three written assignments, twelve short lab assignments and class participation. Each is described in greater detail below.

**Term Paper Assignments:** You will be expected to complete the following term paper assignments:

**Assignment #1 (Model Development):** You will derive a research question, variables, hypotheses and a testable model from a theoretical monograph (value=20%).

**Assignment #2 (Paper Review):** You will critically review an empirical research paper (value=20%).

**Assignment #3 (Research Extension):** You will propose a research project extension to a published research paper that is due on Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup> (value=25%).

**Lab Assignments:** Each week you will submit a short lab assignment that is due by noon on Monday. The lab assignments are presented in greater detail in the "Lab Assignments" section. Each assignment is limited to two double-spaced pages unless otherwise indicated. Each lab assignment is worth 2.5% for a total of 30% of your final grade.

**Class Participation:** You are expected to read the assigned materials prior to class. Parts of the course will be conducted in a seminar format and students will be asked to participate in the discussion. The lab time will be a discussion format where students will be asked to discuss the assigned topic and the lab assignment material. You will also give a brief, informal presentation of your research extension paper in the last week of class. The purpose is for students to ask me and each

other questions and share ideas as you work through this final assignment. These various components of participating in the class and lab discussions will count as 10% of your final grade.

| Component:          | Date Received:   | Date Due:            | Weight: |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Model Development   | Weds. February 3 | Weds. February 24    | 20%     |
| Article Review      | Weds. March 10   | Weds. March 24       | 20%     |
| Research Extension  | Weds. January 13 | Weds. April 21       | 25%     |
| 12 Lab Assignments  | Weds. January 13 | Every Monday by noon | 30%     |
| Class Participation | Weds. January 13 | Ongoing & April 14   | 10%     |

**Grading System:** Grades are entered as raw scores into the grading system. Your final letter grade is computed based on the weighted sum of your raw scores. The letter grade descriptions listed below are from the University of Calgary calendar. Please note that I may use the full range of these letter grades in evaluating your assignments.

|                                     |               |             |              |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Excellent, superior performance:    | A+ = 95%-100% | A = 85%-94% | A- = 80%-84% |
| Good, above average performance:    | B+ = 77%-79%  | B = 73%-76% | B- = 70%-72% |
| Satisfactory, basic understanding:  | C+ = 67%-69%  | C = 63%-66% | C- = 60%-62% |
| Minimal pass, marginal performance: | D+ = 55%-59%  | D = 50%-54% |              |
| Unsatisfactory performance:         | F = 0%-49%    |             |              |

## CLASS TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS

### Week 1: Introduction: Linking Theory and Data (January 13)

Lieberson, S. (1992). Einstein, Renoir, and Greeley: Some Thoughts about Evidence in Sociology.

*American Sociological Review*, 57:1-15.

Anonymous Article #1

### Week 2: Research Questions, Variables & Hypotheses (January 20)

Merton, R.K. (1959). "Introduction: Notes on Problem Finding in Sociology" (pp. ix-xxxiv) in R.K. Merton, L. Broom & L.S. Cottrell (Eds.), *Sociology Today: Problems and Prospects*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Bryman, A. (2007). The Research Question in Social Research: What is its Role? *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 10:5-20.

Anonymous Article #2

### Week 3: Introduction to Causation (January 27)

Stinchcombe, A.L. (1968). "The Logic of Scientific Inference (pp. 15-37) in *Constructing Social Theories*. New York: Harcourt Brace & World.

Hanneman, R.A. (2009). *Graphical Conventions for Causal Models*. Unpublished Notes.

Thompson, L. (1991). Family work: Women's sense of fairness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12:181-196.

### Week 4: And More on Causation (February 3)

Piquero, A.R. (2009). Do Gun Laws Affect Crime the Way Steroids Affect Homeruns in Baseball? *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 34:3-8.

Stack, S., & J. Gundlach (1992). The Effect of Country Music on Suicide. *Social Forces*, 71:211-218.

### Week 5: Research Design (February 10)

Spector, P.E. (1981). "Introduction" (pp. 7-10), "Basic Concepts" (pp. 11-19), "Basic Logic of Design" (pp. 19-27) in *Research Designs*. Sage University Paper series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, 07-023. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Fowler, F.F. (1993). "Methods of Data Collection (pp. 54-68) in *Survey Research Methods*. Sage University Paper series on Applied Social Research Methods, Volume 1. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

- Burns, K.E.A., Duffett, M., Kho, M., et al. (2008). A Guide to the Design and Conduct of Self-Administered Surveys of Clinicians. *CMAJ*, 179:245-252.
- Thompson, L. (1991). Family Work: Women's Sense of Fairness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12:181-196.

**Week 6: The Qualitative vs. Quantitative Debate (February 24)**

- Coser, L.A. (1975). "Presidential Address: Two Methods in Search of a Substance." *American Sociological Review*, 40:691-700.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. and Leech, N.L. (2005). Taking the "Q" Out of Research: Teaching Research Methodology Courses without the Divide Between Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigms. *Quality & Quantity*, 39:267-296.
- O'Cathain, Murphy, E., & J. Nicholl (2008). The Quality of Mixed Methods Studies in Health Services Research. *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy*, 13:92-98.

**Week 7: Sampling (March 3)**

- Henry, G.T. (1990). "Introduction" (pp. 9-16), "Sample Selection Approaches" (pp. 17-32), "Practical Sample Design" (pp. 33-59), "Sample Size" (pp. 117-128) in *Practical Sampling*. Sage University series on Applied Social Research, Volume 21. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mangione, T.W. (1995). "The Basics of Sampling" (pp. 38-53) and "Pitfalls in Sampling" (pp. 54-59) in *Mail Surveys: Improving the Quality*. Sage University Series on Applied Social Research, Volume 40. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pager, D., and Quillian, L. (2005). Walking the Talk? What Employers Say versus What They Do. *American Sociological Review*, 70:355-380.
- Riley, L.A. and Glass, J.L. (2002). You Can't Always Get What You Want – Infant Care Preferences and Use Among Employed Mothers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64:2-15.

**Week 8: Measurement Issues (March 10)**

- Spector, P.E. (1992). "Introduction" (pp. 1-9), "Theory of Summated Rating Scales" (pp. 10-12), "Defining the Construct" (pp. 12-18), "Designing the Scale" (pp. 18-29) in *Summated Rating Scale Construction: An Introduction*. Sage University series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, No. 07-082. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Carmines, E.G., & R.A. Zeller (1979). "Introduction" (pp. 9-16), "Validity" (pp. 17-27), "Classical Test Theory" (pp. 29-35), and "Assessing Reliability" (pp. 37-54) in *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Sage University Series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, 07-017. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pager, D., and Quillian, L. (2005). Walking the Talk? What Employers Say versus What They Do. *American Sociological Review*, 70:355-380.
- Riley, L.A. and Glass, J.L. (2002). You Can't Always Get What You Want – Infant Care Preferences and Use Among Employed Mothers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64:2-15.

**Week 9: Practical Measurement Strategies (March 17)**

- Fowler, F.J. (1993). "Designing Questions to be Good Measures" (pp. 69-93) in *Survey Research Methods*. Sage University series on Applied Social Research, Volume 1. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Alreck, P.L. & R.B. Settle (1995). "Composing Questions" (pp. 87-112) and "Creating Scale Items" (pp. 113-142) in *The Survey Research Handbook: Guidelines and Strategies for Conducting a Survey*. Chicago, IL: Irwin.
- Thompson, L. (1991). Family Work: Women's Sense of Fairness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12:181-196.

**Week 10: Mail-Out Surveys (March 24)**

- Alreck, P.L. & R.B. Settle (1995). "Mail Data Collection" (pp. 183-209) in *The Survey Research Handbook: Guidelines and Strategies for Conducting a Survey*. Chicago, IL: Irwin.

- Dillman, D.A. (1983). "Mail and Other Self-Administered Questionnaires" (pp. 359-377) in P.H. Rossi, J.D. Wright, and A.B. Anderson (Eds.), *Handbook of Survey Research*.
- Diaz de Rada, V. (2005). Influence of Questionnaire Design on Response to Mail Surveys. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8: 61, 72-74.
- Thompson, L. (1991). Family Work: Women's Sense of Fairness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12:181-196.

### **Week 11: High Tech Surveying (March 31)**

- Brick, J.M., Brick, P.D., Dipko, S., Presser, S., Tucker, C., and Yuan, Y. (2007). Cell Phone Survey Feasibility in the U.S.: Sampling and Calling Cell Numbers versus Landline Numbers. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 71:23-39.
- Couper, M. P. (2000). Web Surveys: A Review of Issues and Approaches. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64:464-494.
- Thompson, L. (1991). Family Work: Women's Sense of Fairness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12:181-196.

### **Week 12: Proposal Writing and Ethics (April 7)**

- Wallace, B.B (2009) "Unit 3 – Writing a Research Proposal."
- Wallace, J.E. (2010) "Preparation of the Research Proposal".
- UC's CFREB Information to Help Applicants, Application for Ethics Review and Consent Form Template
- Crow, G., Wiles, R., Heath, S., and Charles, V. (2006). Research Ethics and Data Quality: The Implications of Informed Consent. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9:83-95.
- Thompson, L. (1991). Family Work: Women's Sense of Fairness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12:181-196.

### **Week 13: Presentation of Research Extension (April 14)**

## **CLASS POLICIES AND INFORMATION:**

### **Exam and Term Paper Policies:**

- **You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam or submit your term paper.** All requests for deferral of an examination/term paper due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferred exams/papers may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. If you have missed an exam deadline for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a "make up" exam as close to the original exam date as possible.
- Deferred exams/papers will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam/paper. Without appropriate documentation or a university valid reason for missing an exam, you will receive a zero for that portion of your grade. Refer to the University of Calgary Calendar for additional information on the deferral of exams: [http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2006/how/How\\_HF.htm](http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2006/how/How_HF.htm)).
- **There are no re-writes on any exams/papers in this class and no extra credit work will be given.** If you anticipate any difficulties meeting any of the class deadlines, please make sure to discuss your concerns with the instructor before the deadline. I do not grant extensions unless there is an emergency or valid reason as defined by the Deferral of Final Examinations section of the University of Calgary Calendar ([http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2006/how/How\\_HF.htm](http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2006/how/How_HF.htm)).

### **Class Courtesy:**

Cell phones, pagers, blackberries, Internet surfing, checking email, text messaging and listening to music are disruptive to other students in class. **Please be courteous to your classmates and instructor and turn off all such devices before the class starts.** Computers are to be used

exclusively for the purposes of taking notes during class and other electronic devices may be used only if you have permission from the instructor.

**Email Etiquette:**

The ease of sending emails makes it tempting to send off inquiries to the instructor and/or teaching assistant. Email can be a fast and practical way to manage some types of communication and we are happy to be accessible to you. **You may use email to set up appointments with the instructor or teaching assistant.** It is not appropriate, however, to ask questions about: (1) information that is readily available to you (e.g., room location or exam dates that are contained in the syllabus or available on Blackboard); (2) substantive material covered in class or the readings; (3) exams and assignments; (4) health or academic concerns. These questions should be dealt with in person or by phone with the instructor or teaching assistant.

**Academic Accommodation:**

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

**Academic Misconduct:**

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. **As a result, cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination are regarded as serious academic offenses.** Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with plagiarism, cheating, and other academic misconduct (<http://www.fp.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/appeals%20and%20petitions/Plagiarism-Cheating-AcademicMisconduct.htm>).

**The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)** legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside instructor's office, the department office, etc. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class or during the instructor's office hours; if students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

**Safewalk:**

The University of Calgary provides a safewalk service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

**Sociology Web Page:** <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

### Sociology 613.01 Weekly Lab Assignments

Each week you will submit a lab assignment that is due by **noon on Monday** unless otherwise indicated. You are encouraged to **email your lab** and only print your ID number on your lab assignment. Each assignment is limited to **two double-spaced pages** unless otherwise indicated (12 font Times New Roman).

**You must submit all twelve lab assignments in order to meet the requirements of this course.** Each lab assignment is worth 2.5% for a total of 30% of your final grade.

The lab exercises are based on the assigned readings for that week. Note that you should also be prepared to discuss these issues in each lab as they relate to your research extension. I expect that you will be developing your research extension on an ongoing basis as we progress through the course. For example, in Lab #2 you should be thinking about the research question, variables and hypotheses that you might address in your proposed project. While this is not part of the written assignment, I hope it will get you to think about applying the material in class to the development of your research extension proposal. As well, you might refer to journal articles in seeing how different methodological issues and sections of a research paper are presented and formatted. I highly recommend the journal *Social Forces* for this purpose as it presents a nice variety of theoretical and methodological papers.

#### **Lab #1: Introduction: Linking Theory and Data (Due January 18)**

Identify and discuss one issue raised in the Lieberson (1992) reading and apply it to Anonymous Article #1 in writing a "Discussion" section and a "Conclusions" section for this paper. In the "Discussion" section indicate whether the theoretical argument(s) received empirical support and why. Also present a "Conclusions" section in which you present your own conclusions in regards to the empirical support presented for the theoretical argument(s). Be sure to label and write two separate sections, one labeled "Discussion" and one labeled "Conclusions."

#### **Lab #2: Research Questions, Variables & Hypotheses (Due January 25)**

After reading the front end of Anonymous Article #2, set out the following: (1) the research question in variable form; (2) why it is a research question (i.e., why is it problematic sociologically?); (3) conceptual definitions and labels of the dependent variable(s); (4) conceptual definitions and labels of the independent variables(s); (5) the hypotheses that you think should be tested empirically in this paper; and (6) what method best suits answering this research question?

#### **Lab #3: Introduction to Causation (Due February 1)**

Develop a theoretically-based causal model based on Thompson's (1991) article. Be sure to: (1) set out the research question to be addressed; (2) identify and define the independent and dependent variables; (3) explicitly set out the hypotheses to be tested; and (4) draw the causal model to be tested. You may submit the causal diagram on a separate page (i.e., 3 pages in total).

#### **Lab #4: And More on Causation (Due February 8)**

Use Stack and Gundlach (1992) to illustrate the criteria used in demonstrating causality as outlined in class and by Piquero (2009). In doing so: (1) illustrate pieces of evidence that might be used from Stack and Gundlach to demonstrate causality; and (2) identify any causality concerns that might be raised because they have failed to provide adequate evidence of causality. Be sure to refer to specific issues identified in the Piquero reading.

#### **Lab #5: Research Design (Due February 22)**

In Lab #3 you identified variables and developed hypotheses for Thompson's (1991) article. For this lab assignment, describe the research design that might be used to collect the data needed to test your model. At this stage you do not need to present specific measures, but rather describe the steps you would take in setting up a project to collect the relevant data, consistent with the suggestions made in Spector (1981), Fowler (1993) and Burns et al. (2008).

**Lab #6: The Qualitative vs. Quantitative Debate (Due March 1)**

Propose an additional data collection strategy that would strengthen O’Cathain et al.’s (2008) study in answering the research question: why are some researchers successful in completing mixed methods studies in HSR and others not? You do not need to provide measurement instruments, but you may propose and describe different sources or samples of data, units of analysis, etc. Discuss how you think the additional method/data would complement and challenge the findings presented in this paper. Be sure to refer to issues identified by Coser (1975), Onwuegbuzie and Leech (1998) and O’Cathain et al. (2008) in your assignment.

**Lab #7: Sampling (Due March 8)**

Identify the sampling strategy used in each of the sample descriptions in Pager and Quillian (2005) and Riley and Glass (2002). Identify any concerns you would have about the specific samples they have obtained. Be sure to refer to issues that are identified in the Henry (1990) and Mangione (1995) readings.

**Lab #8: Measurement (Due March 15)**

Discuss what you consider to be important measurement concerns based on the measurement sections presented in Pager and Quillian (2005) and Riley and Glass (2002). Be sure to refer to issues identified in the Spector (1992) and Carmines and Zeller (1979) readings.

**Lab #9: Practical Measurement Strategies (Due March 22)**

Construct a set of measures that tap the “justifications” argument of Thompson’s (1991) article that you read for Lab #3. One of these measures must form a multiple-item scale. Be sure to take into consideration the assigned readings in constructing these measures.

**Lab #10: Surveys (Due March 29)**

Construct a self-administered questionnaire to measure the variables and test the hypotheses set out in Lab #3. Be sure to include the measure you already constructed for Lab #9. You are encouraged to use existing measures where appropriate, but be sure to report relevant measurement data as a justification for using an existing scale (instead of developing a new one) and provide a reference list to cite the source. Format the questionnaire so that it would be suitable for distribution to potential respondents. You may use an extra page for this lab due to formatting considerations.

**Lab #11: High Tech Surveying (Due April 5)**

Using the instrument you constructed for Lab #10, discuss whether you would use a cell phone interview, landline telephone interview or web survey. Be sure to discuss the pros and cons of the specific data collection approach you have selected and be sure to discuss these issues in light of your specific survey topic and relevant sample.

**Lab #12: Proposal Writing and Ethics (Due April 12)**

Identify any issues regarding Confidentiality and Anonymity and Informed Consent that you might have to address in your proposed survey in Lab #11.

**Summary of Class Topics and Assigned Readings**

| <b>Date</b>   | <b>Topic</b>                              | <b>Assigned Reading</b>   |
|---------------|---|---|
| Jan. 13       | Introduction: Linking Theory and Data     | Lieberson (1992):1-15   |
| Jan. 13 (lab) | Lab #1: Linking Theory and Data           | Anonymous Article #1  |
| Jan. 20       | Research Questions & Hypotheses           | Merton (1959):ix-xxxiv<br>Bryman (2007):5-20  |
| Jan. 20 (lab) | Lab #2: Questions, Variables & Hypotheses | Anonymous Article #2  |
| Jan. 27       | Introduction to Causation                 | Stinchcombe (1968):15-38<br>Hanneman (2009):1-11  |
| Jan. 27 (lab) | Lab #3: Introduction to Causation         | Thompson (1991):181-196   |
| Feb. 3        | And More on Causation                     | Piquero, A.R. (2009):3-8  |
| Feb. 3 (lab)  | Lab #4: More Causation                    | Stack & Gundlach (1992):211-218   |
| Feb. 10       | Research Design                           | Spector (1981):7-27<br>Fowler (1993):54-68<br>Burns et al. (2008):245-252                 |
| Feb. 10 (lab) | Lab #5: Research Design                   | Thompson (1991):181-196   |
| Feb. 17       | Reading Week                              | Read what ever you like or not at all!  |
| Feb. 24       | The Qualitative vs. Quantitative Debate   | Coser (1975):691-700<br>Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2005):267-296                                |
| Feb. 24       | Lab #6: Qualitative vs. Quantitative      | O'Cathain et al. (2008):92-98   |
| Mar.3         | Sampling                                  | Henry (1990):9-59, 117-128<br>Mangione (1995):38-59                                       |
| Mar. 3 (lab)  | Lab #7: Sampling                          | Pager & Quillian (2005):355-380<br>Riley & Glass (2002):2-15                              |
| Mar. 10       | Measurement Issues                        | Spector (1992):1-29<br>Carmines & Zeller (1979):9-54                                      |
| Mar. 10 (lab) | Lab #8: Measurement                       | Pager & Quillian (2005):355-380<br>Riley & Glass (2002):2-15                              |
| Mar. 17       | Practical Measurement Strategies          | Fowler (1993): 69-93<br>Alreck & Settle (1995):87-142                                     |
| Mar. 17 (lab) | Lab #9: Practical Measurement Issues      | Thompson (1991): 181-196  |
| Mar. 24       | Mail-Out Surveys                          | Alreck & Settle (1995):183-209<br>Dillman (1983):359-377<br>Diaz de Rada (2005):61, 72-74 |
| Mar. 24 (lab) | Lab #10: Mail-Out Surveys                 | Thompson (1991): 181-196  |
| Mar. 30       | High Tech Surveying                       | Brick et al. (2007):23-39<br>Couper (2000):464-494  |
| Mar. 30 (lab) | Lab #11: High Tech Surveying              | Thompson (1991):181-196   |
| Apr. 7        | Proposal Writing and Ethics               | Wallace (2009)<br>Wallace (2010)<br>UC's CFREB Information (3 files) Crow et al. (2006)   |
| Apr. 7 (lab)  | Lab #12: Proposal Writing and Ethics      | Thompson (1991):181-196   |
| Apr. 14       | Student Presentations                     |   |