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Office hours: W 3-4:30

METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

This research methods course is designed:

1. To acquaint students with the range of research methods used in sociological investigations and to discuss their strengths and weaknesses.
2. To discuss some of the basic problems involved in the collection and analysis of sociological data.
3. To provide a more in-depth treatment of field research techniques.
4. To provide students a first-hand experience in collecting and analyzing data.

REQUIRED READING:

1. Gray, Williamson, Karp, and Dalphin, *The Research Imagination*
2. An ethnographic study from a list provided by the instructor

GRADING:

1. Three tests given during the semester as indicated on this syllabus. Together these three tests, based on both readings and lectures, will count for 60% of the final grade.
2. Classroom participation, including discussion of term research project, will be taken into account in deciding on final grades.
3. The final research report will count for 40% of the final grade.

PART I FUNDAMENTALS OF RESEARCH (approximately 5 weeks)

1. INTRODUCTION (1 class)

- * why study research methods
- * course goals and requirements
- * information and everyday life

Reading: No reading

2. METHOD AND METHODOLOGY (1-2 classes)

- * What is the purpose of sociological work?
- * Is all knowledge political?
- * questions of ethics
- * What makes knowledge claims credible?

Reading: Gray, chapters 1 and 2

3. INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE MODELS OF INQUIRY (1-2 classes)

- * a continuum of research methods
- * steps in the research process
- * induction and deduction
- * the timing and production of theory
- * the nature of generalizations
- * the role of the researcher

Reading: Gray, chapters 3 and 5

4. OBSTACLES TO CLEAR KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL LIFE (2 classes)

- * information and error
- * subject related errors
- * researcher related errors
- * setting related errors
- * triangulation of methods
- * unobtrusive measures

Reading: Gray, chapters 4 and 6

5. SCIENCE AND ITS CRITICS (1-2 classes)

- * criteria of scientific investigation
- * truth in trouble
- * feminist methods

Reading: Gray, chapter 10

EXAMINATION NUMBER 1

PART II DOING FIELDWORK (approximately 4 weeks)

6. INTERVIEWING (2 classes)

- * constructing a guide
- * having a conversation
- * thinking about data along the way
- * coding data
- * writing it up

Reading: Gray, chapter 8

7. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION (2 classes)

- * history of fieldwork in the United States
- * the structure of field notes
- * problems of access
- * first days in the field
- * theoretical assumptions and field research

Reading: Gray, chapters 9 and 13

8. DISCUSSION OF STUDENT RESEARCH (4-6 classes)

- * brief presentations of research directions
- * general class discussion of ongoing projects

Reading: selected ethnography

EXAMINATION NUMBER 2

PART III COMPLEMENTARY METHODS (approximately 4 weeks)

10. ESTABLISHING CAUSALITY (1-2 classes)

- * the logic of survey research
- * experimental research

Reading: Gray, chapters 7 and 12

11. THE VALUE OF COMPARISON (1-2 classes)

- * the uses of history
- * comparative research methods
- * looking at rates

Reading: Gray, chapters 11, 14 and 15

12. RESEARCH FOR CHANGE (1-2 classes)

- *evaluation research
- *action research

Reading: Gray, chapter 16, epilogue

EXAMINATION NUMBER 3