Writing your thesis is the moment when you move from reader to writer, from consumer to producer, from student to scholar. This course will structure your collective and individual movement through that passage.

For the most part, the class will be structured as a workshop, through which I help you, and you help each other, develop and write an independent and creative piece of research. Given that, it will involve only minimal shared readings and requirements. We will open by reading an eclectic set of writings on epistemology – that is how we know what we know. We will move from there to sessions on library research and human subject protection. However, the bulk of the rest of the semester will be dedicated to generating, designing and beginning to carry out the most significant, fascinating and creative research you can generate. I will provide a structure of deadlines, methods for sharing work with each other and personalized feedback, but unlike in most classes, the substantive work here will be yours.

The assignments for the class are intended to keep you on a schedule that will enable you to do a serious piece of research. The work you post can be quite informal at the outset. These are working drafts whose purpose is to help you think about what you’re doing and to help me and your classmates assist you in that process. Only the final paper needs to be a polished piece of work.

Materials
Readings for the first two classes are on O’Neill e-reserve. Readings for the October 16 class on human subjects protections are posted on the Blackboard site. *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E.B. White is on sale at the bookstore. *Tricks of the Trade* by Howard Becker is recommended for those who want help in coming up with a project. It is on sale at the bookstore and on reserve in O’Neill.

Mechanics
There is a Blackboard site for the class. Assignments that are to be posted should be posted in the Assignments section on the site and published in the program so that they are visible to your classmates. They must be posted on schedule, so that everyone has time to look at your work and to discuss it in the following class. Work that is listed under a specific class must be done for that class. All other assignments should be done by the date specified on the syllabus.
Grading
On-time, thorough completion of all written assignments before the final paper guarantees you an A for 40% of the grade. Thorough reading and engaged, respectful discussion of your classmates’ work guarantees you an A on 20% grade. Intellectual quality of the final paper will determine the remaining 40% of the grade.

Course Schedule

Sept 4: Introduction(s).

Sept. 11: Thinking about “truth,” responsibility and your position as researcher.


Sept. 18: Making big claims from small cases.

No later than Sept. 23, 8pm: Post an informal description of your project (1-3 pp.) on our Blackboard site, including research question, why it is important and interesting (you choose the terms in which these are defined). If you can begin to think about what theory your question speaks to and about what methods you might use to investigate your question, include this as well.

Read your classmates’ project descriptions before class.

Sept. 25: Library research
Shari Grove, BC Sociology Librarian will talk to the class.
Project discussion.

Start looking for a faculty advisor and setting up initial meetings.

Oct. 2: Discussion and brainstorming on projects.
Hand in a first draft of a bibliography and a brief summary of the relevant points in one article in class.

No later than Oct. 7, 8 pm: Post a more elaborated discussion of your research project (we will discuss this further in class beforehand).
Oct. 9: Project discussion.

Oct 16: Discussion of the IRB.
*Complete the BC IRB’s Training program and read the following critique (links on the Blackboard home page):*


*No later than October 21, 8 pm:* Post a description of your research methods (we will discuss this further in class beforehand).

Oct. 23: Discussion of research projects.

Oct. 30: Discussion of research projects.
*Hand in completed IRB forms in class.*

Preliminary research begins.

Nov. 6: Discussion of first research experiences.

*No later than Nov. 11, 8 pm:* Post a full draft of a research proposal including problem, significance, hypothesis, literature review and methods of study.

*By this time, you should have secured a faculty advisor for the thesis.*

*Read your classmates’ proposals before class.*

Nov. 13: Discussion of proposals.

Nov. 20: Discussion of research.

Dec. 4: Discussion of research and writing.
*The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E.B. White.

*Final papers (specifics to be discussed in class) due Dec. 13, 10 am in McGuinn 409.*