

DOCTORAL RESEARCH PRACTICUM
SOC6711Y, 2019-2020
Fridays, 10:00-13:00 p.m.
Room 240

INSTRUCTORS

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Two of the most important components of doctoral training include learning how to do research and how to communicate findings to different audiences, including the scientific community. In this course, we take up the challenge of translating your general sociological interests into a research project, including formulating a practical research question, choosing appropriate data and methods, and communicating results in a way that engages with and contributes to the broader scientific literature. Like building a house from the ground up, the research process involves a set of practices that require careful implementation at each stage, but can also bring unforeseen challenges requiring strategic choices, hard thinking, reflection and compromise.

The Doctoral Research Practicum is designed to guide doctoral students through the process of producing an original research paper, from the specification of an appropriate sociological question to the task of writing up one's findings in a defensible, publishable paper, and everything in-between. To accomplish this goal, students will conduct their own research, obtain or produce data, conduct analysis and develop a publishable paper that draws from this research by the Spring of 2020. Along the way, we will meet weekly to discuss each student's progress and suggest ways of improving the research. Toward this end, students will circulate, present and evaluate each other's work in written and oral formats, receiving feedback from their peers, course instructors, and their advisors. Students will also provide response memos regarding how they address feedback with new versions of the paper.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students will receive a (provisional) grade for the fall and an overall grade for the course at the end of the year. The grade components are:

Grade Components

1. Class participation during fall and winter terms (10% each)
2. Preliminary Research Statement (due June 28, pass/fail)
3. First Research Statement (due September 13, pass/fail)
4. Second Research Statement (due November 1, pass/fail)
5. Working Paper (due December 13th, 30%)

6. First draft of complete paper (due February 21, pass/fail)
7. Final Paper (due April 10, 40%)
8. Pass/fail assignments (10%)

Late penalty: **5% per day of lateness of the Final Grade will be applied to all late submission.**

Explanation of grade components

Pass/fail assignments: Four pass/fail assignments add up to 10% of the final grade. An assignment is considered a pass if it is submitted on time and the work shows evidence of real engagement and effort, as determined by instructors.

Class participation: Producing good research is never done in isolation. Rather, it is a communal process wherein researchers consult the existing literature and draw on the feedback of others in crafting their study, developing key arguments and sharpening research findings. Students and professors of the course will serve as the “scholarly community” from which to draw inspiration, constructive criticism, and helpful ideas about each step of the research and writing process. Accordingly, class attendance is crucial. In addition, you are encouraged to have your practicum supervisor attend the presentation of the draft of your final paper in late Feb or early March. As such, students are expected to participate on a regular basis, including providing constructive written comments on the work of those for whom you are assigned to evaluate and oral comments in class.

Participation also includes learning to recognize excellent research and how it is communicated within our department. To that end, part of your learning experience and class participation through feedback to the class will be attending at least one job talk presentations in the department in the Fall or Spring, and writing up a paragraph assessment about what worked well and what did not work well in the presentation – the logic, argument, and presentation of original research. You should post your assessment in your individual dropbox folder.

Preliminary Research Statement: Due June 28

1. What is my research topic? (e.g. I am going to study X, e.g. child poverty).
2. What is my broad research question? (e.g. how does child poverty affect the life chances of children? Or, how do parents in households living below the official poverty line manage childrearing and family wellbeing?).
3. What is the research puzzle or “problem” (e.g. there are three competing explanations regarding the relationship between poverty in childhood and adult SES...; in the existing literature, how is the concept of “poverty” defined and studied? In what contexts, and with what assumptions?)
4. What data are you going to use? Again, feel free to suggest more than one possibility. Make sure you describe: the population you will be studying as well as the source of the data. If you are collecting your own data, briefly describe the methodology. If you are using secondary data, describe the data set.

5. Who will you ask to be your advisor for this paper? You want to pick someone who is going to engage with your work and will play an active role in reading your drafts.

First research statement: (1,000-1,500 words) Due September 13, 9:00am

The first research statement will establish the foundation for the subsequent research process and must include the following subheadings with appropriate content:

1. *Abstract:* (150 words). A complete but very concise description of the paper –one that will entice readers. You may include one sentence with preliminary findings or not mention findings at all. The abstract will change with each draft.
2. *Introduction:* Here you specify the research problem, provide a rationale for the importance of the problem for sociology, and provide an enumeration of hypotheses or interrelated research questions (no more than three) that will guide the research.
3. *Literature Review:* A focused, short discussion of how the existing sociological literature on the topic relates to your chosen problem (include a short bibliography for all text citations).
4. *Methods:* a brief discussion of the major methodological facets of the proposed research, with special attention to data source, method of collection and analysis; and, where necessary, any particular challenges that you may anticipate with regard to data collection and how you intend to remedy them. You should also note if you intend to make generalizations from your research findings to a population and/or to a body of theory. If your data collection is complete, you should include descriptive of your data. See published articles for examples. For interview data, this would be a description, perhaps in table form, of the composition of your sample with relevant sociodemographic information. For survey data, this would be a table that describes the distribution of the dependent variable(s), independent variables, and control variables in your data set.

Second research statement: (2,500-4,000 words) Due November 1, noon.

The second research statement will be a more fully developed version of the first that takes into account the comments received from professors and students on the first version. Your second research statement should expand and develop the following sections:

1. *Abstract:* (150 words). A complete but very concise description of the paper – one that entices an audience to read the entire paper. You should include one sentence with preliminary findings. The abstract will change with each draft.
2. *Introduction:* Outline the relevance of the defined research problem in relation to key debates and social issues; elaborate the key arguments and unique contribution of paper; and where appropriate, present an outline of analytical and research plan, including discussion of data and preliminary presentation of sample characteristics or case(s).
3. *Literature Review:* Expanded discussion of the relevant sociological literature with the task of connecting it to your research question and data analysis strategy. Here you will want to show: 1) command of the existing literature on your topic and 2) specify your

intended contribution to the literature—how are you extending or challenging it, specifically.

4. *Methods*: Revise section, if necessary. Be sure to be clear in your discussion of the types of method you are utilizing to address the research question. Where appropriate, discuss analytical and research plan, including discussion of data, and preliminary presentation of sample characteristics or the context of the case study or comparison. If your data collection was not complete earlier, then include in this draft the descriptives of your data.
5. *Data analysis/empirical discussion*: Here, you should also begin to analyze your data and report some preliminary findings and address possible counter-explanations.
6. *Response memo*: When you submit this document, you must also submit a separate document that details how you responded to the feedback you received. This is a standard document that accompanies revised submissions to peer-reviewed journals. If you receive suggestions that you are not following or accommodating, you explain why in this memo. For the feedback that you are incorporating into your revisions, you describe the changes you made and any significant implications of these changes. A good response memo can be time consuming, so be sure to build in time to write this document. It can also be very helpful in clarifying for yourself how your paper is changing.

Working Paper: (3,000-4,000 words) Due December 13, noon.

The working paper should be about 4000 words, excluding bibliography and tables. This submission should look and feel much like the first draft of a research paper—including your results thus far—except that you should also include notes about unresolved problems regarding theory, data and analysis. In other words, we want to know what still needs to be done. Consult the following for guidelines on crafting a good research paper: 1) Wheaton, Welsh, Kruttschnitt, and Cranford's "(Some) elements of a good paper"; 2) Stephen Porter's "Writing and publishing a research paper in a peer reviewed journal." These documents will be loaded to Dropbox folder. Submit again a response memo. The working paper must include the following elements:

1. A well-developed literature review (not an annotated bibliography). We suggest that you look to well-respected sociological journals for guidance.
2. A very clear explanation on how your research will contribute to this. What is the "gift" you plan to give to the discipline? Will you contribute new theoretical or methodological insights? In short, what will you tell us we didn't know before, what makes it worth knowing, and why will you be able to do it.
3. A very clear description of the data and methods. Think in terms of whether or not someone could replicate your work based on how you've described it.
4. A clear write up of your results. In other words, there should be an initial attempt to analyze your data. That is, you should provide clear interpretations of your coefficients, quotes, documents or field notes using the relevant literature or theory.
5. At this point, a discussion section is not expected because it could change after revising the paper yet again.
6. Again, submit a response memo as a separate document.

First draft of complete paper: (7,000-8,000 words) Due Feb. 21, noon.

The first draft of your complete paper will look like a journal article. Of utmost importance in this draft is the careful match of evidence to claims and data to argument. At this stage you should have a clearly articulated research problem, a clear and succinct literature review that logically ends with your research question(s), a clear and detailed methodological section, a clear and succinct data analysis section, and a compelling discussion section that hammers home your key points and advances an original contribution to the literature. The paper should include:

1. Title Page with name, date, word count. Include a title page footnote w/ Advisor, potential discussants, and target journals.
2. Abstract that conveys key elements of the research puzzle, sample/data, findings, and contribution (250-word max).
3. Introduction with a clear articulation/framing of the importance of this question for the scholarly literature and/or the welfare of society. Often intros are three paragraphs, with the first two outlining the issue/state of the literature, and the third indicating what this study, with this particular data, will do to extend that literature.
4. A well-developed critical literature review where you use the literature (empirical and/or theoretical) to set up the contribution of your research. Use meaningful headers. Often this section ends with a one-paragraph summary and restatement of your research questions.
5. A clear, concise description of the sample, data and measures.
6. A presentation and analysis of the results that directly address the central question(s) of your research project.
7. Discussion section that demonstrates your contribution by tying findings back to the relevant literature; discusses limitations of the study; and provides avenues for future research.
8. Brief conclusion section summarizing the contribution. This is typically only 1-2 paragraphs.

Final paper: (7,000-10,000 words) Due April 10, noon.

The final paper should be between 7,000-10,000 words. (We won't penalize you for going over, but recognize that many journals have word limits that are shorter than 10,000 words, and these limits include the abstract, endnotes/footnotes, and references.) The paper should include all the elements of the former draft but in a polished, publication-ready fashion in the style of the journal to which you plan to submit it. In this sense, it will be helpful for you to identify a suitable sociological journal for your paper and gain exposure to the structure and style of the range of articles it publishes.

You will be expected to give a 15minute conference-style presentation on this work at the Practicum Conference. Be sure to proof read your papers extensively, provide proper ASA style citation format (available online and also on any of the many ASA journals, including the *American Sociological Review*, the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, among others).

Workshopping process and deadlines

The heart of this class is the process of workshopping your papers and getting feedback. Students will participate in a total of four rounds of presentation and commenting. Students are assigned into four groups (see below) to alternate presentation and commenting. The process will work as follows: You will post your work-in-progress to Dropbox by Friday before class, the week before your presentation. Members of your commenting group will post their written comments by the following Wednesday 9:00am. All students are expected to have read the papers and writing comments of that week before attending the seminar.

Students will provide written comments on the work of two other students during Fall term (when submission are shorter) and one other student in Spring (when submissions are longer).

Groups in the Fall

GROUP # 1	GROUP # 2	GROUP # 3	GROUP # 4
1. Gutierrez Cornelius Eduardo	1. Brett Stanley Stewart Masse	1. Carmen Lamothe	1. Jordan Foster
2. Hin A Lee	2. Maria Sigridur Finnsdottir	2. Ferdouse Ahmad Asefi	2. Christos Orfanidis
3. Emeka Eugene Dim	3. Natalie Adamyk	3. Yifang Li	3. Sagi Ramai
	4. Noam Keren	4. Grace Maich	

COURSE SCHEDULE (FALL)

Sept. 13: Introduction

- Review of syllabus
- Explanation of presentation and commenting
- A short presentation of the First Research Statements

Sept. 20: Engaging in Social Research

- In this class we will discuss the nuts and bolts of good social research and the diverse goals and traditions of social research.
- Read and be prepared to discuss the following items:
 1. Abbott, Andrew A. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Chapter 1, "Explanation"
 2. Kristin Luker. 2008. *Salsa Dancing in the social Sciences: Research in the an age of info-glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 4. "What is this a case of, Anyway?"

3. Charles Ragin. 1994. *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Chapter 2, "The goals of social research."

Sept. 27: The Craft of Writing: Puzzles/Gaps/Innovations

With Guest speakers

- In this class we will discuss how to "frame" a research question, writing style, how to find the right journal for your work, and how to "get it out the door."
- Read and be prepared to discuss the following:
 1. Bartkowski, John P., Carma S. Deem, and Christopher G. Ellison. 2015. "Publishing in Academic Journals: Strategic Advice for Doctoral Students and Academic Mentors." *American Sociologist* 46:99-115.

Oct. 4: First Round Presentations

- Group 1 presenting
- Group 4 commenting

Oct. 11: First Round Presentations

- Group 2 presenting
- Group 3 commenting

Oct. 18: First Round Presentations

- Group 3 presenting
- Group 2 commenting

Oct. 25: First Round Presentations

- Group 4 presenting
- Group 1 commenting

Nov. 1: No Class Second Research Statement Due at noon

Nov. 8: Second Round Presentations

- Group 1 presenting
- Group 4 commenting

Nov. 15: No Class

Nov. 22: Second Round Presentations

- Group 2 presenting
- Group 3 commenting

Nov. 29: Second Round Presentations

- Group 3 presenting
- Group 2 commenting

Dec. 6: Second Round Presentations

- Group 4 presenting

- Group 1 commenting

Dec. 13: Working Paper Due, noon

SPRING TERM

The Spring term is the continuation of Practicum and includes two major written assignments, as well as class attendance and participation, presentations, and written commentaries on others' research as central to the learning experience and the final grade.

The Spring term Practicum culminates in the Practicum Annual Conference (PAC) in the Sociology Department. It is held on April 2nd and 3rd and faculty and grad students are invited. Students present their research, conference style, for 15 minutes, and discussant and audience members provide feedback.

The new commenting groups will be arranged by the end of the Fall term.

For the fourth (final) round of presentations, we encourage you to invite your advisor to class (if they cannot make that date, you may suggest they attend your third round presentation). We hope this will encourage a wider dialogue on your work beyond what the students and faculty of the class have already provided.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 10 Discussion of second term goals.

Faculty Presentation: Topic: Writing, work scheduling, publication strategies

With guest speakers of faculties and graduate students

Jan 17 Third Round Presentations

- Group 1 presenting
- Group 4 commenting

Jan 24 Third Round Presentations

- Group 2 presenting
- Group 3 commenting

Jan 31 Third Round Presentations

- Group 3 presenting
- Group 2 commenting

Feb 7 Third Round Presentations

- Group 4 presenting
- Group 1 commenting

Feb 14 No class (Comp Exam week)

Feb 21 No class; First draft of complete paper due, noon

Feb 28 Fourth Round Presentations

- Group 1 presenting
- Group 4 commenting

Mar 6 Fourth Round Presentations

- Group 2 presenting
- Group 3 commenting

Mar 13 Fourth Round Presentations

- Group 3 presenting
- Group 2 commenting

Mar 20 Fourth Round Presentations

- Group 4 presenting
- Group 1 commenting

March 27 No class (Independent work; consultation by appointment available)

April 2 & 3 Practicum Conference (9am-3pm each day)

April 10 Final Paper Due, noon

Accessibility Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at:

accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at distressedstudent.utoronto.ca; Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

Equity and Diversity Statement?

Equity and Diversity

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca>.