

**DOCTORAL RESEARCH PRACTICUM**  
**SOC6711Y, 2022-2023**  
**Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. - Rm. 240**

**INSTRUCTORS**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Two of the most important components of doctoral training include learning how to create an independent research project and how to communicate findings to different audiences, including the academic 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 academic literature. 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 2023. 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 Component***

1. Class participation during fall and winter terms (5% each)
2. Preliminary Research Statement (due June 20, pass/fail)
3. First Research Statement (due on first class - September 13, pass/fail)
4. Second Research Statement (due October 25, pass/fail)
5. Working Paper (due December 9, 30%)

6. First draft of complete paper (due February 28, pass/fail)
7. Final Paper (due April 14, 50%)
8. Pass/fail assignments (10%)

***Policy for late assignments:*** We will apply a late penalty of 5% per day for cases of undocumented lateness.

***Academic Integrity:*** Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well:

(<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>) and Code of Student Conduct

(<https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/students/#codeconduct>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

All of your submitted assignments will automatically be run through a new plagiarism detection tool, Ouriginal, for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. (Ouriginal replaces Turnitin.) In doing so, you will allow your assignments to be included as source documents in the Ouriginal reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Ouriginal service are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website: <https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>

### ***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 excellent research is never done in isolation. Rather, it is a communal process wherein researchers critically engage with the existing literature and draw on the feedback of others in crafting their study, developing key arguments and sharpening research findings. Students and professors in 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. Additionally, all students should complete the assigned readings and carefully review the drafts submitted by their peers prior to the start of class. All students should be prepared to participate in a constructive discussion about their classmates'

drafts during class time. You are also expected to provide constructive written comments on the work of those for whom you are assigned to evaluate and provide oral comments to in class. We hope that this class will be a safe space to share your work and help your classmates with theirs. However, should any issues arise during class that make you feel uncomfortable, please do not hesitate to reach out to one of the instructors.

**\*\*In the unlikely case that class must be held online:** Unless the public health situation changes, classes will be in person. However, if circumstances are such that we are required to teach online, here are some guidelines. An important part of practicum participation is conveying interest, intellectual engagement, and enthusiasm for your colleague's research projects. We understand that the online environment poses unique challenges for active participation. Nevertheless, disengagement is especially problematic during the provision of feedback to student authors--a time when students display their hard work to the class and are looking for collective support, encouragement, and fresh ideas. In the spirit of making the class as productive as possible for everyone, we offer these best practices for the online experience.

- Use a reliable computer or tablet with a working camera and microphone
- Close unnecessary applications to avoid competing sound and computer processing ability
- Mute microphone while not speaking to avoid background noise
- If at all possible, please use video functionality. Feedback from body language and facial expression is an important element of communication, and we want to ensure that presenters have the fullest sense of active support from their peers.
- For more suggestions about how to enhance the video call experience, see this *NYT* article: <https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/blog/professional-video-call-from-home/>

**Preliminary Research Statement: Due June 20**

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. Please also describe the status of your data (do you have access, if collecting what stage are you at and what is your timeline).
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, not including references) Due Sept. 13, 9:00 am**

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 in-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 descriptives 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, not including references) **Due Oct. 25, 9:00 am**

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 critical 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 literature on your topic and 2) specify your intended contribution to the literature—how are you extending, clarifying, or challenging it, specifically.
4. *Methods*: 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* (no more than 700 words, and not included in the overall word limit): 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 Dec. 9, 5:00 pm**

The working paper should be about 4,000 words, excluding references, figures 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. Again, submit a response memo.

**The working paper must include the following elements:**

1. A meaningful and accurate title; A great abstract – that is one with a “hook” and the preliminary results.
2. Introduction. A very clear explanation of how your research will contribute to this literature, by extending, clarifying or challenging an empirical or conceptual aspect of the field. What is the mark you plan to make in this area? Will you contribute new theoretical, conceptual or empirical 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? This should be contained in a 3-4 paragraph Introduction.
3. A well-developed critical and sculpted literature review. Look to well-respected sociological journals for guidance. Use meaningful subheads (not “Lit Review” but “The Downsides of Schedule Control”)
4. 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.
5. A clear write up of your results. In other words, there should be an initial attempt to analyze your data. Provide clear interpretations of your coefficients, quotes, documents or field notes using the relevant literature or theory.
6. NOTE: At this point, a discussion section is not expected because it could change after revising the paper yet again. But you are welcome to include it if you like.
7. Again, submit a response memo as a separate document of no more than 700 words.

**Complete paper draft:** (7,000-8,000 words) **Due Feb. 28, 12 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 critical 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 14, 12 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 15-minute conference-style presentation on this work at the Practicum Annual Conference. Be sure to proofread 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 Groups and Processes

The heart of this class is the process of workshopping your papers and getting critical feedback. For the Fall, the class has been divided into the following four groups:

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### Reading Groups Fall Term

GROUP # 1	GROUP # 2	GROUP # 3	GROUP # 4
Aboubakar	Al Hafez	Chen	Attia
Bass	H. Kim	Gibson	Coelho
Iqbal	Marois	Gul	Nabi
Nachtigall	Xing	J. Kim	Parnia
		Wang	Ugarte Villalobos

### Each member of Group 2 will provide feedback for two members of Group 1

Al Hafez	Aboubakar	Iqbal
H. Kim	Aboubakar	Nachtigall
Marois	Bass	Iqbal
Xing	Bass	Nachtigall

### Each member of Group 1 will provide feedback for two members of Group 2

Aboubakar	Al Hafez	Marois
Bass	Al Hafez	Xing
Iqbal	H. Kim	Marois
Nachtigall	H. Kim	Xing

### Each member of Group 4 will provide feedback for two members of Group 3

Attia	Chen	Wang
Coelho	Gibson	J. Kim
Nabi	Gul	Gibson
Parnia	J. Kim	Gul
Ugarte Villalobos	Wang	Chen

### Each member of Group 3 will provide feedback for two members of Group 4

Chen	Attia	Ugarte Villalobos
Gibson	Coelho	Parnia
Gul	Nabi	Coelho
J. Kim	Parnia	Nabi
Wang	Ugarte Villalobos	Attia



Though only two commentators from one reading group are assigned to provide written feedback on your paper, everyone is required to read your paper and provide comments during class. You will be expected to give a brief 5-7 minute overview of your paper, in a maximum of 4 PowerPoint slides, covering the following components: 1) The motivation/ rationale/ puzzle of your research project; 2) Your research question(s); 3) Research design/ empirical data; 4) Challenges or issues that are yet to be resolved. Commentators will present their feedback orally and the class as a whole will discuss each paper.

The process will work as follows: You will post your work-in-progress to Quercus by Thursday at noon, the week before your presentation. Student commentators will provide written comments on the work of two other student authors. Commentators will post their written comments by the following Monday, the day before the class meets, by 5:00 pm.

Groups will be re-organized during the Winter term to ensure that students receive the most directed feedback possible as projects near completion.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE (Fall) - Readings will be available on Quercus**

#### **Sept. 13: Introduction to Practicum \*First Research Statement Due at 9:00 am\***

- Review of syllabus; Brief explanation of reading groups and research feedback
- Brief updates about how each project has progressed since the summer meeting
- Class Discussion. Please identify:
  - 1) One published article that you find stimulating and inspiring. This article need not be on the same topic as your practicum paper, but it should be an exemplar for the type of intellectual product you aspire to create.
    - a. Be prepared to discuss what makes it an exemplar for you
  - 2) Two journals to which you would ideally like to submit your article for review
    - a. Be prepared to talk about why you selected these journals. Briefly comment on any implications for what it means for your own paper – length, style, articles on your topic you need to cite from this journal, etc.

#### **Sept. 20: Formulating a Research Question: Puzzles/Gaps/Innovations**

- In class we will workshop and refine your research questions.
- Read and be prepared to answer the questions that Luker poses at the end of each chapter and be prepared to share these in class: Kristin Luker. 2008. *Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 4 and 5. (“What is this a Case of, Anyway?” and “Reviewing the Literature.”)

#### **Sept. 27: First Round Feedback**

Group 1 submitting paper drafts

Group 2 commenting

#### **Oct. 4: First Round Feedback**

Group 2 submitting paper drafts

Group 1 commenting

**Oct. 11: First Round Feedback**

Group 3 submitting paper drafts

Group 4 commenting

**Oct. 18: First Round Feedback**

Group 4 submitting paper drafts

Group 3 commenting

**Oct. 25: Debrief and Debug: Your Writing Challenges and How to Solve Them**

Guest presenter Dan Newman, Director of Graduate Writing Support, FAS

**\*Second Research Statement Due at 9:00 am\***

**Nov. 1: Second Round Feedback**

Group 1 submitting paper drafts

Group 2 commenting

**Nov. 8: No Class, Reading Week****Nov. 15: Second Round Feedback**

Group 2 submitting paper drafts

Group 1 commenting

**Nov. 22: Second Round Presentations**

Group 3 submitting paper drafts

Group 4 commenting

**Nov. 29: Second Round Presentations**

Group 4 submitting paper drafts

Group 3 commenting

**Dec. 6: No Class****Dec. 9: \*Working Paper Due, Friday Dec. 9 at 5:00 pm\*****WINTER TERM**

The Winter 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. In contrast to the Fall semester, in the Winter semester student authors will formally present their papers to the class and receive feedback from commentators and other students.

The Winter term Practicum culminates in PAC, or the Practicum Annual Conference in the Sociology Department. It is held April 6-7 (tentatively) and faculty and grad students are invited. Students present their research, conference style, for 15 minutes, and discussant and audience members provide feedback.

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.

Reading Groups Winter Term			
GROUP # 1	GROUP # 2	GROUP # 3	GROUP # 4
Bass	Nachtigall	Aboubakar	Ugarte Villalobos
Chen	H. Kim	Parnia	Marois
Xing	Iqbal	Coelho	Attia
Gibson	Al Hafez	Ugarte Villalobos	Gul
J. Kim	Wang		

Group 2 will provide feedback for Group 1		
Bass	Nachtigall	Al Hafez
Chen	Nachtigall	Wang
Xing	H. Kim	Al Hafez
Gibson	H. Kim	Iqbal
J. Kim	Iqbal	Wang

Group 3 will provide feedback for Group 4		
Marois	Aboubakar	Parnia
Ugarte Villalobos	Nabi	Coelho
Attia	Parnia	Coelho
Gul	Aboubakar	Nabi

Group 1 will provide feedback for Group 2		
Nachtigall	Bass	Chen
H. Kim	Xing	Gibson
Al Hafez	Bass	Xing
Iqbal	J. Kim	Gibson
Wang	J. Kim	Chen

Group 4 will provide feedback for Group 3		
Aboubakar	Marois	Gul
Parnia	Marois	Attia
Coelho	Ugarte Villalobos	Attia
Nabi	Ugarte Villalobos	Gul

## **COURSE SCHEDULE (Winter)**

### **Jan. 10: Discussion**

Discussion of second term goals; writing and publication strategies

*Faculty Presentation:* Faculty perspectives on writing and the publication process

*Advanced Student Presentation:* Writing, from practicum to publication

### **Jan. 17: Third Round Workshop**

Group 1 presenting

Group 2 commenting

*Third Round presentations should focus on connecting your research question to your preliminary analysis*

### **Jan. 24: Third Round Workshop**

Group 2 presenting

Group 1 commenting

### **Jan. 31: Third Round Workshop**

Group 3 presenting,

Group 4 commenting

### **Feb. 7: No Class, COMP WEEK**

Informal drop-in session during class time

### **Feb. 14: Third Round Workshop**

Group 4 presenting, group 3 commenting

### **Feb. 21: No class; Reading week**

### **Feb. 28: No class,**

**\*First draft of complete paper due, 12 noon**

### **March 7: Fourth Round Presentations**

Group 1 presenting

Group 2 commenting

*Fourth round presentations should be a full presentation of your paper – 12 minutes*

### **March 14: Fourth Round Presentations**

Group 2 presenting

Group 1 commenting

### **March 21: Fourth Round Presentations**

Group 3 presenting

Group 4 commenting

### **March 28: Fourth Round Presentations**

Group 4 presenting

Group 3 commenting

### **April 6 & 7 Practicum Conference – *Tentative* dates**

The practicum conference will likely run for most of the day for these two days, so please make room in your schedule accordingly. We will let you know the exact schedule closer to the date.

### **April 14: \*\*Final Paper Due, 12 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](#)."

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>, 416-978-8060, or [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto: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](http://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:** 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 course instructors, we will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity 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>.