

SOC 300—Claims and Evidence in Sociology

Princeton University, Fall 2007

McCosh Room 2

Time: TTH 3:30-4:20pm

Instructor: King-To Yeung

E-mail: kyeung@princeton.edu

Office: 153 Wallace Hall

Preceptors:

Michael Benediktsson

Amir Goldberg

Michael Schlossman

Charles Varner

OBJECTIVES

This is a course on the logic of social research. During this semester, we will discuss how sociologists apply a specific approach of inquiry we call “science” to analyze and explain social behavior. A wide range of research methods will be surveyed, and by the end of the course you should develop a critical eye towards how research questions can be answered differently by using various combinations of theory, methods, and data. Throughout the term, we will pay particular attention to how different researchers employ various kinds of assumptions about society and how those choices affect the methods used. We will examine three assumptions about society: 1) the Durkheimian’s notion of “society as a thing”; 2) society as a composite of variables; 3) society as a meaning-producing process. As a requirement for your junior thesis, you are expected to come up with a research question, produce a research proposal, and start some initial investigation of your project. Let’s learn together!

REQUIRED READINGS

All other assigned readings can be downloaded from the class website:

<http://blackboard.princeton.edu>

CLASS FORMAT

- 1) Class lecture: The lectures are a combination of talks, Powerpoint presentations, and interactions with the students. I cannot hold one hour lecture without falling asleep myself, so I expect you to raise questions and discuss issues that I may not have prepared. If I cannot answer them, I will tell you in the next session. Please keep me awake in the lecture.
- 2) Precepts: This is the time when we will try out some technical, hands-on practices of social research. There will be precept reading, in-class assignments and research activities. This means attendance is mandatory in these sessions.

REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Complete all reading assignments *before* coming to class.
- 2) Bring a calculator and index cards to every class.

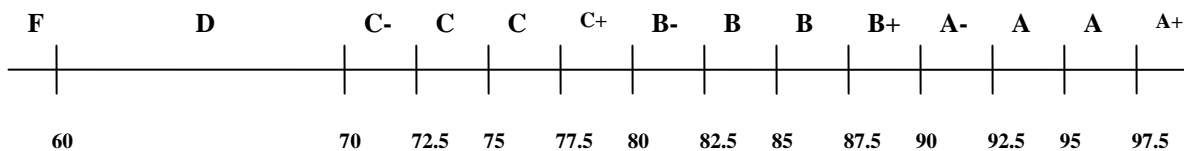
- 3) Mid-term exam (25%) and a final-exam (20%)—You will need a calculator for both exams. No make-up examination will be granted without legitimate reasons documented in writing from a Dean or physician.
- 4) Homework assignments (30%)—Unless instructed otherwise, all assignments (10 points each) should be typed. This class requires students to complete ALL assignments. You can submit late assignments with a grade deduction (2 points deducted for each day delayed), but you must turn in all assignments required in the class. Please e-mail assignments to your preceptors by the deadline (follow your preceptor’s instructions) and attach one copy to King.
- 5) Lecture participation (5%)—Do you answer questions raised by the instructor? Raise your own questions? Make *relevant* comments to lecture and discussions? This grade is not based on attendance, but on your contribution to class interaction and learning.
- 6) Precept participation (5%)— Do you answer questions raised by the instructor? Raise your own questions? Make *relevant* comments to lecture and discussions? This grade is not based on attendance, but on your contribution to class interaction and learning.
- 7) Complete the IRP on line training (5%)—Submit your certificate to preceptors by the week, **Nov 6-8, 2007.**

Visit and sign up on this site:

<http://cme.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning/humanparticipant-protections.asp>

- 8) Final Research Proposal (10 %): Integrated draft that includes the introduction, statement of the problem, strategic literature review, research approach/methods and data analysis plan. This assignment covers all except the data analysis, interpretation of results, and conclusion of your Junior Thesis. Due date is **January 11, 2008.**
- 9) **NOTE:** You must **complete ALL** the requirements. If you fail to complete any one of the above required items, you may not be given a grade at the end of the semester.
- 10) Strictly follow the university honor system and academic regulations. Issues related to academic integrity and plagiarism can be found in <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/rrr/>

EVALUATION



Final Percentage

CLASS SCHEDULE

<<Subject to change; please check Blackboard for update>>

PART I: BASIC LOGIC

WEEK 1 Sept 18-20

Sociological Questions

How do sociologists construct their subjects of research? What are the underlying assumptions guiding social research? What is sociological evidence?

- **Tue:**
 - o "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure" (Hochschild)
- **Thur:**
 - o "Introduction" from *Suicide* (Durkheim, pp. 41-53)
 - o "What is a Social Fact" from *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Durkheim)
 - o "A Note on the Uses of Official Statistics" (Kitsuse & Cicourel)
- Precepts: NO precepts this week.
- Homework:

Assignment 1: Brainstorming for a Research Topic

WEEK 2 Sept 25-27

Establishing Patterns

How to examine patterns from data? How to explain patterns? What is the scientific attitude? What is a piece of "evidence"?

- **Tue:**
 - o "Egoistic Suicide" (Durkheim, pp. 152-170)
 - o *Hypotheses and Evidence* (Stephens, pp. 1-19)
- **Thur:**
 - o "The Subject, Method and Scope of this Inquiry," from *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski, pp. 1-11)
 - o "The Natives of the Trobriand Islands," from *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski, pp. 49-80)
- Precept reading: — *Hypotheses and Evidence* (Stephens, pp. 1-19) & "A Variable Language" (Babbie, pp. 28-33).
- Precept discussion: —Reinforcing the Ideas about hypotheses. Discuss what is and what is not a "social phenomenon." Review potential research topics.
- In-class exercise: Hypothesis exercise and work on Assignment 02.
- Assignment 2: Formulating Hypotheses.

WEEK 3
Oct 2-4

Correlations of Things

How to establish correlations between variables? How to isolate a set of correlations from other effects? How to detect spurious relationship?

- **Tue:**
 - o “Egoistic Suicide” (Durkheim, pp. 171-189; 201-202)
 - o “Closing the Trap,” from *Hypotheses and Evidence* (Stephens, pp. 179-190)

- **Thur:**
 - o "The Subject, Method and Scope of this Inquiry," from *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski, pp. **11-25**)
 - o “The Essentials of the Kula.” from *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski, pp. 81-99)

- Precept reading: “The Suicide Mind” (Shneidman, pp. 386-391)

- In-class exercise: Content Analysis of Suicide Notes.

- Precept discussion: The basics of content analysis. Review each one's research questions. Explore more research possibilities.

- Assignment 3: Preliminary Report

NOTE: October 5 is the deadline for choosing an advisor.

WEEK 4
Oct 9-11

Interpretation and Explanation

How to come up a causal, functional, and processual story to explain patterns of observations? How to eliminate alternative explanations?

- **Tue:**
 - o *Egoistic Suicide* (Durkheim, pp. 197-202; 208-216)
 - o “Cause and Effects,” from *Hypotheses and Evidence* (Stephens, pp. 168-190)

- **Thur**
 - o “Launching a Canoe” (Malinowski pp. 146-159); “Sociology of the Kula” (pp. 274-281); “Mythology of the Kula” (pp. 291-330); “The Inland Kula” (pp. 469-477); “The Meaning of the Kula” (pp. 509-518)—All from *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.
 - o **Video: Tales from the Jungle (part 2-4).**

- Precept reading: “Criteria for Causality” (Babbie, p. 75-77; table 3)

- In-class exercise: Control exercise.

- Assignment 4: Literature Review (due in 2 weeks).

WEEK 5
Oct 16-18

Constructing Theories

How to strengthen your explanation? How to use logic to construct explanation?

- **Tue:**
 - o Repeated: *Egoistic Suicide* (Durkehim pp. 208-216)
 - o “The Logic of Scientific Inference,” from *Constructing Social Theories* (Stinchcombe, pp. 15-22)
 - o “Deductive and Inductive Theory” (Babbie, p. 24-26; 42-56)
- **Thur:**
 - o “The Status of Woman in Native Society,” from *The Sexual Life of Savages* (Malinowski, pp. 24-43)
 - o *Women of Value, Men of Renown* (Weiner 1976, xv-xx; 3-11)
 - o *IPR application mention*
- Precept reading: “Suicide and Friendship Among American Adolescents” *American Journal of Public Health* (Bearman and Moody 2004: 89-95)
- Precept discussion: Further explore testing Durkheim’s theory. Introduce Survey Methods.
- Homework: NO.

WEEK 6
Oct 23-25

Checking Claims

How to deduce new hypotheses from theories? How to understand theories in a different context? How to check a scientific claim?

- **Tue:**
 - o “A Test of Durkheim’s Theory of Suicide—Without Committing the ‘Ecological Fallacy.’” *American Sociological Review* (van Poppel and Day, 1996: 500-502).
 - o “Denomination, religious context, and suicide,” *American Journal of Sociology* (van Tubergen et al. 2006: 787-822).
- **Thur:**
 - o “Theoretical Framework,” (Weiner, pp. 11-22); “Women’s Mortuary Ceremonies” (Weiner, pp. 91-103); “The Nature of Trobriand Exchange” (Weiner pp. 211-226)—All from *Women of Value, Men of Renown*.
- Precepts: NO.
- Assignment 5: Observation & finish the IRP training at home (certificate due after the break).

WEEK 7
Nov 6-8

Logic of Experiment Design

How to set up experimental designs? How do experiments address the questions of causality? How do experimenters apply J.S. Mill's method of agreement and method of difference? What are the limits of those methods?

- **Tue:** Mid-Term Exam
- **Thur:**
 - o “Empirically Driven Experiments” from *Building Experiments* (Willer and Walker, pp. 31-40)
 - o “The Classical Experiments” (Babbie, pp, 221-230)
- Precept reading: Continued with lecture reading from *Building Experiments* (Willer and Walker, pp. 40-57)
- Precept discussion: Discuss famous examples of experiments. Figure out the logic of each of the experiments.
- Homework: NO.

WEEK 8
Nov 13-15

Variations in Experimental Designs

How to conduct experiments in naturally-occurring settings? How do researchers modify the classical experimental design in audit studies and survey experiments?

- **Tue:**
 - o “Measuring the Labor Market Consequences of Incarceration” (Pager, pp. 41-57); “The Mark of a Criminal Record” (Pager, pp. 58-85)—*Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration*.
- **Thur:**
 - o “Racial Prejudice and Attitude Toward Affirmative Action.” *American Journal of Political Science* (Kurklinski et. al. 1997, pp. 402-419)
- Precept reading: NO.
- Precept discussion: Present Observation Assignment.
- Assignment 6: JP Proposal Draft (due after Thanksgiving).

WEEK 9
Nov 20-22

Catch Up

- **Tue:**
 - o **Tue:** Catch up with last week's readings--"Racial Prejudice and Attitude Toward Affirmative Action." *American Journal of Political Science* (Kurklinski et. al. 1997, pp. 402-419)
- **Thur:**
 - o *THANKSGIVING*

WEEK 10
Nov 27-29

Asking questions

How do social researchers study attitudes and behavior through survey research? What kind of assumptions do they make about the links between attitudes and behaviors?

- **Tue:**
 - o "Questions and Answers in Survey" Pp. 201-208 in *Survey Methodology* (Groves et. al. 2004)
 - o "Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus What they Do" (*ASR 2005; Pager and Quillian, pp. 355-380*)
- **Thur:**
 - o "Ambivalence and Pregnancy: Adolescents' Attitudes, Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* (Bruckner, Martin, and Bearman 2004)
- Precept reading: "Sampling" (Singleton and Straits, pp. 134-160).
- Precept discussion: Types of Sampling.
- Homework:NO

WEEK 11
Dec 4-6

Validity and Reliability

- **Tue:**
 - o *Catch Up*--"Ambivalence and Pregnancy: Adolescents' Attitudes, Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* (Bruckner, Martin, and Bearman 2004)
 - o Definition of Attitudes (Handout)
- **Thur:**
 - o "How Unclear Terms Affect Survey Data." *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Fowler 1992)

Assignment 7: Draft a Short Questionnaire

Assignment 8: Checking Questionnaire

WEEK 12
Dec 11-13

Deep Talking

How to conduct in-depth interviews and analyze interview data?

- **Tue:**

- “Making Men in Gay Fraternities” Gender & Society (Yeung, Stompler, and Wharton, 2006).
- “Grounded Theory Method” (handout)

- **Thur**

Conclusions

Assignment 9: Survey Data Analysis

Dec 17 (Monday)

No class

FULL CITATIONS OF ASSIGNED READINGS

Babbie, Earl. 2004. *The Practice of Social Research*, 10th edition. Wadsworth.

Bearman, Peter S. and James Moody. 2004. “Suicide and Friendship Among American Adolescents” *American Journal of Public Health* 94: 89-95.

Berg, Bruce L. 2007. *Qualitative Research Methods For the Social Sciences*, 6th edition. Boston: Pearson. (Week 3, supplementary reading)

Brückner, Hannah, Anne Martin, and Peter S. Bearman. 2004. “Ambivalent and Pregnancy: Adolescents’ Attitudes Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy.” *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 36(6): 248-257.

Durkheim, Emile. [1897] 1951. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. New York: Free Press.

Durkheim, Emile. 1982. *The Rules of the Sociological Method*, edited by Steven Luke and translated by W. D. Halls. New York: Free Press.

Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau. 2004. *Survey Methodology*. Wiley-Interscience.

Kitsuse, John I. and Aaron V. Cicourel. 1963. “A Note on the Uses of Official Statistics.” *Social Problems* 11: 131-139.

Fowler, Jr. Floyd Jackson. 1992. “How Unclear Terms Affect Survey Data.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 56(2): 218-231.

- Hanneman, Robert A. and Mark Riddle. 2005. *Introduction to Social Network Methods*. Riverside, CA: University of California, Riverside (<http://faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman>) (Week 3, supplementary reading)
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kuklinski, James H., Paul M. Sniderman, Kathleen Knight, Thomas Piazza, Philip E. Tetlock, Gordon R. Lawrence, and Barbara Mellers. 1997. "Racial Prejudice and Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action." *American Journal of Political Science* 41(2): 402-419.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: George Routledge & Sons.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1929. *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia: An Ethnographic Account of Courtship, Marriage, and Family Life among the Native of the Trobriand Islands, British New Guinea*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Pager, Devah and Lincoln Quillian. 2005. "Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus What They Do." *American Sociological Review* 70: 355-380.
- Pager, Devah. 2007. *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration*. University of Chicago Press.
- Shneidman, Edwin S. 1996. *The Suicidal Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Singleton, Royce A., Jr. and Bruce C. Straits. 1999. *Approaches to Social Research*, 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stephens, William N. 1968. *Hypotheses and Evidence*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- van Tubergen, Frank, Manfred te Grotenhuis, and Wout Ultee. 2005. "Denomination, Religious Context, and Suicide: Neo-Durkheim Multilevel Explanations Tested with Individual and Contextual Data." *American Journal of Sociology* 111: 797-823.
- van Poppel, Frans and Lincoln H. Day. 1996. "A Test of Durkheim's Theory of Suicide: Without Committing the 'Ecological Fallacy.'" *American Sociological Review* 61: 500-507.
- Weiner, Annette B. 1976. *Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Willer David and Henry A. Walker. 2007. *Building Experiments: Testing Social Theory*. Stanford University Press.
- Yeung, King-To, Mindy Stomblor, and Renee Wharton. 2006. "Making Men in Gay Fraternities: Resisting and Reproducing Multiple Dimensions of Hegemonic Masculinity." *Gender & Society* 20(1): 5-31.