Social research is a vast and contested terrain. In this course we will focus on the logic and practice of major approaches to contemporary social research. We you will soon see that every research approach has its own strength and weakness. At the end of the semester, you will be able to:

1. develop your own research project to the areas of your interest.
2. understand general principals of contemporary social research practices.
3. critically evaluate sociological research reports, journals, and books.

Unit I: Introduction

In the introduction section, we will review the basic process of social research. In particular we will focus on framing research questions and choosing appropriate research designs. This unit will also examine the relationship between epistemology, theory, methodology, and methods. At the end of this unit, you are required to come up with a research question, which you will develop into your dissertation proposal.

Suggested Readings


Unit II: Quantitative Research

In this section, we will begin with the (post)positivism paradigm in the social sciences and then review the notion of scientific methods and debate surrounding it. We then focus on the logic of quantitative research in sociology. The key concepts we review in this unit are: variables, measurement, hypothesis, casualty, reliability, and validity.

Suggested Readings


Unit III: Qualitative Research

Unit III provides an introduction to social constructionism and interpretivism. Our focus in this unit will be meaning and interpretation, which generally inform qualitative research. We will thus chiefly focus on designing, conducting, and analyzing qualitative research projects.

Suggested Readings


Onwuegbuzie, Anthony and Nancy Leech. 2007. "Validity and Qualitative Research: An Oxymoron?" *Quality and Quantity* 41:233-249.


**Unit IV: Comparative Historical Research**

In this unit, we will focus on comparative historical research. The promise of comparative method is that it aims at bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Historical sociologists, on the other hand, use both qualitative and quantitative techniques, but they also claim distinctiveness of their approaches and substantive areas. Historical sociologists, for example, focus on large scale social transformations and changes such as the rise and demise of feudalism. These types of research pose their own problems to researchers. In this section, we will study historical sociology as a methodological approach.

**Suggested Readings**


Daniel Little. 'Explaining large-scale historical change'. Accessed at http://www-personal.umd.umich.edu/~delittle/resources/v2.PDF


Unit V: Ethics, Values, and Writing Research Reports

Doing research and writing research reports might appear as a straight forward process, but we will see that they have their own complexities. In this final unit, we will review the art and politics of doing research and writing research reports. We will also examine postmodern critique of dominant research practice in the social sciences.

Suggested Readings


Method of Evaluation

Mid-term exam 30; Internal Evaluation including field reports 30%; Final exam 40%.

Note: Students are required to do one week long fieldwork as part of this course. The date and place of the fieldwork will be announced as the semester progresses. During fieldwork, students will practice qualitative data collection techniques. They are also required to analyze their data and present a research report.