Overview

This class is intended to provide a hands-on learning experience in creating sociological research. As such, all students will choose a research topic for the class, and will conduct original research on their topic. The results of this research will form the basis of a conference-style paper and presentation. At the end of the class you will have a conference-quality research paper, as well as experience giving a presentation in a conference format.

Format

Conferences are one of the ways that ideas are communicated and exchanged, and are a staple of academic life. Most articles and books were first presented at conferences, and many articles and books grow out of ideas people came up with at conferences.

This class is organized around writing a conference-style research paper, and to give you a feel for what presenting at a conference is like. You are encouraged to work on an idea that interests you, and to develop this into a paper that you will not only turn in at the end of the course, but also present in our class conference. As papers for academic conferences are often coauthored, you are welcome to work on this project either by yourself or to collaborate with up to three colleagues, as you see fit.

Note that this class has only one book, and relatively little assigned reading. This is because it is assumed that you will be reading articles and books related to your project. While a portion of every class will be used for lecture, in this class my role is less to impart information to you, and more to help you learn how to structure the information
that you are marshalling for your paper. Thus, much of the class will be spent discussing your various projects and ideas, and you should expect to learn from each other.

The nature of writing a conference paper is that there are not many deadlines, but the ones that exist are non-negotiable. Thus, as you work on your project, you will be expected to turn in an abstract (like you would submit for a conference), and a draft of the paper. All other homework assignments provide a guide for your writing and help you become a better writer by breaking the paper up into its component parts (introduction, literature review, data and methods, results, conclusion).

Final Project

The final project consists of two parts, a paper and a presentation, and is designed to give you a chance to apply the skills that you have learned as a sociology major.

The paper should be roughly 20 pages and should contain the results of your original analysis of primary data. This could involve exploring a new research agenda, testing an existing theory, or replicating the findings of a journal article in a different time or place.

The presentation is an opportunity for you to present your project to the class. You will have approximately 15 minutes to present your project, followed by a Q&A session where you will have a chance to receive questions and feedback from your classmates. Note that this is designed to give you a chance to revise your paper based on the feedback you get on your presentation.

Grading

Proposal: 10 points
Draft of paper: 10 points
Final presentation: 30 points
Final paper: 50 points

If you are working collaboratively with classmates you will all receive the same grade for the proposal, draft, presentation and paper. You will receive full points for the proposal and the draft of the paper if they are complete and you turn them in on time. The final presentation will be graded for clarity and professionalism, and if you are working collaboratively you are welcome to split up the presentation or have one person present for the whole group (both are common at conferences). The final paper counts for half of your grade. Papers will be graded for the clarity of the writing, the quality of the analysis, the scope of the project, and the significance of the ideas.

Extra credit will be given for class participation, and is available for providing comments on drafts of your colleagues’ papers.

No late assignments will be accepted.
Text


Course Schedule

**Week 1: Overview of class and how to choose a topic**
*September 24 (Booth et al. Part 2)*

HW: Pick a topic and collaborators. If you are collaborating a list of collaborators and the project title is due at the beginning of class in Week 2. Start working on your project.

Recommended: Identify a key article related to your project to bring to class next week. Analyze the method it uses, what literature it draws on, and how it lays out its argument.

**Week 2: Review of sociological methods and how to build an argument**
*October 1 (Booth et al. Part 3)*

HW: Abstract/proposal. This is a document summarizing your project; it should include a table using GSS data and be between 1 paragraph and 4 pages in length. This is due by the beginning of class in Week 3.

**Week 3: Writing a literature review**
*October 8 (Booth et al. Part 3, Appendix)*

HW: Research relevant literature and write literature review (approx. 2-5 pages).

**Week 4: Writing about your data and method**
*October 15*

Homework: Write up your data and method for paper (approx. 1-4 pages).

**Week 5: Presenting your results**
*October 22 (Chapter 15)*

Homework: Write up results for paper (approx. 3-10 pages).

**Week 6: Introduction and conclusion**
*October 29 (Chapter 16)*

Homework: Write your introduction (approx. 2-4 pages) and conclusion (approx. 1-4 pages).
**Week 7: Revise, revise, revise.**  
*November 5 (Chapters 14 and 17)*

Copy editing & moving section of text to make things flow well.  
HW: Swap papers with somebody and provide them with comments.

**Week 8: Academic Conferences and Presentations**  
*November 12*

HW: Prepare your presentation. A draft of your paper is due at 5pm on Monday November 16th. The draft should contain an introduction, literature review, information about your data, your method, and your results, and a conclusion.

**Week 9: Sociology 180AW Conference**  
*November 19*

Presentations.

**Week 10: Thanksgiving Break!**  
*November 26*

Presentations.

**Week 11: Sociology 180AW Conference**  
*December 3*

Presentations.

**Exam Period**

Papers must be received by the end of the exam period for this class, which is Thursday December 10th, 10:00am.