



INSTITUT DE HAUTES
ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES
ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
GRADUATE INSTITUTE
OF INTERNATIONAL AND
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Department of Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO)

Academic year 2020-2021

Doctoral Research Seminar II: Research Design

ANSO114 - Spring - 6 ECTS

[Schedule & Room](#)

Course Description

This course is a class on the art of research design in the social sciences. Students will learn how to relate observations drawn from fieldwork (observation, interview, archives and experiment) with theory so as to better assess truth claims in the social sciences. In addition, students will learn various comparative research designs. Students are encouraged to come to class with a research idea in mind, or better, a draft of a research proposal. Throughout the class, students will write small assignments that will allow them to produce a research proposal by the end of the class.

> PROFESSOR

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[Office hours](#)

Syllabus

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

This course requires active participation from all members during class and every week. The assessment of students' performance will be broken down into three criteria: participation in class (25% of the grade), many short assignments (35% each), and a final research proposal (40%). Participation in class means engaging with the discussions in class and being an active commentator, not only of your assigned memoranda but also of other memoranda but also of others, so to create a collective conversation in the class. Many short memoranda are required throughout the semester, and the grade will reflect as much quality as regularity and the ability to respect deadlines. The final research proposal will not be longer than 25 double-spaced pages.

Organization of the Class

Some classes are entirely devoted to the discussion of articles, and other classes are entirely devoted to the discussion of students' writing assignments. When students are asked write a new piece of their research proposal, the assignment is due by **Monday morning 8am BEFORE the class**. Students are required to **post their writing exercise on an online document**. Therefore, **every student should (and must) read her colleagues' writing exercises prior to class**.

In addition, when a writing assignment is due, **students will be asked to focus on ONE particular piece of writing (by one of their colleagues), and discuss it in class**. This student will be referred to below as your 'commentator'. Commentators may vary for each week. This exercise is meant to nurture your commenting (e.g. analytical) skills, which means that you should not only do the work of 'commentator' for the one paper you are assigned to comment upon (and for which you need to read a little more), but for ALL the proposals. So in class,

we should gather a lot of comments, almost by everybody for each paper. That means that everyone needs to learn to express herself very briefly, and go immediately to the core of the problems you have identified and also propose a solution to solve the problem (hopefully in one minute!).

The final proposal is due on May 27th

WEEK 1 What is (Good) Research? Evaluative Cultures of Proposals (February 23)

Lamont, Michèle. 2009. Introduction. *How Professors Think: Inside the curious world of academic judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ Press.

Guetzkow, Joshua, Michèle Lamont, and Grégoire Mallard. "What is Originality in the Humanities and the Social Sciences?." *American Sociological Review* 69.2 (2004): 190-212.

WEEK 2 Constructing the Object of Research (March 2)

****please note this class is likely to be exceptionally moved to the morning, 10h15****

Presentations of MPT and FNS proposals by 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students

Alford, Robert R., *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, chapters 1, 2 & 3, pp. 11-53

Also, start working on your assignment for week 3.

WEEK 3 From Research Idea to Research Object (March 9)

Discussion of assignments

Guidelines for the writer:

Identify your topic of research, and then find an article in the daily press (NYT, Le Monde, The Guardian, etc.) or magazines (New Yorker, etc.) that deals with some of the issues at stake in your future research. Send the article to your commentator. Then, write what could be an introductory paragraph (half a page) to your future proposal based on that article.

Then, start thinking about the research question that you want to raise about this topic. To help you do so, find two articles: *one* article published in a major generalist journal (e.g. AJS or ASR, a top Anthropology journal, etc.); and choose *one* article from a speciality journal (i.e. from the specific topic or region, from recent issues) in which you are likely to publish your paper.

Then, use both articles to identify: The broad general question the author seeks to answer; and how the author answers her question.

Identify whether the contribution is framed as a contribution to the literature, whether she brings in wealth of new data and disconfirms old theory/frame, whether she challenges existing theory; or adjudicates an ongoing debate in the field; etc.

Then, write one page (or half a page) to formulate your research question, and frame how your future research on the topic can contribute to the field. Please keep in mind this is a preliminary exercise to help you think about how to formulate a research question. It does not mean you will have to stick to it through the entire semester. In fact, your question will likely change as the semester unfolds.

Guidelines for the commentator:

You need to comment on the choices made by the writer with respect to the choice of anecdote and research question. Having a look at the academic and popular article will help you think of alternative ways that the introduction writer could have used to start his/her proposal. So try to think of alternatives, and the pros and cons of each alternative. If you know the topic, and want to refer to other sources than the academic article that you've been sent, please, do so.

WEEK 4: Social Sciences and Theory**(March 16)**

- Abend, G. (2008). "The meaning of 'theory'." *Sociological Theory*, 26(2), 173-199.
- Besbris, M., & Khan, S. (2017). Less Theory. More Description. *Sociological Theory*, 35(2), 147-153.
- Charmaz, Kathy and Belgrave, Linda Liska (2007). "Grounded theory." *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology*, 2007
- Healy, Kieran. (2017) "Fuck nuance." *Sociological Theory* 35.2: 118-127.
- Skocpol, Theda and Margaret Somers. 1980. "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 174-197.

WEEK 5 Theory and Literature Review**(March 23)**

At the end of the Doctoral Seminar 1, all students had to write a literature review essay based on 5 monographs in their field. All students have to send their last assignment for Doctoral Seminar 1 to the TA, and the TA will upload those review essays in a folder on Moodle. Before class, all students have to read all these essays and choose two Literature Reviews from the Annual Review of Anthropology or Sociology.

We will discuss these review essays and the problems you will encounter as you try to do next week's assignment, which requires that you write a literature review, which is different from writing a review essay based upon 5 monographs. So please, before you come to week 5's class, start doing the assignment for week 6. Otherwise, you won't know which problems you encounter, and won't be able to benefit as much from this class.

WEEK 6 Theory and Literature Review**(March 30)**

Discussion of assignments

Guidelines for the writer:

You need to write 2-3 pages, starting with your research question (2 lines). Then, you announce which subfields of anthropology/sociology your question belongs to (legal anthropology, urban sociology, etc.), and which broad set of theories have debated this question for the last 10-20-30 years. This is one paragraph.

Then, draft the literature review of your research proposal. To do so, find at least 3 articles (send ONE of these to your commentator) on your general topic (but not your case specifically) and list the research questions asked by each author. Identify the research question that is most similar to the one you want to ask.

Then, list at least 2 (possibly 3) different approaches to answer your research question, which you have identified in the literature. After that, you present the list of concepts/authors/solutions to the puzzle you identified that belong to a first approach (3 paragraphs max). You can tell us what are the limits of their approach (lack of reflexivity? A theoretical one? Etc.). Then, you do the same with the second approach by listing how the concepts/authors/theoretical claims lead to a different answer to your initial research question. You can and present some limits (3 paragraphs max).

Guidelines for the commentator:

You need to pay close attention to the 2 pages of literature review that your fellow student will send you. Your comments should be focused on these 2 pages, and not on the article that your fellow will have sent you, as this other article is just here to allow you to learn a bit more about the kind of literature that will be discussed by your colleague (and that you may not know at all).

Paying close attention to the 2 pages of literature does not necessarily mean that in class, you have to discuss every sentence of the proposal. Please, try to sum up your comments along 3 dimensions, asking: First, do you think the concepts/theories identified will allow your colleague to answer his/her question? Second, can you think of another answer that is not debated in the literature review (and that belongs to another literature)? Third, do

you think the debate is well rendered by the draft? (for instance, would you change the order between the first and second set of answers, etc.).

Please, keep your comments to a maximum of 4-5 minutes.

*****April 6 - SPRING BREAK*****

**WEEK 7 Choosing a Case: What is it a Case Of?
Or How Many Cases do you Need To Prove Your Point? (April 13)**

Burawoy, Michael. 2009. *The Extended Case Methods: Four Countries, Four Decades, Four Great Transformations, and One Theoretical Tradition*. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Lund, Christian. "Of what is this a case?: analytical movements in qualitative social science research." *Human organization* 73.3 (2014): 224-234.

Small, Mario Luis. "How many cases do I need?" On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research." *Ethnography* 10.1 (2009): 5-38

WEEK 8 Cases Selection (April 20)

Guidelines for the writer:

You need to write 2-3 pages, starting with your research question (2 lines), and the one or two literatures that you think you will address (2 lines). This is normally already included in a proposal, but here, please, just write down as your thinking is evolving, and this is just for your readers to know what you will be talking about.

Find 5 articles that deal with the case(s) you want to study. They may overlap with the articles you used for your literature review, but they may not. Indeed, you will look for articles which deal with the specifics of your case(s), and not all of them do have a good literature review (especially among the more historically/empirically-based articles, or among articles that deal with your case but that do not ask the same question about it). These case-specific articles will allow you to learn something about your case, and formulate hypotheses about how your case will fit (confirm or disconfirm) with your theoretical expectations, and what data exist out there. You need to pay close attention to kind of data has been used to answer these questions in your specific case. Send one article in this subset of articles to your commentator.

Based on a subset of these readings, provide an in-depth description of the case(s) you intend to study. Then, write down 3-4 pages: describe your case(s) and explain why choosing your case(s) is the best way to approach your research question. The point is not to say everything you know about the topic, but to justify why it is a good idea to choose this case 1) to answer your research question; 2) why choosing your case(s) is the best way to investigate the dimensions you are interested at; 3) why choosing this case is a good idea in terms of "data" available (because you will know what has already been used to investigate that case, and you need to tell us what kind of new "data" (new interviews, new fieldwork, new surveys, new historical research, etc.) you intend on building upon; 4) why you think that investigating these specific new "data" with these new theoretical lenses that are yours is better than what has been said about this case before by other authors.

Guidelines for the commentator:

You need to pay close attention to the 2-3 pages of case description that your fellow student will send you. Your comments should be focused on these 2-3 pages, and not on the ONE article that your fellow will have sent you, as this other article is just here to allow you to learn a bit more about the kind of literature that will be discussed by your colleague.

About the case(s), think of the following question: 1) is it a good case to answer the research question (think about micro-macro problems)? 2) If it is a comparison, do you think a comparison is needed? And is it the right comparison to choose? 3) whether the empirical material that will be used is the right one to answer the kind of question raised, and whether you think it will be difficult to get this "data" (and whether another "data" may not be better and more readily available).

WEEK 9 Cases Selection**(April 27)***Guidelines for the writer:*

Provide a description of cases that you DO NOT intend to study in depth but that are cases of the same kind you are interested in. Find 5 articles that deal with similar cases, and identify a subset of cases which could be comparable to your case (but which you do not intend to study). Send one article in this subset of articles to your commentator.

Try to find some criteria which make these cases and your case(s) comparable and not comparable at the same time. Then, write down 3-4 pages: describe these case(s) and explain why choosing your case as opposed to these other case(s) is better to verify or disconfirm your hypotheses.

Guidelines for the commentator:

Discuss whether the author convincingly argues that these are 'cases' of the same thing, and if they are not, whether some conceptual clarification is needed from the author about what her/his case is really a case of.

Assess whether the author convincingly argues that the case under study (described in the last assignment) is similar to those other cases (all are the average cases) or whether the inclusion of these other cases shows that in fact, the case under study is chosen because it is an interesting outlier. Then, you should discuss what are the merits of choosing an average vs. an outlier as the main case of your study.

WEEK 10 Types of Reflexivity: What is the Right Distance/Proximity between Researching and Researched Subjects?**(May 4)**

Marjorie L. Devault. 1990. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis" *Social Problems*. 37(1): 96-116

Hekman, Susan. 1997. "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited." *Signs*. 22(2): 341-365.

Khan, S. 2005. Reconfiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the Global Age. *Signs*. 30(4), New Feminist Approaches to Social Sciences.

Controversy about *On the Run*, by Alice Goffman, University of Chicago Press, 2014.

<http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/O/bo18039324.html>

- Dwayne Betts: <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2014/07/alice-goffmans-on-the-run-she-is-wrong-about-black-urban-life.html>
- Steven Lubet, <http://newramblerreview.com/book-reviews/law/ethics-on-the-run>
- Jesse Singal : <http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2015/07/heres-whats-in-alice-goffmans-dissertation.html>
- Isaac William Martin. 2016. "Academia on the Run?" <https://booksandideas.net/Academia-on-the-Run.html>

WEEK 11 Data Collection Methods**(May 11)***Guidelines for the writer:*

Write 3-4 pages that outline which research methods you intend to use and the problems associated with your methodology. Discuss which methods would be best to use— whether statistical, historical or ethnographic, or a mixture of the two. Note any specific difficulties that you may encounter using such methods – numbers of respondents, access to fieldwork or archives, etc. - and explain how they might be resolved. Discuss the ethical issues, if any, associated with the methods used, and how you propose to get round any material or ethical difficulties identified. Pay attention to your positionality when you write about methods: is your gender/race/class/nationality important to co-construct 1) the type of information you find, or 2) your interpretation, or 3) the reception of your interpretation.

Guidelines for the commentator:

Discuss whether you think the data collected (interviews, observation, survey, archives) suffers from a problem of reliability? Or validity? (criteria internal reliability and validity) If there are problems with either the reliability or validity of the data, how can the author come around? Find new data sources? Complement the data collection with another technique? Is the data fit to answer the theoretical question? If there is a problem of validity, should the author change the research question so that we do not run into the same problems? (criteria of theoretical fit) Has the author said something about how the data will be analysed, and how the analysis will allow him/her to produce new knowledge? Is the author reflexive enough about the limits of his or her research?

WEEKS 12 &13 Presentation of Final Proposals

(May 18 & 25)

Guidelines for the writer:

Write an abstract in which you summarize your proposed research question, methodology, and case selection. Add a detailed timetable outlining the order of steps, and complete the bibliography. Add all the write-ups and send the first draft of your research proposal to everyone.

Guidelines for the commentator:

In general, do you think the selection of cases and the data-collection methods will allow your colleague to answer his/her research question?

WEEK 14 Conclusion & Final Comments on proposal (by individual appointments)

(June 1)