

Principles of Empirical Research (E10.2132), Thursday 2:00-3:40

Richard Arum
Fall 2009

Office Hours: Tues.3:00-5:00
295 Lafayette – 4th floor

This course introduces advanced study of social science research methods. The course examines: 1), the relationship between theory and research; 2), methodological issues, such as objectivity, the logic of argument, reliability and validity; and 3), exemplars of various methodological techniques, including survey, interview, experimental, archival and ethnographic research. The course is designed to train social scientists to both recognize and be able to conduct rigorous, theoretically informed research.

MATERIALS

Books for purchase at bookstore:

Richard Arum, *Judging School Discipline: The Crisis of Moral Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams. 1995. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Durkheim, Emile. 1997. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. New York: Free Press.

Durkheim, Emile. 1982. *Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: Free Press.

Grant, Gerald. 1990. *The World We Created at Hamilton High* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

Mitchell Stevens, *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2007).

Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Way, Niobe. 1997. *Everyday Courage*. New York: New York University Press.

Readings available on NYU Blackboard:

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1992. "The Practice of Reflexive Sociology (The Paris Workshop)" in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 216-260

Kirk and Miller. 1986. *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Merton, Robert. "On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range," "The Bearing of Sociological Theory on Empirical Research," and "The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory," in *On Theoretical Sociology*. Pp. 39-72, 139-172.

Simon, J.L. and P. Burstein, "Sampling", from *Basic Research Methods in Social Science*, 3rd Ed. 107-24.

Survey Research Center, I.S.R., University of Michigan, *Interviewers' Manual*. 1976. Pp. 1-31.

Weber, Max [1904] 1949. "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Max Weber, translated and edited by Edward Shils and Henry A. Finch. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. Pp. 49-112.

REQUIREMENTS

1. *Attendance and participation* in class discussions. [10 points].
2. *Class Presentation*: in teams of approximately five students, presentation groups will prepare a memo on weekly readings (to be circulated to all students in the course, 24 hours prior to class) and prepare a brief 10-15 minute class presentation on the methodological exemplars examined beginning on October 23. The short two or three page memo should include a brief summary of the reading and suggest two or three interesting questions or ideas generated by the material. [20 points].
3. *Research exercise*: students either as a group or individually will conduct a survey or participant-observation "pilot" research project. Each student will be responsible for writing up an 8 pages report on the exercise which identifies the theoretical motivation for the project, the methodology employed, the results, and reflections on the methodological issues involved. [30 points].
4. *Research proposal/term paper*: A proposal for future research that includes a theoretical rationale for the project, a review of relevant literature, and a detailed research design (including discussion of data and methods). Approximately 15-20 pages. [40 points].

9/4: Introduction

9/11: The Logic and Rhetoric of Argumentation in Research

Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams. 1995. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

9/18: Objectivity in Research

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1992. "The Practice of Reflexive Sociology (The Paris Workshop)" in *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 216-260

Weber, Max [1904] 1949. "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Max Weber, translated and edited by Edward Shils and Henry A. Finch. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. Pp. 49-112.

9/25: From Theory to Research

Durkheim, Emile. 1982. *Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: Free Press.

Merton, Robert. "On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range," "The Bearing of Sociological Theory on Empirical Research," and "The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory," in *On Theoretical Sociology*. Pp. 39-72, 139-172.

10/2: Logics of Sociological Research

Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[one or two paragraph memo due identifying ideas for individual or group exercise]

10/9: NO CLASS

10/16: Methodological Techniques and Concerns

Kirk and Miller. *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. 1986. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Simon, J.L. and P. Burstein, "Sampling", from *Basic Research Methods in Social Science*, 3rd Ed. 107-24.

Survey Research Center, I.S.R., University of Michigan, *Interviewers' Manual*. 1976. Pp. 1-31.

10/23: Early Sociological Research (Methodological Exemplar I)

Durkheim, Emile. 1997. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. New York: Free Press.

RESEARCH EXERCISES DUE

10/30: Survey Research (Methodological Exemplar II)

Richard Arum, *Judging School Discipline: The Crisis of Moral Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

11/6: Ethnographic Research (Methodological Exemplar III)

Mitchell Stevens, *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2007).

11/13: Experimental Research (Methodological Exemplar IV)

Readings to be determined and posted on blackboard.

[one or two page memo identifying direction for research proposal. Specify the proposed sociological question, data and methodology]

11/20: Archival Research (Methodological Exemplar V)

Grant, Gerald. 1990. *The World We Created at Hamilton High* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

11/27: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

12/4 (Unstructured) Interview Research – Methodological Exemplar VI

Way, Niobe. 1997. *Everyday Courage*. New York: New York University Press.

12/11 NO CLASS – work on final papers

[Research proposals due in my office mailbox by 12/15 noon]