

GEOGRAPHY 7101, AU 2016

Research Design

Instructor: Professor Becky Mansfield

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Seminar hours: Tuesday, 2:15-5:00pm

Seminar location: Derby Hall 1116

Course Description

Research design and proposal writing are challenging tasks. They require us to articulate how our research is *interesting* and *important* (both empirically and conceptually), while also requiring us to show the *logical connections* among our topic, concepts, object of inquiry, research questions, necessary evidence, and methods. Yet even as students are required to produce compelling research proposals, the research design process is also strangely cloaked; it is, as Michael Watts notes, a “public secret”. Many texts on research design, for example, leap from literature review to data gathering and analysis, as if “reviewing the literature” is somehow analogous to producing a conceptual framework, constructing an object of inquiry, asking questions, and identifying necessary evidence to answer those questions. This course fills in these missing steps. We focus on the things that make a research project coherent, intelligible, and compelling—that is, rather than jumping to methods, we address the things that make the choice of particular methods make sense. We do this in three ways.

First, we look at the structure of research proposals. We will read and discuss successful proposals for the sake of understanding how it is and why it is that some research proposals seem to hang together better than others.

Second, we will explore issues regarding epistemology, that is, what counts as valid knowledge. Research design should not be mistaken as a straightforward, nuts-and-bolts exercise unmediated by questions regarding claims about how to know the world. To understand these issues regarding what counts as valid knowledge and how that affects research design, we will cover overarching issues regarding objectivity (e.g. positivism and situated knowledge), ethics (e.g. IRB and reflexivity), and validity and generalizability.

Third, throughout the semester you will work on your own proposals, and present them in the seminar. You will leave this class with a proposal under your arm, peer-reviewed by your colleagues and closely scrutinized by me. Hopefully this will get you a little further along with regards to completing a coherent, intelligible, and compelling thesis and/or dissertation.

DISABILITY SERVICES

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

OSU COUNSELING AND CONSULTATION SERVICES

A recent American College Health Survey found stress, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, interpersonal concerns, death of a significant other and alcohol use among the top ten health impediments to academic performance. Students experiencing personal problems or situational crises are encouraged to contact the OSU Counseling and Consultation Services (292-5766; <http://www.ccs.ohio-state.edu>) for assistance, support, and advocacy. This service is free to students and is confidential.

Evaluation

Discussion of readings: 20%

My baseline expectation is that seminar participants will come every week having read the assigned readings in their entirety. I also expect seminar participants to come prepared with something substantive to say about the week's readings.

- Our discussion of *seminar readings* will center on two basic questions. First, what are the authors saying, and how does this compare across the readings? Second, what is it about the readings that relate specifically to research design?
- Our discussion of *proposals* will center on different questions. First, what do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of this proposal? Second, what is the object of inquiry and what are the evidentiary needs of each proposal, and where and how does the author communicate those? Third, do you have any observations across the assigned proposals?

Research proposal: 40%

You will write a research proposal that you will refine and develop over the course of the semester. The form and final length will be decided individually, based on your stage of career, field (within or beyond Geography), and specific program needs (e.g. a proposal for a particular funding agency). There are four stages:

- **Topic statement**: A paragraph describing your research in brief and what you find interesting and compelling about it. For most of you, this will be a research "topic." **Due to Carmen Friday 8/26 at 10am**
- **Draft 1**. This first draft is your opportunity to lay out everything you know about your project at this point. What is it about? What do you think is interesting about it? What feels sketchy and unclear? This draft should include *something* on all the elements of the research design (topic statement, conceptual framework, object of inquiry, research questions, necessary evidence, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis). However, the level of detail for each element will vary for each of you because you are starting from different places: some of you are starting with a topic but are less clear on concepts, others have a conceptual orientation but are unclear on topic, others know what sorts of methods they want to use but are unclear how to apply them, etc. Therefore, hints about what will make your project compelling can come from anywhere in the proposal—but you certainly will not have all the pieces, let alone their connections, figured out. **Due date varies**
- **Draft 2**. This draft must be an extensive revision of what you presented in Draft 1. It must reflect thoughtful engagement with the feedback you received on the previous draft, extend parts of the proposal that were less clear, and include new information from the ongoing research you are doing (e.g. from literature reviews and work beyond this course). **Due date varies**
- **Final version**. This, too, must be an extensive revision; see the description of Draft 2. While for most of you the Final version will be complete, we may decide together to have you focus on developing one or more sections rather than the entire proposal. **Due date varies**

Note that there is a single grade for all these assignments, listed in the Carmen gradebook as Research Proposal (Final). All stages of the proposal are required and it is crucial (for yourself and your peers) that you complete all of the preliminary assignments and do so on time. Your grade on the Research Proposal will reflect your performance on all of these assignments. I will deduct up to 10% from your final course grade for each instance of a missing, late, or incomplete assignment and you will fail the course if you do not turn in the Final version.

Research proposal presentation: 10%

Between Draft 2 and the Final version, you will present your research in oral (and visual) form. This is good practice (you might think of this as a pitch to a funding agency, or to your committee members). And in some cases people include different things in the oral version than in the written—things that turn out to be crucial for making the written version make sense. The revisions you make for the Final version should take into account the presentation experience and feedback. **Due date varies**

Constructive peer commentary (written and oral): 20%

You are required to provide commentary to your peers during each of the four “workshops” during the semester: Topic, Draft 1, Draft 2, and Presentations.

- For the Topic and Presentation workshops, you will not need to prepare in advance and you will give only oral commentary. *Everyone is expected to participate in these discussions.*
- For the Draft 1 and Draft 2 workshops, you will be assigned a set of draft proposals to read in advance and will have to provide oral commentary on all of them (in discussion) and written commentary on a subset. You will be asked to lead the discussion of at least one proposal in each workshop. Additional information will be provided.

Literature search and annotated bibliography: 10%

Using some of the search strategies discussed in the Wentz reading and subsequent discussion, find and read new-to-you references central to your emerging research interests. (You do not need to follow Wentz’s techniques for searching and annotating exactly; this is about experimenting to find what is useful for you.) **Due to Carmen Friday 10/7 at 10am**

- Annotate at least 20 articles covering at least two of the following three areas: *topical* (what’s known about your topic), *conceptual* (what’s known about useful concepts, not necessarily directly related to your topic), *methodological* (what’s known about methods of data collection or analysis, not necessarily directly related to your topic or even concepts).
- Write a short account (up to a page) describing your search process, what it yielded, and what you learned about finding and annotating relevant and useful literature.

General Policies

Attendance for all seminars is required. If you miss a seminar, you must complete an essay (minimum 5 pages, double spaced) on the readings for that day. The essay should not be a summary; it should raise substantive issues. If you miss a workshop, you must provide substantive written commentary to all the participants in that day’s workshop. Essays and commentaries for missed classes will be due the following week, at the beginning of seminar. If you do not turn in your essay/provide commentary, I will automatically take 10% off your final grade.

If there is some issue in your life that is making attendance (and active participation) difficult, please talk to me as soon as possible—and before an assignment is due—so that we can determine if alternative arrangements are appropriate and possible.

Standard OSU grading scheme

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research and other educational and scholarly activities. The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expects that all students have read and understand the [University's Code of Student Conduct](#), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and in this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the COAM. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal. If you have questions about this policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Seminar Schedule (subject to change)

| Date | Topic | Readings (see below for full references) |
|--|--|--|
| 8/23 | Introduction and Topic workshop | Watts 2001 |
| 8/30 | Structuring a proposal Reading proposals | National Science Foundation 2004 Przeworski and Salomon 1995 WinklerPrins 2015 Proposals, to be provided |
| 9/6 | The “literature” | Wentz 2014 Latour 1987 |
| 9/13 | Reading proposals | Proposals, to be provided |
| 9/20 | Draft 1 workshop, part 1 <i>Drafts for this workshop are due the <u>prior</u> Friday (9/16) at 10am</i> | Read other students’ drafts and prepare comments |
| 9/27 | Draft 1 workshop, part 2 <i>Drafts for this workshop are due the <u>prior</u> Friday (9/23) at 10am</i> | Read other students’ drafts and prepare comments |
| 10/4 | Positivist epistemologies Validity and generalizability | Kitchin 2006 Montello and Sutton 2006 |
| 10/11 | Relational epistemologies Rethinking generalizability | Shaw 2010 Harvey 2006 Foucault 1977 Gobo 2008 Small 2009 |
| 10/18 | Feminist epistemologies Positionality and reflexivity | Haraway 1988 Lawson 1995 Rose 1997 Benson and Nagar 2006 |
| 10/25 | Draft 2 workshop, part 1 <i>Drafts for this workshop are due the <u>prior</u> Friday (10/21) at 10am</i> | Read other students’ drafts and prepare comments |
| 11/1 | Draft 2 workshop, part 2 <i>Drafts for this workshop are due the <u>prior</u> Friday (10/28) at 10am</i> | Read other students’ drafts and prepare comments |
| 11/8 | Ethics/IRB | <i>Professional Geographer</i> 2012 selections: Price (Introduction to issue), Freundschuh, Martin and Inwood, Rittersbusch OSU ORRP 2010 Explore OSU IRB website , and Training Requirements |
| 11/15 | Reading proposals | Proposals, to be provided |
| 11/22 | NO CLASS: Writing day | |
| 11/29 | Presentations | |
| 12/6 | Presentations | |
| <p>Final proposal: If you present 11/29, your Final version is due Friday 12/9 at 10am. If you present 12/6, your Final version is due Monday 12/12 at 5pm.</p> | | |

Reading list

- Benson, K. & R. Nagar 2006. Collaboration as resistance? Reconsidering the processes, products, and possibilities of feminist oral history and ethnography. *Gender Place and Culture*, 13, 581-592.
- Foucault, M. 1977. Nietzsche, genealogy, history. In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. D. F. Bouchard, 139-164. Ithaca: Cornell.
- Gobo, G. 2008. Re-conceptualizing generalization: old issues in a new frame. In *Sage Handbook of Social Research Methods*, ed. P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman and J. Brannen, 193-213. London: Sage.
- Haraway, D. 1988. Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14, 575-599
- Harvey, D. 2006. Space as a keyword. In *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Development*, 117-148. London: Verso
- Kitchin, R. 2006. Positivist geographies and spatial science. In *Approaches to Human Geography*, ed. S. Aitken and G. Valentine, 20-29. London: Sage.
- Latour, B. 1987. Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-62) of *Science in Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lawson, V. 1995. The politics of difference: examining the quantitative-qualitative dualism in poststructuralist feminist research. *Professional Geographer*, 47, 449-457
- Montello, D. and P. Sutton. 2006. Chapters 1, 8, 11 (pp. 1-16, 137-156, and 213-229) of *An Introduction to Scientific Research Methods in Geography*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- National Science Foundation. 2004. *A Guide for Proposal Writing*.
- OSU ORRP. 2010. Investigator Guide. Ohio State University Office of Responsible Research Practices.
- Professional Geographer* 2012. Protecting Human Subjects across the Geographic Research Process: Special Issue. Vol 64, 1-48.
- Przeworski, A. & F. Salomon. 1995. *The Art of Writing Proposals*. Washington DC: Social Science Research Council.
- Rose, G. 1997. Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, 21, 305-320.
- Shaw, I, D. Dixon, and JP Jones, III. 2010. Theorizing our world. In *Research Methods in Geography*, ed. B. Gomez and JP Jones, III, 9-25. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Small, M.L. 2009. 'How many cases do I need?' On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. *Ethnography* 10 (1):5-38.
- Watts, M. 2001. *The Holy Grail: In Pursuit of the Dissertation Proposal*. Berkeley: Regents of the University of California.
- Wentz, L. 2014. Chapters 5 and 7 (pp. 37-54, 81-96) of *How to Design, Write, and Present and Successful Dissertation Proposal*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- WinklerPrins, M. 2015. How Not to Get a DDRI Award. AAG Newsletter, June 16, 2015.