

Sociology 691H - Honors Seminar
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Fall 2010

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Goals

The Honors program provides you with an opportunity to conduct original research, develop important research skills, and work closely with UNC faculty. Many students find this to be one of the most valuable academic experiences of college. The basic goal of our seminar is to support your efforts to write an excellent thesis by holding weekly meetings in which we discuss and reflect on the original work that each student is doing. To aid this process, we have a complementary goal – to develop a strong intellectual community among the students in the honors program so that we can learn from each other’s experience.

Seminar Schedule

The focus of our weekly meetings will follow the basic schedule of the thesis writing process – see below. So, for example, we will begin by focusing on the research question and the basic research design. Then, we will consider issues such as gaining access to a population, selecting a good site for a case study, designing questions for interviews, and completing the IRB application. We will have some guest presentations throughout the semester. The content of these will depend on the kinds of projects that you develop and the needs that people have – for example, we could schedule guest presentations on the use of software in analyzing qualitative data, on designing surveys, on writing up your results, or on conducting a literature review.

Major Components of a Thesis

At the beginning of the thesis writing process, many students are interested in having a clearer picture of what a final thesis will look like. How long will it be? What needs to be included? What kinds of research can one do? I would encourage you to go look at some theses from the sociology department which you can find at Wilson library and in the Sociology department's library (in Hamilton 271).

Theses are typically 40-60 pages and include the following sections/chapters:

- (1) Abstract (150-200 word summary)
- (2) Introduction – Describes the purposes of the research including the research question that you answer.
- (3) Theoretical Debates and Prior Research – Discusses major theoretical approaches to the question you have studied, the findings from prior research, and how your study will contribute to that line theory and research.
- (4) Methods, Data, and Analysis – Discusses the research method and its appropriateness for answering your questions, characteristics of the data you collect, and the strategy you used to analyze your data.
- (5) Results/Findings – Presents and interprets the findings of your research.
- (6) Conclusion – Summarizes the main findings, reflects on their broader significance, and points to important new ideas or questions for future research that your project helped to uncover.

Workshop Schedule of Meetings

September 2 Introduction

September 9 Research Questions

September 16 Thesis Overview, Literature Review, and Structure

September 23 IRB

September 30 Research Design
[Deadline for Honors Thesis Research Grants]

October 7 Writing Process

October 14 Joint Meeting with Duke Sociology Honors Students

October 28 Data Collection & Analysis Plans

November 4 Data Collection & Analysis Plans

November 11 Data Collection & Analysis Plans

November 18 No Meeting Scheduled

December 3 Synthesis and Planning Ahead

Benchmark/Guideline: Thesis Writing Schedule

September	Research Question and Design Certification for IRB (CITI Training) Begin identifying and reading sociological literature on your topic Apply for Honors Research Funds (deadline Sept 30)
October	Submit IRB proposal Finalize Research Design (e.g., finalize interview questions, gain access to research sites, identify possible interviewees, etc) Continue Literature Review Apply for funding
November	Data Collection Underway
December	Turn in Progress Memo, Research Proposal, and Bibliography to advisor, Andrews, and Gary
January	Complete Remaining Data Analysis Writing thesis chapters
February - March	Writing and revising thesis
Late March	Submit thesis to advisor and reader and schedule meeting for Thesis Defense
April 10	Presentation and Defense of Thesis (April 10th is the last possible date; you and your advisor will schedule a specific time)
April 11	Register Thesis on Honors Website

General Resources

Robert Alford. *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, and Evidence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Alford uses example from the founders of sociology and contemporary research to discuss how to design research. He compares multivariate, interpretive and historical research designs emphasizing the ways that each approach is appropriate for answering different kinds of research questions.

Earl Babbie. *The Basics of Social Research*, 3rd edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2005.

Widely used text book on research methods. Clear introduction to major methods and components of research design. His final chapter on reading and writing research and his appendix on using library resources should be especially useful for thesis writers.

Royce A. Singleton, Jr. and Bruce C. Straits. *Approaches to Social Research*, 4th Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Another clear text book that covers much of the same ground as Babbie in slightly greater depth. Also includes a final chapter on writing research reports.

Arthur Stinchcombe. *The Logic of Social Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Howard S. Becker. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Delbert C. Miller. *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*, 5th edition. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991.

Useful handbook that includes selections written by scholars on many aspects of research from designing a project, collecting data, and carrying out analyses.

Specific Methods and Methodological Issues (Content Analysis, Interviews, Survey Analysis, Fieldwork)

In-Depth Interviews

Robert S. Weiss. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press, 1994.

Content Analysis

Klaus Krippendorff. *Content analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004.

Fieldwork and Observational Methods

John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, 3rd edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995.

Sampling

Gary T. Henry. *Practical Sampling*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1994.

Survey Design

Don A. Dillman. *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, 2nd edition. New York: Wiley & Sons, 2000.

Floyd J. Fowler. *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995.

Floyd J. Fowler. *Survey Research Methods*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: 2002.

Case Studies

Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 2nd edition. Thousand, Oaks: CA, 1994.

Qualitative Methods and Analysis: General Resources

Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, editors. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998. [Also published as three separate volumes: *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, and *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*].

Quantitative Analysis

Travis Hirschi and Hannan C. Selvin. *Principles of Survey Analysis*. New York: Free Press, 1967.

Paul Allison. *Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Pine Forge Press, 1998.

Writing in the Social Sciences

Howard S. Becker. *Writing for Social Scientists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986

Jane E. Miller. *The Chicago Guide to Writing About Numbers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Jane E. Miller. *The Chicago Guide to Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Peter Elbow. *Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Fourth edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002.

Kate Turabian. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, Dissertations*. Sixth edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Campus Resources

Writing Center – provides individual consultations and has many written handouts related to writing and research. See the two below on writing an honors thesis and writing for sociologists. They are excellent. Other handouts are available for abstracts, writing about statistics, proofreading, and many other issues.

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/honors.html>

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/sociology.html>

Odum Institute – provides extensive support for UNC students and faculty conducting research. Short courses are available for qualitative and quantitative research methods. Computer labs have many software options and assistants who can help.

<http://152.2.32.107/odum/jsp/home.jsp>

Library – you can schedule individual consultations with librarians to learn about materials related to your thesis topic:

<http://www.lib.unc.edu/faculty/consult.html>

Honors Program – has a searchable archive of Honors theses titles and abstracts.

<http://www.honors.unc.edu/thesis.html>

Human Subjects in Research – these sites provide details about whether and, if so, how to apply for approval for research involving human subjects.

<https://sociology.unc.edu/resources/IRBApplication.html>

<http://research.unc.edu/ohre/>

<https://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp>