Sociology 510
Sociological Methods I
Fall 2018

Professor Orestes “Pat” Hastings (pat.hastings@colostate.edu)
Course Website: https://colostate.instructure.com/courses/70621
Lecture: Tuesday/Thursday 2pm-3:15pm in Clark B252
Office hours: Tuesdays/Thursday 3:15-4:30pm and by appointment in Clark B248

Overview
This course is designed to introduce you to the methodological tools deployed by sociologists to conduct empirically grounded and theoretically engaged research. The course will cover the basic elements of research design, the role of theory in empirical research, the construction of sociological arguments, the ethics involved with human subjects research, and the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data and results. Methodologically, this course will introduce students to the use of ethnography, interviews, surveys, experiments, comparative/historical methods, and social network analysis. This course is not meant to provide specialized training on any particular method. As such, the readings will include a variety of perspectives and examples of previous research. The assignments will provide hands-on experience to develop a better understanding of the methods and help prepare you to conduct your own original research.

Learning Goals
• Develop sociological research questions
• Understand the basics of various methodological approaches and be able to understand their different strengths and weaknesses
• Evaluate research designs and formulate one’s own plan of research.
• Understand the nuts and bolts of a research proposal, including the use of online resources, citation management, and IRB approval
• Think critically about the use of empirical evidence in sociological scholarship.
• Take into account the ethical considerations of social research

Expectations and Evaluation
Your grade will be assigned using the standard letter +/- system based on:
• High-quality participation (20%)
• Reading reflection comments (10%)
• Ethics Training (5%)
• Neighborhood Project (20%)
• Pilot Project (20%)
• Research Proposal and Presentation (25%)
High-quality participation (20%)
Together in class we will engage in the readings and the issues they present. We will also collectively discuss the assignments and your research ideas. This is a small seminar. I expect you to attend and actively participate in every class. Please talk to me if you must miss class.

Readings and Reflection Comments (10%)  
In general, I expect you to complete all of each week’s readings before class on Tuesday. Exceptions to this are noted in the course schedule or will be announced in class. You are not expected to have mastered the material, but if you are finding yourself regularly overwhelmed by or unable to complete the readings, talk to me. At the end of each Thursday class I will help orient you to how to read the following week’s readings. To help you engage with the readings and help me gauge your engagement, I ask that each Tuesday before class you email me at least a short paragraph describing some questions, comments, or critiques from the readings. Aim for 100-200 words. I may ask you to share your thoughts in class. Do this for at least 10 of the weeks (1% each assignment)

Ethics training (5%)  
Unless you have completed it previously, you will complete the online Human Subjects Projection Training as part of our ethics module (https://vpr.colostate.edu/ricro/irb/human-subjects-protection-training-at-colorado-state-university) This will be due on September 14.

Neighborhood Project: Statistical Profile and Ethnographic Observation (20%)  
You will create a descriptive statistical profile (using online census and school district data) of a census tract of your choosing and you will conduct a neighborhood visit of the same neighborhood and make field notes. You will write a 7-10ish page double-spaced paper that integrates the descriptive statistical profile and your field observations and reflects on these methods and your use of them. Further details will be discussed in class. This will be due on October 19.

Pilot Project (20%)  
You will either do two in-depth interviews or you will conduct a short survey, ideally related to the topic of your research proposal. If you do interviews, this will include preparing an interview guide, conducting two interviews, and transcribing one of them in its entirety. If you do surveys, you will create a questionnaire, collect at least 30 responses, and do some preliminary analysis. In either case, you will prepare a short report (5-10ish double-spaced pages plus appendices) that explains the rational for your questions, presents the main findings, and reflects on the process. Further details will be discussed in class. This will be due on November 16.

If you would like to do some other kind of pilot project (dig in some archives, do a social network analysis, etc.), talk to me and we may be able to work something out.

Short Research Proposal and Presentation (25%):  
There are three parts to this assignment: 1) the rough first draft, 2) the proposal, and 3) a presentation. You will get some feedback from me at each stage.

1. The rough first draft (5%) should briefly describe the research topic, include an argument for why it is worthy of study, pose 2 or 3 (or more!) distinct research questions related to the topic, and provide a short bibliography (5-20 references, mostly peer-reviewed sources) relevant to the topic (4-6ish double-spaced pages in all). At this stage, I encourage you to consider research
questions that require different designs and methods. The rough first draft is due September 21.

2. The (mini) research proposal (10%) should focus on one or two related questions and should be 3-5 double-spaced pages plus references. The mini research proposal is due October 26.

3. The presentation (10%) will cover your research question, motivation, relevant literature, research design (including – as applicable – site/period selection, unit of analysis, sampling, draft interview schedule, documents to be used, data collection strategies and tentative plan of analysis), and expected contributions. It will be very much like a conference presentation (~15 minutes + Q&A) except, of course, without results. Presentations will occur the last week of class and/or during finals week.

**Materials**

There are four required books for this course.


Except for the *The Art and Science of Social Research*, the other books can be found fairly inexpensively online. The remaining assigned readings will be posted on the course website. The “suggested additional readings” in the course schedule are listed if you would like to take any one particular topic deeper or see more examples (and if you want more, talk to me!).

**Ethical Concerns in Sociological Research**

All social scientists must be aware of their ethical and professional obligations. We will discuss research ethics throughout the semester. All seminar participants should also become familiar with the American Sociological Association’s Code of Ethics ([http://www.asanet.org/membership/code-ethics](http://www.asanet.org/membership/code-ethics)) and the regulations of Colorado State’s Institutional Review Board ([https://vpr.colostate.edu/ricro/irb/](https://vpr.colostate.edu/ricro/irb/)). All published or publicly presented research (including Ph.D. dissertations) must get prior IRB approval if research will include human subjects.

**Other Important Matters**

**In-Class Decorum**

Please come to class on time and be ready to engage the material we are covering in class. Laptops should ONLY be used for class purposes in class. Cell phones are not to be used during class. Colorado State University has stated five Principles of the Community: inclusion, integrity, respect, service and social justice ([http://diversity.colostate.edu/principles-of-community/](http://diversity.colostate.edu/principles-of-community/)). Your conduct in this class should adhere to these to help us generate an open, tolerant, and respectful learning environment that we can all flourish in.
Office hours
I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours. I am happy to discuss course material, the assignments, your research interests, or anything else that would be useful to you. Email me if you would like to meet and none of the available times work for you.

Academic Integrity
The course will adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Colorado State University General Catalog (http://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/policies/students-responsibilities/) and the Student Conduct Code (https://tilt.colostate.edu/integrity/knowTheCode/). At a minimum, violations will result in a grading penalty in this course and a report to the Office of Student Resolution Center. Do your own work. Don’t cheat.

Resources for Disabled Students
If you have a diagnosed learning or physical disability, which may require special accommodations, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester. The university’s Resources for Disabled Students (http://rds.colostate.edu/) can also help facilitate your individual needs. I will work with you and the RDS to make sure that any individual needs are appropriately accommodated.

Support
Any student who may be the victim of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking or retaliation is encouraged to report to CSU through one or more of the following resources:
• Emergency Response 911
• Deputy Title IX Coordinator/Office of Support and Safety Assessment (970) 491-1350
• Colorado State University Police Department (non-emergency) (970) 491-6425

For counseling support and assistance, please see the CSU Health Network, which includes a variety of counseling services that can be accessed at: http://health.colostate.edu/
And, the Sexual Assault Victim Assistance Team is a confidential student resource that does not have a reporting requirement and that can be of great help to students who have experienced sexual assault. The web address is http://www.wgac.colostate.edu/need-help-support.

Need Help? CSU is a community that cares for you. If you are struggling with drugs or alcohol and/or experiencing depression, anxiety, overwhelming stress or thoughts of hurting yourself or others please know there is help available. Counseling Services has trained professionals who can help. Contact 970-491-6053 or go to http://health.colostate.edu. If you are concerned about a friend or peer, tell someone by calling 970-491-1350 to discuss your concerns with a professional who can discreetly connect the distressed individual with the proper resources (http://supportandsafety.colostate.edu/tellsomeone). Rams take care of Rams. Reach out and ask for help if you or someone you know is having a difficult time.
COURSE OUTLINE
In addition to the topics and readings listed below, we will also be regularly discussing the assignments and your research ideas. This is a tentative schedule. If there are changes to this schedule, you will receive adequate notice.

Key:
- ASSR = The Art and Science of Social Research.
- SRM = Survey Research Methods
- ATE = Approaches to Ethnography

Week 1: August 21 & 23
Introduction & Getting Started

Readings (for Thursday)
- ASSR Chs. 1, 2

Suggested additional readings

Week 2: August 28 & 30
Thinking Like a Sociologist

Readings
- ASSR Chs. 4, 5

Suggested additional readings

Week 3: September 4 & 6
Causality; Proposing Research

Readings on Causality and Mechanisms

**Readings on writing (for Thursday)**
• ASSR Ch 17 (skim)
• Writing a literature review, the six steps: [http://getalifephd.blogspot.com/2011/10/writing-literature-review-six-steps-to.html](http://getalifephd.blogspot.com/2011/10/writing-literature-review-six-steps-to.html)
• Quick tips for ASA style
• Proposal on Family Structure and Parental Investments

**Suggested additional readings on mechanisms and causality**
• Elster, Jon. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press. [clear writing on mechanisms]

**Week 4: September 11 (no class Sept 13)**

**Ethics and IRB**

DUE: Complete the CITI training (https://vpr.colostate.edu/ricro/irb/human-subjects-protection-training-at-colorado-state-university/) by Sept 14 and email me your certificate of completion.

**Readings**
• ASSR Ch 3
• SRM Ch 11

**Week 5: September 18 & 20**

**Experiments**

DUE: Rough draft of proposal due on Sept 21.

**Readings on Experiments**
• ASSR Ch. 8

**Suggested additional readings on experiments**
Syllabus – Sociology 510: Sociological Methods I


Week 6: September 25 & 27
Surveys

Readings
• ASSR 6, 7
• SRM Read Chs 1-6 (can skim Chs. 1 and 4)

Suggested additional readings

Week 7: October 2 & 4
Statistical reasoning

Readings
• SRM Read Chs. 9, 10, 13
• ASSR Skim Chs. 14, 15
• Sociological Science responses to Hannon and Defina 2016 (https://www.sociologicalscience.com/v3-10-190/)

Suggested additional readings statistical reasoning and its limits
• More on the Racial Fluidity Debate:
• Example on Religion

- **Example on Racial Stratification:**

**Week 8: October 9 & 11**

**Qualitative Methods and Ethnography**

**Readings**
- ASSR Ch. 10
- ATE Intro and Chapter 1

**Suggested additional readings**

**Week 9: October 16 & 18**

**Qualitative Methods and Ethnography II**

**DUE: Neighborhoods Project on Oct 19**

**Readings**
- ATE Chapters 2, 4, 5, 7, 8
- Desmond, Matthew. 2012. “Disposable Ties and The Urban Poor” *American Journal of Sociology*

**Suggested additional readings**
Week 10: October 23 & 25
Qualitative Methods and Interviewing

DUE: Research Proposal on October 26

Readings
- ASSR Ch. 11

Suggested additional readings

Week 11: October 30 (no meeting Nov 1)
Qualitative Methods and Interviewing II

Readings
- ASSR Ch. 16

Week 12: November 6 (Vote!) & 8
Saying vs Doing and Other Controversies

Readings (Tuesday)

Readings (Thursday)

Fischer, Claude. 2014 “Slumming it” (http://bostonreview.net/blog/claude-fischer-made-america-alice-goffman-slum-ethnography)

Cohen, Philip. 2015. “Survey and ethnography: Comment on Goffman’s “On the Run” (https://dx.doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/HDTGG)

**Suggested additional readings**


**Week 13: November 13 & 15**

**Historical and Comparative Sociology, Materials-Based Methods**

**DUE: Pilot Project on November 16**

**Readings**

- ASSR Ch. 12

**Suggested additional readings:**


**No class November 20 & 22. Happy Thanksgiving!**

**Week 14: November 27 & 29**  
Social Network Analysis and Mixed Methods

**Readings**

- ASSR Ch. 13

**Suggested additional readings**


**Week 15: December 4 & 6 (and/or during finals week, TBD)**  
Presentations of Research ideas

Great resources for preparing academic talks


Each presentation will be ~15 minutes + Q&A. Styled liked an academic conference talk, except (of course) without results yet.