

SOCI BC3082. Junior Colloquium

Spring 2008

W 4:10-6:00pm (207 Milbank Hall)

Prof. Debra Minkoff

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Office hours: Tues 2:00-4:00 or by appointment

This colloquium offers an overview of key issues facing researchers in the social sciences. The first part of the course will focus on sociology as a mode of explanation, examining various aspects of the relationship between theory, methods, and evidence. The second part of the course will introduce some of the dominant methodological approaches used by sociologists and provide examples of empirical application for critical evaluation. Most of the substantive research will address topics in the study of race and ethnicity in the U.S. The objective of the course is to clarify the links between sociological theory and sociological research and to provide a foundation for studying social structures and social relations as a theoretically-informed empirical enterprise.

Required Readings

The following books can be purchased at Book Culture (536 W. 112th St) and are on Barnard Library reserve:

Monica McDermott, *Working-Class White: The Making and Unmaking of Race Relations* (University of California Press, 2006)

Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (University of Chicago Press, 1999)

Mary Waters, *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (Harvard University Press, 1999)

Dan Zuberi, *Differences that Matter: Social Policy and the Working Poor in the United States and Canada* (ILR Press, 2006)

The Sociology Writing Group, *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*, 6th Ed. (Worth Publishers, 2008) (Recommended)

All other readings will be available through CourseWorks.

Course Requirements

- (1) Paper #1: Comparative analysis of 2 journal articles from weeks 3 & 4 (5-7 pages; 20% of final grade); due Monday, February 18 by 9:00 a.m. (by e-mail)
- (2) Paper #2: Comparative analysis of two articles on a research topic of your choice and preliminary list of references for research proposal (6-8 pages + reference list; 25% of final grade); due Monday, April 7 by 9:00 a.m. (by e-mail).
- (3) Research Proposal (statement of question, literature review, proposed research design) (10-12 pages; 35% of grade); due Monday, May 5 by 5:00 p.m. (by e-mail). Guidelines will be distributed in class.
- (4) Seminar preparation/participation (20% of grade). Includes in-class presentation of assigned reading TBD.

Course Outline

Jan 23 Introduction

MODES OF EXPLANATION

Jan 30 Thinking Sociologically

C. Wright Mills, "The Promise." Ch. 1 in *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford, 2000[1959]).

M. Hechter and C. Horne, "Theory Is Explanation." Pp. 3-8 in Michael Hechter and Christine Horne, eds., *Theories of Social Order: A Reader* (Stanford, 2003).

Andrew Abbott, *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences* (WW Norton, 2004), chs. 1-2.

Devah Pager, "The Mark of A Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(2003): 937-975.

William Julius Wilson, "The Meaning and Significance of Race: Employers and Inner-City Workers." Ch. 5 in *When Work Disappears* (Vintage, 1996).

Feb 6 Deductive Approaches

Earl Babbie, "Theory and Research." Ch. 2 in *The Practice of Social Research* (Wadsworth, 2004).

Walter Wallace, "Introduction" in *The Logic of Science in Sociology* (Aldine, 1971).

Empirical examples:

Armand Mauss, "Anticipatory Socialization Toward College as a Factor in Adolescent Marijuana Use." *Social Problems* 16(1969): 357-364.

Steven R. Burkett, "School Ties, Peer Influence, and Adolescent Marijuana Use." *Pacific Sociological Review* 20(1977): 181-202.

Feb 13 Inductive Approaches

Charles Ragin, "Using Qualitative Methods to Study Commonalities." Ch. 4 in *Constructing Social Research* (Pine Forge Press, 1994).

Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, "Theoretical Sampling." Pp. 45-77 in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Aldine DeGruyter, 1999[1967]).

Empirical examples:

Howard S. Becker, "Becoming a Marijuana User." *American Journal of Sociology* 59(1953): 235-242.

Don H. Zimmerman and D. Lawrence Wieder, "You Can't Help But Get Stoned: Notes on the Social Organization of Marijuana Smoking." *Social Problems* 25(1977): 198-207.

*** * *PAPER # 1 DUE: Monday, February 18 by 9:00 a.m. (by e-mail) * * ***

PAPER #1: Write a comparative analysis of two of the assigned articles on marijuana use (one 'deductive' and one 'inductive'). Follow the guidelines in "The Textual

Analysis (or Article Critique) Paper, “ Ch. 5 in The Sociology Writing Group, *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*, 6th Edition (Worth Publishers, 2008).

Feb 20 Turning Ideas into Research Questions

Robert Alford, “Designing a Research Project.” Ch. 2 in *The Craft of Inquiry: Theory, Methods, Evidence* (Oxford, 1998).

Andrew Abbott, “Ideas and Puzzles.” Ch. 7 in *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences* (WW Norton, 2004).

Howard Becker, “Terrorized by the Literature.” Ch. 8 in *Writing for Social Scientists* (Chicago, 2007).

Recommended: Chs. 3-4 in *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*

MODES OF ANALYSIS

Feb 27 Survey Research & Analysis I (Design/Measurement)

Herbert Weisberg, et al. *An Introduction to Survey Research and Data Analysis* (Scott, Foresman, 1989). Chs. 2-3.

Howard Shuman, “Sense and Nonsense about Surveys.” *Contexts* 1,2(2002): 40-47.

Cathy J. Cohen, “The Attitudes and Behaviors of Young Black Americans: Research Summar” (June 2007)

<http://blackyouthproject.uchicago.edu/writings/project.shtml>

The Black Youth Project: Youth Culture Survey Methodology Report—Abridged Version (February 2006).

Sudhir Venkatesh, Ch. 1 in *Gang Leader for a Day* (Penguin Press, 2008)

For class: look at the survey instrument for the Black Youth Project

(<http://blackyouthproject.uchicago.edu/surveys/byp.shtml>). Evaluate the study’s sampling frame and measurement strategies.

Mar 5 Survey Research & Analysis II (Applications)

Cathy J. Cohen, Jamila Celestine-Michener, and Crystal Holmes, “Nihilism and Politics: The Constrained Life Chances of African American Youth.” Unpublished manuscript, 2006.

Christopher Ellison and Bruce London, “The Social and Political Participation of Black Americans: Compensatory and Ethnic Community Perspectives Revisited.” *Social Forces* 70(1992): 681-701.

David R. Harris and Jeremiah Joseph Sim, “Who is Multiracial? Assessing the Complexity of Lived Race.” *American Sociological Review* 67(2002): 614-627.

Mar 12 Intensive Interviewing

Mary Waters, *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (Harvard, 1999). Ch 1 and Appendix (Notes on Methodology); Chs. 3-5, 8-9.

Robert S. Weiss, *Learning from Strangers* (Free Press, 1994). Ch. 2.

Mar 19 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Mar 26 Ethnography and Participant Observation I
Monica McDermott, *Working-Class White*. Preface, Intro, Chs. 1-4, Conclusion;
Appendix 2.
Patricia Adler and Peter Adler, "The Promise and Pitfalls of Going into the Field."
Contexts 2,2(2003): 41-47.

Apr 2 Ethnography and Participant Observation II
Sudhir Venkatesh, "The Social Organization of Street Gang Activity in an Urban
Ghetto." *American Journal of Sociology* 103(1997): 82-111.
Sudhir Venkatesh, "'Doin' the hustle': Constructing the ethnographer in the American
ghetto." *Ethnography* 3(2002): 91-111.
Mary Patillo-McCoy, "Negotiating blackness, for richer or poorer." *Ethnography*
4(2003): 61-93.

*** * * PAPER #2 DUE: MONDAY, APRIL 7 BY 9:00 a.m. (by e-mail) * * ***

PAPER #2: Write a comparative analysis of two journal articles on the same research
topic of your choice that use different methods (e.g., survey, interview, ethnography).
Include preliminary list of references for research proposal. Additional guidelines to
be distributed in class.

Apr 9 Unobtrusive Methods I: Using Existing Data
Earl Babbie, "Unobtrusive Research." Ch. 11 in *The Practice of Social Research*
Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of*
Antipoverty Policy (University of Chicago Press, 1999). Intro, Chs. 1-4.

Apr 16 Unobtrusive Methods II: Using Documentary Sources
M. Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. Chs. 5-7.
Mitch Berbrier, "'Half the Battle': Cultural Resonance, Framing Processes, and Ethnic
Affectations in Contemporary White Separatist Rhetoric." *Social Problems*
45(1998): 431-450.

Apr 23 Cross-National Research
Dan Zuberi, *Differences that Matter: Social Policy and the Working Poor in the*
United States and Canada (ILR Press, 2006). Chs. 1-4, 6, 8, 10, Appendix.

Apr 30 Looking Forward: Conceptualizing a Senior Thesis Project

*** * * RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE: Monday, May 5 by 5:00 p.m. (by e-mail) * * ***