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 Office Hours: Thursday 10:30-12:00 pm, or by appt.

Fall 2014  
 SOC 494  
 Thursday 2-5pm  
 HSH 303

## **SOC 494: Sociology Honors Seminar**

### **Course Description**

Welcome to the Sociology Honors Seminar! This course will be unlike any of your prior sociology coursework. It will be an interactive seminar and our collective focus will be in helping each student produce sociological research and knowledge. You will not be sitting back as a consumer of sociological knowledge, but you will be leaning in, seeking out and working towards being a producer of knowledge. This is an exciting and challenging process, one that will require your creativity and self-discipline. Over two semesters, you will develop and write an original research project that will serve as your senior sociology honors thesis.

This course is designed to offer you a seminar experience where you will examine a particular topic in much greater depth than is possible during a one semester class. It will also offer you hands-on experience in these areas: formulating a sociological research question; conceptualizing a research proposal and plan; collecting data and analyzing it; writing and communicating your findings and analysis; and providing feedback to others on their research projects.

Students in this class are limited to sociology majors with a cumulative minimum overall GPA of 3.25 and a minimum sociology GPA of 3.50. In fact, all of you who have enrolled this fall have much higher GPAs (congratulations on your achievements!).

### **Required Readings**

These books are available for purchase at the USC bookstore.

Charles Lipson, How to Write a BA Thesis

Rubin and Rubin, Qualitative Interviewing

Kristen Luker, Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut

Edward Orozco Flores, God's Gangs: Barrio Ministry, Masculinity, and Gang Recovery

A selection of articles and chapters (to be handed out in class)

Bibliography relevant to your study

Proposals and drafts written by other students in the class

### **Course Requirements**

Students are required to attend class regularly, to initiate and complete an original research project, to participate in discussions of the assigned readings and our respective research efforts, and to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that date. Each student must develop a research project that he or she can conduct here locally during this semester and the spring. Another important aspect of this class is that you will also be engaged in discussing, reading about and providing written feedback on

the research projects of your classmates. Generosity is required. As a small seminar course (rather than a lecture course), every student in the class will take a turn leading discussion of the week's readings. Each student will also be required to find a professor in the sociology department with expertise on the topic of your research—this person will be your faculty mentor. You must use this professor as a resource and mentor, regularly seeking their advice and guidance on your research project.

Your research project will require several hours of dedicated effort every week. Plan accordingly.

Writing requirements for this course:

- **A short research proposal** (approximately 6 pages). A proposal will include a description of your project, a clear statement of the research question(s), significance of the research (why it is important), a brief literature review describing where the project is situated in theoretical debates and previously conducted research, a description of the research methods (e.g., a description of who will be studied, how they will be recruited, where the study will occur and what methods you will use to gather the data), and a discussion of the contribution of your project to the field. This proposal will be written in stages, as listed in the syllabus. The final proposal will be due October 30 at 2pm in class. Bring two copies.
- **A 16 to 20 page paper** describing the major results and analysis of your research through December, and how you intend to develop the project in the spring semester. This paper should include a clear statement of your research questions, methods and literature review, as well as preliminary data and analysis, and bibliographic references, and it should also include some critical reflections on the advantages and limitations of the methods you have used. This will be due December 13.

During each seminar meeting, the reading selections will be presented to the class by class members. These brief presentations should briefly summarize the material, and should focus on raising questions and identifying issues that warrant discussion. The presenter will help guide the discussion, and on the day of their presentation, she or he will come to class with typed discussion questions for each class member and she or he will lead the discussion. The date of each presentation will be assigned during the first class meeting. You can anticipate making two or three presentations over the course of the semester. Evaluation of class participation will include attendance and engagement, weekly discussion of major themes, reading presentations and providing feedback to peers when necessary.

#### **Evaluation**

Research Questions	5%
Revised Research Questions and Lit Review	10%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Methods Section	10%
Final Proposal	15%
Preliminary Research Paper	40%
Class Attendance and Participation	15%

Discussion Leader

5%

**Research Funding Opportunity: SOAR**

Gathering and collecting data is hard work, and sometimes it can also involve expenses for research equipment (digital voice recorders, software, etc.) and perhaps travel expenses. The Vice Dean of the College Steve Lamy is allowing students enrolled in this class to be eligible to apply for SOAR research funds. If you choose to apply—and this is not a requirement of the class, but only a resource if you need it—consult the website: <http://college.usc.edu/soar>

SOAR stands for “Student Opportunities for Academic Research.” You may apply for research funds up to \$1000 to cover research costs. This will require filling out an application form, submitting a one page description of the research plan, submit a budget, a letter of support from your faculty sponsor, and your current STARS report. According to the website, “The stipend is a single payment credited to the student’s university account. This may initially affect the student’s financial aid award, but if this happens, alternate arrangements may be mad...If the student fails to complete the project successfully...the funds will be withdrawn and \$1000 will be applied to the student’s university account.”

If you plan on developing a proposal, I would like you to submit it **by October 10**.

**Administrative Matters**

This course is offered in full compliance with the terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Any student requesting academic accommodations based on disability is required to register with the Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP can be contacted at 740-0776.

Academic integrity is at the core of the life of all connected with the University. It is essential that you be certain that all work that you present is exclusively your own. Plagiarism of any sort is a serious matter and it will be dealt with in accordance with University regulations.

**Class Schedule and Readings****August 28**

Seminar Introduction; Writing as a way of thinking

Discussion of Possible Topics for Student Research

In Class Writing: This is intended to help you brainstorm research questions and interests. What kinds of thing about the world interest you? What is a social issue that concerns you? What do you want to know that you don’t already know?

Assignment: Develop Research Topic and Possible Questions, and write 2-3 pages on this, and find relevant research citations (due Sept 11).

Begin contacting faculty members to serve as your faculty mentor.

**September 4**

Developing a Research Topic

Organizing Thesis Time Schedule

C.W. Mills “The Sociological Imagination” (handout)

Lipson, How to Write a BA Thesis, pp. 3-34, 267-291

Luker, Salsa Dancing into Soc Sci, chapters 1 & 2

Rubin and Rubin, Qualitative Interviewing, ch 3 pp.39-52

Before class next week, see library research guide for sociology: (<http://libguides.usc.edu/sociology>)

**September 9: You are invited to attend new book presentations by myself and Professor Yen Le Espiritu of the Ethnic Studies Department at UCSD. 12-2pm. Scriptorium, University Club.**

**September 11**

**Bring your laptop to class on this day** (if you don't have one, we'll talk about this in advance). Meet 2pm, as usual, for tutorial with librarian Carolyn Caffrey Gardner ([ccgardne@usc.edu](mailto:ccgardne@usc.edu)), who will review Soc. Abstracts and electronic data bases. Then we will resume our class for the following:

Writing a Research Proposal

Lipson, How to Write a BA Thesis, pp. 66-86

Due: Preliminary Research Topic and Questions (2-3 pages) plus 6 References

**September 18**

No Class. Use this time to work on your bibliography, and secure your Faculty Mentor.

**Sept 25**

Literature Review

Avoiding Plagiarism

Lipson, How to Write a BA Thesis, pp. 37-65

Luker, Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences, chapters 4 & 5

Flores, Introduction, in God's Gangs pp. 1-29

In class discussion: How have other scholars and sociologists “framed” the kind of research questions that you are intending to pursue?

Due: Signed Agreement from Faculty Mentor (you may return signed form by next week, if not yet possible)

**Oct 2**

Qualitative Interviewing and Ethnography

Ethics in Research

Rubin and Rubin, Qualitative Interviewing 79-151

Chapters 3 and 4 in Flores, God's Gangs

Due: Revised Research Topic, Questions and Lit Review (4-5 pages) plus References, and Faculty Mentor agreement

### **October 9**

Guest Visit from Professor Edward Flores, author of God's Gangs.

Sociological Analysis

Flores, Chapters 5, 6 and Conclusion in God's Gangs

Due Oct 9: Preliminary Annotated Bibliography

**October 15 W:** You are invited to attend new book presentation by Professor Ana Rosas, Chicana/o Studies Dept. UC Irvine, and USC History alumna. Details tba. 12-1:30pm

### **October 16**

What is good writing? And Sociological Research Design and Analysis

Luker, Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences, Ch 6

Lipson, How to Write a BA Thesis, pp. 143-176

Gary Marx, "Of Methods and Manners...." (handout)

In class discussion: Will you be drawing a research sample, and if so, where? What kinds of obstacles do you anticipate, and how will you get around these? If you already have a "case," what will become your tacit comparison or control group? Meet with your faculty mentor to discuss your proposed research methods

Due Oct 16: Preliminary Research Methods Section

Note: No office hours on this day.

### **October 23**

No Class.

### **October 30**

Due: Final Research Proposal (bring 2 copies to class)

Verbal presentations of Proposals in class.

Assignment for week of Oct 12-19:

Spend a minimum of 4 hours gathering data.

Read Research Proposal of Class Peer, and bring 2 copies of written comments on 11/6.

**October 31, Friday:** You are invited to attend Graduate Research Symposium on immigrant integration, featuring keynote lecture by Professor Robert C. Smith, CUNY Graduate School. Details tba.

### **Nov 6**

Class discussion of research proposals, and research experiences.

Assignment: Spend a minimum of 4 hours on your research project.

(If you are submitting a SOAR application for funding, plan on submitting it this week)

**Nov 13**

How to work efficiently, and avoid stress and procrastination.

Lipson, How to Write a BA Thesis, pp. 233-263

Informal class presentations on research-to-date, and triumphs and tribulations.

Assignment: Spend a minimum of 6 hours on your research project this week.

Prepare a 15 minute oral presentation on your research, to be presented on this day. To guide the presentation, prepare a typed one page outline, which will also be due in class.

**Nov 18:** You are invited to attend new book presentation by Professor Leisy Abrego, Department of Chicana/o Studies, UCLA.

**Nov 20:** On this day, we have no assigned readings. We will continue with the informal class presentations on research-to-date.

**Nov 27—no class. Thanksgiving holiday.**

**Dec 2 Tuesday:** You are invited to attend lecture on forthcoming book by Professor Jacqueline Hagan, Sociology Dept., University of North Carolina.

**Dec 4**

Writing dilemmas, confusions and confessions.

How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article (handout)

Harry G. Levine, “A Good Sociologist is a Good Writer” (hand out)

Assignment: Spend 6 hours on your research project this week.

**Dec 11 Last day of class, fall semester.**

Research Presentations: Data and Preliminary Analysis, Feedback and Discussion.

Due: Typed outline for paper (1 page).

Assignment: Continue research and writing.

**Dec 13 Friday**

Preliminary Research Paper due in my box by 1pm.

Note: This is your *preliminary* research paper. You will not have gathered all of your data, nor are you expected to have completed your analysis in this paper.

This paper will include many of the elements from your final research proposal (the research questions, literature review, methods, bibliography) as well as provisional findings, analysis, and a discussion of obstacles and limitations you have faced, hunches and ideas for future research that you will conduct in the spring.

