

RESEARCH METHODS FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION (sample – advanced undergraduate or graduate level methods course)

Term: Fall 2015
Time: Thursdays 1pm – 4pm
Location: TBA
Instructor: Samuel L. Perry
Office hours: XXX
Office: XXX
Contact: samperry@uchicago.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will focus on social science research methods with applications to the study of religion. Although issues of epistemology will be covered initially, the primary goal of the course is to provide broad, practical understanding and competency in social science *methods*. Topics covered include theoretical and conceptual issues, ethics, research design (including question formation, measurement, operationalization, sampling, etc.), various quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analyses, and publication. The course should help sharpen your existing research skills and introduce you to new techniques. By the end of the semester you should have a new appreciation for social research, understand how social research enhances our understanding of religion, and most importantly, be able to conduct and critique social scientific research on religion.

The course will include discussion and, occasionally, lecture. Although some statistical methods will be covered, it does not assume formal course work in statistics or calculus.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance, Participation, & Preparedness (30%)

This is a foundational graduate level course. Full participation is essential to your getting the most out of the readings, class sessions, and assignments. Class participation will be weighted heavily and will be based on my subjective evaluation of whether you consistently come to class, contribute to the class discussions, and demonstrate that you have read and thought about the materials. The impetus will be on you to convince me of these things.

Five Short Assignments (25%)

Throughout the course, you will have five short assignments that will ultimately contribute to a fully developed research proposal (or even a finished paper if you already have the data) by the end of the course. These will be outlined below.

Final Proposal/Paper (25%)

A final proposal or finished paper will emerge out of your five assignments. I will provide feedback on the short component assignments so that your finished proposal or paper should be quite solid. The finished product could ideally be used as an article for publication, a proposal for your MA thesis, or even the nascent proposal for your dissertation.



Presentations (20%)

Each student will give a 20 minute presentation on their proposed research project or actual paper. The presentations will include a discussion of the research question, theoretical and conceptual framework, methods, and, if relevant, data analysis and results.

GRADING

Attendance, Participation, & Preparedness = 30%

Five Short Assignments (5% each) = 25%

 Certificate of IRB Completion

 Research Questions and Justification

 Review of Literature for Research Questions

 Description of Proposed Research Methods

 Proposed Funding/Access Strategy or Actual Analysis

Final Proposal/Paper = 25%

Presentation = 20%

Total = 100%

COURSE MATERIALS

- Earl Babbie. 2012. *The Practice of Social Research* (12th Edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
 - This is a very general social science methods text. It will be used to provide introductions and overviews of topics in social science research. You should be able to get the 12th Edition on Amazon now for fairly cheap (< \$20.00). It will also be on reserve at the library.
- Ann Taves. 2009. *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Various articles and book chapters will be used as examples of the course topics for that day. These can either be found online or will be posted on the class website.

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction to Social Science and the Scientific Study of Religion

Read: Babbie, chapter 1

Read: Taves, Introduction and chapter 1

Week 2 Assumptions Behind Research

Read: Babbie, chapters 2

Read: Taves, chapters 2 and 3

Week 3 Ethics and Politics of Research

Read: Babbie, chapter 3

Read: Festinger et al., "Methodological Appendix." In *When Prophecy Fails*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Read: Sheper-Hughes. "Preface to the 1982 Paperback Edition." In *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Read: Humphreys. 1975. "Chapter 2," "Postscript: A Question of Ethics," and "Retrospect: Ethical Issues in Social Research," and the rest of the additional material on ethics in social research. In *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*.

Assignment # 1 Due: Certificate of IRB Completion.

Week 4 Defining Research Questions

Read: Babbie, chapters 4 and 5

Read: Davis. 1971. "That's Interesting! Toward a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology." *Philosophy of Social Science* 1:309-344.

Assignment # 2 Due: Research question and justification (1-2 pages).

Week 5 Research Methods: Survey Research (construction and administration)

Read: Babbie, chapters 6 and 7

Read: Chaves et al. 1999. "The National Congregations Study: Background, Methods, and Selected Results." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38(4):458-476.

Read: Chaves and Anderson. 2008. Continuity and Change in American Congregations: Introducing the Second Wave of the National Congregations Study. *Sociology of Religion* 69(4):415-440.

Read: Emerson et al., 2010. "The Panel Study on American Religion and Ethnicity: Background, Models, and Selected Results." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49(1):162-171.

Read: Bader et al., 2007. American Piety 2005: "Content and Methods of the Baylor Religion Survey." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 46(4):447-463.

Week 6 Research Methods: Survey Research (construction and administration)

Read: Babbie, chapter 9

Read: Frenk et al., 2011. "Assessing the Validity of Key Informant Reports about Congregations' Social Composition." *Sociology of Religion* 72(1):78-90.

Read: Steensland et al., 2000. "The Measure of American Religion: Toward Improving the State of the Art." *Social Forces* 79(1):291-318.

Read: Hadaway et al. 1993. "What the Polls Don't Show: A Closer Look at U.S. Church Attendance." *American Sociological Review* 58(6):741-752.

Week 7 Research Methods: Survey Research (analysis)

Read: Babbie, chapters 14 and 16

Assignment # 3 Due: Review of Literature for Research Question (5 pages)

Week 8 Research Methods: Experimental Designs

Read: Babbie, chapter 8

Read: Wallace et al., 2014. "Religious Affiliation and Hiring Discrimination in the American South: A Field Experiment." *Social Currents* 1(2):189-207.

Read: Willer. 2009. "No Atheists in Foxholes: Motivated Reasoning and Religious Belief." In *Social and Psychological Bases of Ideology and System Justification*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 9 Research Methods: Introduction to Qualitative Field Research

Read: Babbie, chapter 10

Read: Taves, chapter 4

Read: Tavory and Timmermans. 2009. "Two Cases of Ethnography: Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method." *Ethnography* 10:243-263.

Week 10 Research Methods: Ethnographic Methods

Read: Chen. 2002. "The Religious Varieties of Ethnic Presence: A Comparison between a Taiwanese Immigrant Buddhist Temple and an Evangelical Christian Church." *Sociology of Religion* 63(2):215-238.

Read: Tavory and Winchester. 2012. "Experiential Careers: The Routinization and De-Routinization of Religious Life." *Theory and Society* 41(4):351-373.

Read: Winchester. 2008. "Embodying the Faith: Religious Practice and the Making of a Muslim Moral Habitus." *Social Forces* 86(4):1753-1780.

Assignment # 4 Due: Description of Proposed Research Methods (4-5 pages)

Week 11 Research Methods: Interview Methods

Read: Lindsay. 2008. "Evangelicals in the Power Elite: Elite Cohesion Advancing a Movement." *American Sociological Review* 73(1):60-82.

Read: Lindsay. 2008. "Appendix." In *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Read: Marti. 2005. "Appendix A: Methodological Considerations from a Religious Insider." In *A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multiethnic Church*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Read: Marti. 2012. "Appendix: Research Methodology." In *Worship Across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 12 Research Methods: Content Analysis

Read: Babbie, chapter 11

Read: Tavory and Swidler. 2009. Condom Semiotics: Meaning and Condom Use in Rural Malawi. *American Sociological Review* 74:171-189.

Read: Ignatow. 2009. "Culture and Cognition: Moral Discourses in Internet Support Groups for Overeaters." *Social Forces* 88(2):843-870.

Assignment # 5 Due: 2 Options: (1) proposed strategy of securing funding/access to the data needed and timeline, or (2) actual analysis of data already collected (4-5 pages).

Week 13 Research Methods: Qualitative data analysis (coding and theory building)

Read: Babbie, chapter 13

Read: Saldana, "An Introduction to Codes and Coding." Chapters 1 and 3 in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Week 14 Writing-Up Research and Publishing

Read: Babbie, chapter 18

Read: Clemens et al. 1995. "Careers in Print: Books, Journals, and Scholarly Reputations." *American Journal of Sociology* 101(2):433-494.

Read: Examples of peer-reviewed journal articles at various stages in the production, peer-review, and publication process.

Week 15 Presentations

Week 16 Presentations

Final Proposals/Papers Due