Sociology and Management & Society 691H - Honors Seminar  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Fall 2008

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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.
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**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

**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 Lucas

**January**
- Complete Remaining Data Analysis
- Writing thesis chapters

**February - March**
- Writing and revising thesis

**March 25 (tentative)**
- Submit thesis to advisor and reader and schedule meeting for Thesis Defense

**April 3**
- Presentation and Defense of Thesis (April 3rd is the last possible date; you and your advisor will schedule a specific time)

**April 6**
- Register Thesis on Honors Website
General Resources
Alford uses examples 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.

Wide use 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.

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.


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

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

In-Depth Interviews

Content Analysis

Fieldwork and Observational Methods

Sampling

**Survey Design**

**Case Studies**

**Qualitative Methods and Analysis: General Resources**

**Quantitative Analysis**

**Writing in the Social Sciences**
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 cites 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