

Logic of Social Inquiry (SOCY699D)

Fall 2014

3:30-6:00 PM Mondays

1101 Art-Sociology Building

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REQUIRED READINGS:

There are three required texts for the course:

Becker, Howard S., and Pamela Richards. 2007. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. University of Chicago Press.

Weston, Anthony. 2009. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. Hackett Publishing.

Whyte, Jamie. 2004. *Crimes Against Logic: Exposing the Bogus Arguments of Politicians, Priests, Journalists, and Other Serial Offenders*. McGraw Hill.

There will be a number of additional readings through the course of the semester. These are listed in the syllabus or will be assigned in class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will be concerned with connecting theory to methods, constructing theories, and building explanations that make sense. Building theories ties theoretical principles to empirical research through the application of logic, and two of the required texts for the course address logical demonstration. Theoretically driven empirical research is the gold standard for social inquiry. For this reason, knowing how to build theoretical explanations is the single most important skill required to develop high quality research in the social sciences.

Most social science students have little experience with logical demonstration, and early class assignments will focus on developing logical arguments. Over the course of the semester, students will gain experience in working with theoretical ideas and using them to explain aspects of their social world. At the end of the semester, students will workshop their research ideas to help each other produce high quality second-year paper proposals.

In addition to readings, the class will involve assignments most weeks, the crafting of an early draft of a second-year paper proposal, and the development of a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship application.

GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS:

Grades will be comprised of the following components:

- Participation and presentations (25%)

Through the course of the semester, students will give presentations to the class interpreting the importance of (but not summarizing) two or three assigned readings. Students will also present their research ideas to the class for feedback. I will grade participation in class discussions, placing more emphasis on quality than on quantity of contributions.

- Weekly assignments (30%)

There will be assignments most weeks in the class. I will not assign grades to these assignments each week, but students' overall performances on the assignments over the course of the semester will make up 30% of the grade.

- Final research proposal (30%)

The primary product students produce in the course will be a proposal that includes a well-developed theoretical explanation for some substantial social phenomenon and a brief description of proposed research.

- Graduate fellowship application (15%)

Over the course of the semester, students will develop National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship applications. These completed applications will be worth 15% of the course grade. (Note: Some students in the course might not be eligible for NSF Graduate Fellowships. Those students may develop an application for external funding from an alternative source.)

MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES:

Deadlines: All assignments are due on time. Late submissions and requests for extensions are not a good sign that a student is able to handle the work that the career for which she or he is preparing demands. I am aware, however, that exceptional circumstances do sometimes arise. If you confront such a situation and feel it is unfeasible to submit an assignment by its due date, then you must consult with me at least two days prior to the due date so that we can make alternative arrangements. Late

submissions of any assignments without prior authorization will not receive credit. If you are experiencing difficulty in the course for any reason, please speak with me about the situation so that I can provide advice and we can work together to overcome the difficulty.

Students with disabilities or special needs: Any students with documented disabilities who may require additional time, help, or an alternative format on the graded requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible to make the necessary arrangements.

Religious Observance: Students will not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs and shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. If you expect that observances of religious beliefs will require you to miss any class meetings or course deadlines, talk with me beforehand to make alternative arrangements.

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the borrowing of information, wording, organization, or ideas without acknowledging the source. You must acknowledge the sources that you use in this class. Further, when you repeat the exact language of your source, you must put the material in quotation marks. In this class, the minimum penalty for plagiarism will be a grade of zero for the assignment; more extensive plagiarism or cheating will result in a course grade of "F" and the filing of charges of academic misconduct.

Cancelled classes: If class is cancelled for any reason, that day's scheduled activities will be carried out the next time that class meets.

Mobile phones: Please turn off mobile phones during class.

COURSE OUTLINE:

(Below is an outline of required readings due each week of the semester. There will be regular readings in addition to the required chapters. The syllabus lists these for the first six weeks. For subsequent weeks, we will identify these readings as we go, in part because some of the readings will likely be articles you identify as exemplary demonstrations of the type of work you intend to produce.)

Week 1 (9/8) INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

- Week 2 (9/15) Becker, Chapter 1
 Whyte, Preface and Chapter 1
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. "An Invitation to Grounded Theory." In Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Markovsky, Barry. 1994. "The Structure of Theories." Pp. 3-24 in Martha Foschi and Edward J. Lawler (Eds.), *Group Processes: Sociological Analyses*. Nelson-Hall.
- Week 3 (9/22) Becker, Chapter 2
 Weston, Chapter 1
 Whyte, Chapter 2
- Wagner, David. 1994. "The Growth of Theories." Chapter 2 in Martha Foschi and Edward J. Lawler (Eds.), *Group Processes: Sociological Analyses*. Nelson-Hall.
- Week 4 (9/29) Becker, Chapter 3
 Weston, Chapter 2
 Whyte, Chapter 3
- Lucas, Jeffrey W. 2003. "Theory Testing, Generalization, and the Problem of External Validity." *Sociological Theory* 21: 236-253.
- Week 5 (10/6) Becker, Chapter 4
 Weston, Chapter 3
 Whyte, Chapter 4
- Eisenhardt, Kathleen, M. 1989. "Building Theories from Case Study Research." *The Academy of Management Review* 14: 532-550.
- Merton, Robert K. 1949. "On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range," Pp. 39-53 in, *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Week 6 (10/13) Weston, Chapter 4
 Whyte, Chapter 5

Goode, Erich. 2002. "Sexual Involvement and Social Research in a Fat Civil Rights Organization." *Qualitative Sociology* 25: 501-534.

Martinson, Brian C., Melissa S. Anderson, and Raymond de Vries. 2005. "Scientists Behaving Badly." *Nature* 435: 737-738.

Week 7 (10/20) Becker, Chapter 5
Weston, Chapter 5
Whyte, Chapter 6

NSF Graduate Fellowship applications due in class

Week 8 (10/27) Becker, Chapter 6
Weston, Chapter 6
Whyte, Chapter 7

Week 9 (11/3) Becker, Chapter 7
Weston, Chapter 7
Whyte, Chapter 8

Week 10 (11/10) Becker, Chapter 8
Weston, Chapter 8
Whyte, Chapter 9

Week 11 (11/17) Becker, Chapter 9
Weston, Chapter 9
Whyte, Chapter 10

Week 12 (11/24) THEORY WORKSHOP I

(No readings)

Week 13 (12/1) THEORY WORKSHOP II

(No readings)

Week 14 (12/8) Becker, Chapter 10
Whyte, Chapters 11 and 12

(Final research proposals and fellowship applications due in class on 12/8)