Geography 391
Social Science Inquiry and Research
Spring 2016

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Instructor: Dr. Leigh Johnson
Class Meeting Times: Mon, Wed 2:00-2:50pm
GTF Contact Information: TBA

Required Texts

Course Description
How is social science research developed, performed and interpreted? What standards exist for research in geography? What are the main forms of thought that drive geographic inquiry, and how have they been used to design research? These are the types of questions this class seeks to address. Students of this class will learn how geographers and other social scientists approach research, what drives their questions, and how they design research to answer those questions in order to prepare them to study active research in their future academic studies, whether at the undergraduate or graduate level. By placing importance not only on the research process, but also its representation in news media, this class will better position the student to critique studies’ methods and conclusions.

This course fulfills a Social Science Group Requirement
This course will introduce students to the variety of methods for the kinds of questions that Geographers, and social scientists more generally, ask. It will introduce students to the theoretical foundation for understanding the scientific approach and engaging with intellectual questions of the social sciences. This will include developing a research question to finding the appropriate methodology to address it, to ethics and publication. This course can be useful for people across the social sciences, though it will primarily draw upon theoretical content from geography.

The course will rely on a central text that outlines social science methods, but it will also utilize student analysis of peer-reviewed research papers to provide depth in different types of social science research projects. These peer-review assignments will help demonstrate application of course concepts to a variety of approaches to social science research. Though there are no pre-requisites, it is expected that students will be able to engage with course material at the junior-
level, though they will need no prior course work in geography to be successful in this course.

**Expected Learning Outcomes**  
Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:
- Critically evaluate peer-reviewed social science research and media reports of the same.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the scientific method and its use within the discipline of geography and other social science disciplines.
- Analyze the development of research questions from a given real-world situation/problem.
- Distinguish the appropriate uses of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods in geographic research.

**Estimated Student Workload**  
Students will perform a variety of work during the course. The learning processed is centered on six-part research evaluation assignment, with a brief component due every week for five weeks (ending Week 6) and the final paper due Week 9). Each component is expected to take 1-1.5 hours to complete. Weekly readings should average about one to one and a half hours to complete. The remaining work (exam and presentation preparation) should average 2.5 hours per week, though most of this work will be performed closer to the appropriate due dates.

**Grading and Evaluation**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Evaluation Assignment (Parts 1-5)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper (Part 6)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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The **Research Evaluation Assignment** requires the student to examine two peer-reviewed research studies and evaluate a different component of them each week. It culminates in a final paper that addresses all of these components. The paper’s length is between 12-15 pages, not including tables, photos and/or citations.

The **Project Presentation** will take place in the discussion sections, where the students will present their project (4-5 minutes) to their classmates.

The **Final Exam** is based on short answers and essays that encompass the entire term.

For the Department of Geography’s guidelines on grading, please visit gradeculture.uoregon.edu.
Weekly Topic Outline

Weeks 1

Lecture: Introduction, scientific process

Reading: Montello & Sutton Chapter 1

Week 2

Lecture: History of social theory (with particular attention to geographic thought) research topics, and methods.


Due: Project Part 1: Subjects

Week 3

Lecture: Research questions
How are they developed? The merger of empirical and theoretical.

Reading: Cresswell (2014) “Research Questions and Hypotheses”
Assignment: 3-4 optional scenarios; students pick one, develop questions – What would a researcher ask?

Due: Project Part 2: Measurements

Week 4

Lecture: Data Collection, Analysis and Display

Reading: Montello & Sutton Chapter 3

Due: Project Part 3 Methodology:

Week 5

Lecture: Methods: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed

Reading: Montello & Sutton Chapters 4-6

Due: Project Part 4: Conclusions
Week 6

**Lecture**: Positionality

**Reading**: Weronka and Smiley (2014) “Navigating the city: gender and positionality in cultural geography research”

**Due**: Project Part 5 Outcomes:

Week 7

**Lecture**: Conclusions

Reading: Montello & Sutton Chapter 11

Week 8

**Lecture**: Ethics, Legitimation, Debate

**Reading**: Montello & Sutton Chapter 14

Week 9

**Lecture**: Peer review, publication and critique

**Reading**: Montello & Sutton Chapter 13

**Due**: Project Part 6: Final Paper

Week 10

**Lecture**: Term Wrap up and Review

**Course Policies**

Please be respectful of your classmates and the instructor. I expect students to be in class on time, to engage with the lecture and especially the discussion. This is an upper-division undergraduate/graduate split course and thus has high standards for completion of readings and coursework, but especially participation.

**Technology:**

If you have plans to use a computer or tablet for note taking or to access the digital readings during the class period please do so in a way that is not distracting to others. This is a discussion class, and I expect students
to be active participants. Students found to be using their computers for non-class purposes will be asked to leave the class session. No exceptions.

Please plan to have your cell phone on ‘silent’ for the duration of the class. If you are unable to comply with this and must send a text-message or take a phone-call, please exit the class to do so and return when your call/text is complete. This is non-negotiable; if I see you texting I will ask you to leave.

*Academic Honesty*
Violations of academic integrity, such as cheating or plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Suspected violations will be reported to the Director of Student Judicial Affairs. Student found guilty of a violation may receive a failing grade.

*Accessible Education Services*
Please contact me early in the course so that we can make arrangements if you have special learning needs. There are a range of accommodations possible and you may find useful information through the Accessible Education Center on campus.

*Academic Support:*
Visit the Teaching Learning Center for assistance with speed-reading, test taking, critical thinking, time management, and more. Head to PLC 72 or visit their website at [http://tlc.uoregon.edu/](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/).