

Geography 391

Social Science Inquiry and Research

Spring 2016

Instructor:

Prof. Leigh Johnson

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Office hours: Wed 3:30-4:30
 Thurs 2:30-3:30
 or by appointment

GTEs:

Dylan Brady

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 Wed 11:00-12:00
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 Thur 4:00-5:00
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Lecture: Mondays & Wednesdays 2:00-2:50 pm, 221 Allen Hall

Discussion/Lab sections:

All in 206 Condon Hall

Wed 12:00-1:20 pm, D. Brady
Thurs 10:00-11:20 am, D. Brady
Thurs 12:00-1:20 pm, M. Lu
Fri 10:00-11:20 am, M. Lu

Course description

Social science research in America is an increasingly hot political topic as it falls under scrutiny by lawmakers attempting to legislate the kinds of research that receive federal funding. In this course, we step back to ask:

- Why do we do social science research at all?
- How do social scientists ask and answer questions about the world?
- What methods do we use to generate and analyze data?
- How do we study humans and societies ethically?
- How should we share our findings with the world?

While the bulk of empirical examples will come from human geography, the principles learned in this course will give you the skills to design and conduct doable research projects in any social science discipline, as well as in a range of future careers.

Learning objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Formulate an original and exciting social science research question, and develop an accompanying research design to answer it
- Identify and assess existing research relevant to their own question
- Suggest appropriate methods for pursuing various types of social science inquiry
- Assess the ethical responsibilities of researchers
- Provide constructive critique of peers' and other scholars' research designs

Required texts

- Gomez, Basil and John Paul Jones [henceforth 'Gomez & Jones']. (2010). *Research Methods in Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. Available at the Duck Store or available online as an E-book through the UO library system (Web reader or download for 7 days; requires installation of Adobe Digital Editions)
- Various readings, including peer-reviewed original research articles, publications on research methods, popular media articles, and book excerpts. All articles will be posted on the course Canvas site. Non-textbook readings are subject to change; always check the Canvas site for the up-to-date assignment.

Grading, evaluation, and estimated workload

For the Department of Geography's guidelines on grading, please visit <http://gradeculture.uoregon.edu/>. The workload for this class is appropriate for a 300-level course at the University of Oregon.

Coursework centers on a five-part, term-long research design assignment, with brief components due throughout the quarter and the final paper due week 10. Components are expected to average 6-8 hours to complete, including research and writing. Weekly readings of roughly 30-40 pages should average 3 hours to complete and should be completed **before each lecture**. The remaining work (exam and presentation preparation) should average 1.5 hours per week, though most of this work will be performed closer to the appropriate due dates.

Research design assignment (Parts 1-4)

25%

Research design final product (Part 5)	30%
Research design presentation (in discussion section)	10%
Final Exam	25%
Attendance and Participation	10%

- The term-long **research design assignment** has students design a rigorous and robust research project with components created through smaller assignments due in weeks 3, 4, 5, and 7. The project culminates in a final **research design product** due week 10 that combines all of these components into a research proposal and builds on feedback provided by the GTF from the previous activities.
- Students will prepare a short, 5-minute **presentation** of their final research proposals for discussion sections in weeks 9 and 10.
- The comprehensive **final exam** will include short answer and essay questions.
- **Attendance and participation** will be monitored in lecture and discussion sections through participation in daily activities.
- Students **must complete all components of the course to receive a passing grade**.
- All assignments should be submitted on Canvas by 9:00 am on the day of your discussion section, unless otherwise noted. Late papers lose 10% per day, including weekends/holidays. Extensions or incompletes will be given only in the event of documented emergencies. You must notify your GTF as soon as possible if you experience an emergency that will prevent you from completing an assignment on time.

Supplementary resources:

If you are struggling to grasp social science terminology and concepts, you may find the following resources helpful:

- *The International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. (2009) Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift, eds. Elsevier. Entries available (Links to an external site.) in downloadable pdf format with a UO IP address.
- *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. (2007) Michael Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao, eds. SAGE. Entries searchable and downloadable (Links to an external site.) with a UO IP address.
- *Oxford Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. (2002) Craig Calhoun, Ed. Oxford University Press. Entries searchable (Links to an external site.) with UO IP address.

Course schedule

PLEASE NOTE: *This schedule may be revised as the course proceeds to reflect the interests and needs of the group. Always check Canvas for the most up-to-date schedule and reading assignment. Each Wednesday in class, I will review which of the reading assignments should be completed in time for each lecture the following week.*

WEEK 1: Thinking as a social scientist

READING:

Wednesday March 30

- Ziyad Marar (2013) “Why does social science have such a hard job explaining itself?” *The Guardian* Higher Education Network Blog, 8 April
- National Research Council (2010) Introduction, *Understanding the Changing Planet: Strategic Directions for the Geographical Sciences*, National Academies Press. Pp 7-18
- Due in discussion section: “Social Science working backwards” worksheet. Choose one of the three news articles covering research by social scientists and read it alongside the questions in the worksheet. Come to section prepared with your answers to these questions (no upload to Canvas). Article options:
 - (1) Mega-events: Olympic bidding, building and its aftermath in host cities like Sochi
 - (2) Women and social media in Iranian elections
 - (3) Ebola patients in Sierra Leone

WEEK 2: Framing disciplines and problems

READING:

Monday, 4 April:

- Gomez and Jones (Textbook) Chapter 3, "Observing our World"
- University of Southern California Libraries Research Guide, “Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: The Research Problem/Question”, <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/introduction/researchproblem>

WEEK 3: Designing rigorous, answerable research questions

READING:

Monday April 11:

- Blaikie, Norman (2010) “Chapter 3: Research questions and purposes” and “Appendix: Examples of Research Topics, Problems and Questions” in *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (pp 56-78 and 258-261)

Wednesday April 13:

- Blaikie, Norman (2010) selections from “**Chapter 4: Strategies for Answering Research Questions**” in *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (pp 79-92 and 104-109, **SKIP p 93-103**)
- *Review or read* Gomez and Jones Chapter 3, Observing our world (Reading from Week 2)
- **RECOMMENDED OPTIONAL RESOURCES FOR PROBLEM STATEMENT DEVELOPMENT**
 - 2 page quick read: "Where do research questions come from, and how do I get one?" Excerpted from G. Marx 1997.
 - Example of a problem statement in a successful research proposal, "Fire-adapted communities on the range: Alternative models of wildfire response".

DUE: Project part 1: Problem statement

WEEK 4: Selecting appropriate data and methods, part I: Research strategies and approaches

READING:

- Blaikie EXCERPT from Ch 7 “Methods for answering research questions: data gathering and analysis”, p 199-219
- Gomez & Jones, Chapter 4, “Measurement and Interpretation” 41-59

DUE: Project part 2: Annotated bibliography

WEEK 5: Selecting appropriate data and methods, part II: Qualitative methods

READING:

Monday April 25:

- Cloke, P. et al. (2004) *The Practice of Human Geography*. London: SAGE. *Sections* from Chapter 5: pp 126-130 and 148-163 (“The practices of talking to people”, “Interviewing”, “Discussion Groups”)

Wednesday April 27:

- “Ethnography” entry in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. (2007) Michael Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao, eds.
- Gomez & Jones, Chapter 13, “Ethnography and participant observation”, 194-221

DUE: Project part 3: Research questions

WEEK 6: Selecting appropriate data and methods, part III: Quality and rigor, Qualitative analysis, Quantitative concepts

READING:

Monday May 2:

- Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, Chapter 24: Qualitative data analysis, 564-588
- Cope, M. (2010) "Coding transcripts and diaries", *Key Methods in Human Geography*, N. Clifford and G. Valentine (eds), SAGE, p 440-450

Wednesday May 4:

- Review (from week 4) Basil and Gomez Chapter 4, "Issues in Measurement", especially the gray boxed texts
- Malcom Gladwell, (2015) “Starting Over”, *The New Yorker* 24 August:
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/24/starting-over-dept-of-social-studies-malcolm-gladwell> (Links to an external site.)

DUE: N/A

WEEK 7: Quantitative methods and analysis

READING:

Monday May 9:

- Cloke, P. et al. (2004) *The Practice of Human Geography*. London: SAGE. Sections from Chapter 5: “Questionnairing”: pp 130-148

Wednesday May 11:

- Bryman, A. "Quantitative data analysis"; Chapter 15 in *Social Research Methods*” pp 329-352;
- Excerpt of Basil and Gomez Ch 17 “Descriptive statistics” pp.289-294

DUE: Project part 4: Methods, DUE FRIDAY MAY 13 at 5 pm

WEEK 8: Ethics and dissemination of research

Monday May 16

- Hay, I. "Ethical practice in geographical research" *Key Methods in Human Geography*, N. Clifford and G. Valentine (eds), SAGE, p 35-47.
- For section discussion of geopyracy and ethics:
 - Complete the reading guide questions (see "Files" for Week 8) for Vooson, P. (2016) "The Oaxaca Incident: A geographer's efforts to map a Mexican village reveal the risks of military entanglement" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 27 April.
 - American Association of Geographers Statement on Professional Ethics, Part V
http://www.aag.org/cs/about_aag/governance/statement_of_professional_ethics

WEEK 9: Peer review, publication, and critique

DUE:

- Anonymized rough draft of final project for peer review (in class Lecture 1)
- Two completed peer review sheets (in class Lecture 2)
- Project presentations in discussion section

WEEK 10: Directions in social science research

- *No course meeting Monday, Memorial Day*
- Guest Lecture Wednesday June 1:

Professor Kari Norgaard, Department of Sociology, University of Oregon

READING:

- Reed, R. and K. Norgaard. (2010) "Salmon Feeds Our People: Challenging Dams on the Klamath River" in Pianemilla et al. (eds), *Indigenous Peoples and Conservation: From Rights to Resource Management*. Arlington: Conservation International. pp 7-16

DUE:

- Project part 5: final paper, by FRIDAY June 3 at 5 pm on Canvas
- Project presentations in section

FINAL EXAM

Thursday, 9 June 2:45-4:45 221 Allen; Bring 1 Green Book for your answers

Course Policies

Please be respectful of your classmates and the instructor. Students are expected to be in class on time and to remain engaged during lectures and participate in discussion.

Technology: If you have plans to use a computer or tablet for note taking or to access the digital readings during the class period, you must do so in a way that is not distracting to others. Students found to be using their computers for non-class purposes will be asked to leave the class session. No exceptions.

Please have your cell phone set to silent for the duration of the class. If you must use your phone for any non-course related purpose, please leave the classroom. This is non-negotiable; if I see you texting I will ask you to leave.

Email reduction: We are here to help everyone learn, yet the volume of email we receive on a daily basis can make this more difficult. If you have a course-related issue, please consider the following before sending an email: Might the question and the answer be more clearly communicated in person? Can this question wait until before, during, or after class, or in office hours? Have you checked the course materials on Canvas that might answer your question? If you do need to email any of us, please put “GEO391” at the beginning of the subject line to make it easier to identify your message. It may take me 2 days to respond during the week.

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. Students found guilty of a violation may receive a failing grade. It is **your responsibility** to review the course’s Academic Dishonesty Policy posted on Canvas.

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, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-1155; website: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>

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/>.