

# SOC 532: PRACTICUM IN COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

## FALL 2017

Class: Th 3:00-6:00pm  
Room: 3207 LSA

Instructor: Professor Robert Jansen  
Email: [rsjansen@umich.edu](mailto:rsjansen@umich.edu)  
Office: 4222 LSA  
Office Hours: By appointment.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course examines the methods and reasoning commonly employed by comparative and historical sociologists. In addition to exploring comparative and historical sociology's logic of inquiry—considering key problems, debates, and approaches within the methodological tradition—it will sensitize students to comparative and historical sociology as a genre of sociological writing and orient them to the practicalities of conducting this type of research.

The reading list is intentionally eclectic. One feature of comparative and historical research is that each project requires the development and justification of a methodological architecture capable of responding adequately to the unique ambitions and considerations of that project. In light of this fact, it is my view that students are better served by broad exposure to a range of tools (and to the assumptions behind them and the critical objections that have been raised) than by doctrinaire socialization into the instructor's favored approach. But this requires that students engage with the material deeply and critically, take stances on the arguments raised, and generally commit to developing a relationship to the methodological tradition that is genuinely their own.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Active Participation (10%): The quality of our discussions rests on your degree of preparation, active engagement with the material, and willingness to share with others.
2. Presentation/Leading Discussion (20%): Each student will be responsible for presenting on the readings and initiating our discussion once during the semester. Your presentation should first and foremost identify the main arguments of each individual reading and attempt to highlight the stakes behind this argument (i.e., to what problem is the argument proposed as a solution?). You should also discuss how the various readings relate to one another, considering them as a set and highlighting points of contrast and complementarity.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Acknowledgement:* This course is modeled on a similar offering by Greta Krippner and further informed by reflection on courses taught by Rebecca Emigh, Howard Kimeldorf, James Mahoney, Dan Slater, and Maurice Zeitlin.

Finally, you should raise a few issues or questions that you believe will motivate a productive discussion.

3. Response Memos (20%): Six times over the course of the semester, you will prepare a short response memo (approximately 500-600 words) on the week's material. At least one of these memos must be on one of our two assigned books. When multiple readings are assigned, your memo can address a specific reading, a limited set of them, or all of them. Memos should combine analytical summary with critical engagement. They are due by Wednesdays at midnight and should be posted to the Canvas Discussions forum. (Late memos will not count toward your required six.) Then, in preparation for class on Thursday, you must read (and consider your responses to) the other students' memos—even on weeks in which you declined to post. (You are not required to reply on the forum to other students' posts, but I will enable that feature in case you feel so moved.)
4. Research Proposal (50%): The main written assignment for this course is the production of a highly polished research proposal, of approximately ten (double-spaced) pages in length, on a topic of your choosing. This proposal should identify a researchable problem, situate it theoretically, and elaborate a suitable research design. For students early in the program, this will likely be related to the development of your publishable paper project. For students further along, it might be an early statement of your proposed dissertation research. I will provide more detail on this assignment early in the semester and we will tackle it in multiple stages. A preliminary draft (which will be circulated to the other students) is due at 5:00pm on Friday, December 1; the final draft is due at 5:00pm on Thursday, December 14.

## READINGS

### Required:

Most of the readings for the course are available on the Canvas website. In addition, the following books are recommended for purchase:

Gould, Roger V. 1995. *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### Supplemental:

The readings listed in this syllabus only begin to scratch the surface of the many methodological statements and exemplary works in comparative and historical sociology. Accordingly, you will be provided with a list of supplemental readings. (This is a continuously evolving list, so please send me suggestions for additions!) You will also notice that some weeks in this syllabus identify a couple of recommended supplemental readings that relate particularly well to the required texts. It is not an expectation of this class that you read these: they are simply provided for your benefit (now, or in the future).

**COURSE SCHEDULE**Week 1 (September 7): Introduction

Adams, Julia, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff. 2005. "Introduction: Social Theory, Modernity, and the Three Waves of Historical Sociology." Pp. 1-72 in Adams, Julia, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff (eds.), *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology*. Durham: Duke University Press.

*Suggested Supplemental Reading:*

Mahoney, James, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. 2003. "Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas." Pp. 3-38 in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sewell, William H., Jr. 2005. Chapter 2 of *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 2 (September 14): Defining a Research Topic / Discussion of Proposal Assignment

Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (Pp. xi-xii, 8-13, 211-248)

Davis, Murray S. 1971. "That's Interesting! Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 1(4):309-344.

Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. 2014. *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 7, "The Community of Inquiry")

*Suggested Supplemental Reading:*

Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. 2014. *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Introduction)

Zald, Mayer N. 1995. "Progress and Cumulation in the Human Sciences after the Fall." *Sociological Forum* 10(3):455-79.

Week 3 (September 21): Comparison 1 (The Basics) / Discussion of Research Topics

\* Come prepared to discuss potential research topic(s).

Mill, John Stuart. 1950 [1881]. "Of the Four Methods of Experimental Inquiry." Pp. 211-38 in *John Stuart Mill's Philosophy of Scientific Method*, edited by Ernest Nagel. New York: Hafner.

Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (vii-xi, 1-68)

Skocpol, Theda and Margaret Somers. 1980. "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22(2):174-97.

Week 4 (September 28): Exemplary Book 1

Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Pp. xi-xvii, 3-99, 109-40, 147-57, 161-73, 284-93)

Week 5 (October 5): Comparison 2 (Criticisms and Extensions) / Discussion of Research Design

\* Have selected your research topic and come prepared to discuss dilemmas of research design.

Sewell, William H., Jr. 1985. "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case." *Journal of Modern History* 57(1):57-85.

Mahoney, James. 1999. "Nominal, Ordinal, and Narrative Appraisal in Macrocausal Analysis." *American Journal of Sociology* 104(4):1154-96.

Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Chapters 6 & 8)

*Suggested Supplemental Reading:*

Lieberson, Stanley. 1991. "Small Ns, Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases." *Social Forces* 70(2):307-320.

Skocpol, Theda. 1985. "Cultural Idioms and Political Ideologies in the Revolutionary Reconstruction of State Power: A Rejoinder to Sewell." *Journal of Modern History* 57(1):86-96.

Tilly, Charles. 1997. "Means and Ends of Comparison in Macrosociology." *Comparative Social Research* 16:43-53.

Week 6 (October 12): Working with Cases*For Part I:*

Rueschemeyer, Dietrich. 2003. "Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?" Pp. 305-336 in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Walton, John. 1992. "Making the Theoretical Case." Pp. 121-37 in *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, edited by Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Armato, Michael, and Neal Caren. 2002. "Mobilizing the Single-Case Study: Doug McAdam's Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970." *Qualitative Sociology* 25(1):93-103.

*For Part II:*

Emigh, Rebecca Jean. 1997. "The Power of Negative Thinking: The Use of Negative Case Methodology in the Development of Sociological Theory." *Theory and Society* 26:649-84.

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2014. "Exceptional Cases: Epistemic Contributions and Normative Expectations." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 55(02):223-43.

*Suggested Supplemental Reading:*

Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2005. "Negative Case Selection: The Possibility Principle." in *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*, edited by Gary Goertz. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 7 (October 19): Exemplary Book 2

Gould, Roger V. 1995. *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Pp. 1-71, 90-99, 118-122, 149-206, 213-228)

Week 8 (October 26): Historical Process, Temporality, and Events

*For Part I:*

Abbott, Andrew. 1988. "Transcending General Linear Reality." *Sociological Theory* 6(2):169-86.

Mahoney, James. 2000. "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology." *Theory and Society* 29(4):507-48.

Sewell, William H., Jr. 1996. "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology." Pp. 245-80 in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, edited by Terrence J. McDonald. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

*For Part II:*

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2015. "The Structure of Contingency." *American Journal of Sociology* 121(1):64-125.

*Suggested Supplemental Reading:*

Clemens, Elisabeth S. 2007. "Toward a Historicized Sociology: Theorizing Events, Processes, and Emergence." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33:527-49.

Collins, Randall 2017. "Emotional Dynamics and Emotional Domination Drive The Microtrajectory of Moments of Collective Contingency: Comment On Ermakoff." *American Journal of Sociology* 123(1):276-83.

Griffin, Larry J. 1993. "Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 98:1094-133.

Week 9 (November 2): \*\*\* NO CLASS: SSHA MEETINGS \*\*\*

Week 10 (November 9): Theorizing History / Student-Selected Readings*For Part I:*

- Kiser, Edgar and Michael Hechter. 1991. "The Role of General Theory in Comparative-Historical Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology*, 97:1-30.
- Somers, Margaret R. 1998. "We're No Angels: Realism, Rational Choice, and Relationality in Social Science." *American Journal of Sociology* 104(3):722-84.
- Gorski, Philip S. 2004. "The Poverty of Deductivism: A Constructive Realist Model of Sociological Explanation." *Sociological Methodology* 34(1):1-33.

*For Part II:*

- \* Select one comparative-historical reading (broadly construed) from your own topical area of interest and come prepared to present its logic of analysis to the class.

*Suggested Supplemental Reading:*

- Paige, Jeffrey. 1999. "Conjuncture, Comparison, and Conditional Theory in Macrosocial Inquiry." *American Journal of Sociology* 105:781-800.
- Weber, Max. 1978 [1906]. "The Logic of Historical Explanation." Pp. 111-131 in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, edited by W.G. Runciman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 11 (November 16): Working with Historical Sources / Behind the Scenes: Information Management and Analysis

- Tilly, Charles. 2002. "Event Catalogs as Theories." *Sociological Theory* 20(2):249-54.
- Hill, Michael R. 1993. *Archival Strategies and Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. (Chapter 2, "Archival Sedimentation")
- Mariampolski, Hyman, and Dana C. Hughes. 1978. "The Use of Personal Documents in Historical Sociology." *The American Sociologist* 13:104-113.
- Dibble, Vernon K. 1963. "Four Types of Inference from Documents to Events." *History and Theory* 3:203-21.
- Lustick, Ian. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *American Political Science Review* 90:605-618.
- Various Authors. 2008. "From the Archives: Innovative Use of Data in Comparative Historical Research." Pp. 1-11 in *Trajectories: Newsletter of the ASA Comparative and Historical Sociology Section*, 19(2).

Week 12 (November 23): \*\*\* NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING \*\*\*

Week 13 (November 30): Exemplary Articles / Behind the Scenes: Article Writing and Revision  
**\*\*\* Draft proposal due (for circulation) Friday, December 1, 5:00pm \*\*\***

*For Part I:*

McDonnell, Erin Metz. 2017. "Patchwork Leviathan: How Pockets of Bureaucratic Governance Flourish within Institutionally Diverse Developing States."

*American Sociological Review* 82(3):476-510.

Krippner, Greta R. 2017. "Democracy of Credit: Ownership and the Politics of Credit Access in Late Twentieth-Century America." *American Journal of Sociology* 123(1):1-47.

Jansen, Robert S. 2007. "Resurrection and Appropriation: Reputational Trajectories, Memory Work, and the Political Use of Historical Figures." *American Journal of Sociology* 112(4):953-1007.

*For Part II:*

\* Read materials provided by Jansen

Week 14 (December 7): Proposal Draft Workshop

\* Read all other student proposals and be prepared with comments on each.

**\*\*\* Final proposal due Thursday, December 14, 5:00pm \*\*\***