

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Department of Sociology
Spring, 2010 (draft 1/24/10)

Soc. 920:702, Quantitative Analysis Seminar

[Patricia A. Roos](#)

Rm. A-342, Lucy Stone Hall

Email: roos@rutgers.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30-1:30 p.m. (or when class ends, or by appointment)

It's an experience like no other experience I can describe, the best thing that can happen to a scientist, realizing that something that's happened in his or her mind exactly corresponds to something that happens in nature. It's startling every time it occurs. One is surprised that a construct of one's own mind can actually be realized in the honest-to-goodness world out there. A great shock, and a great, great joy. Leo Kadanoff, Chaos

I. Goals: This is a course on conducting and writing about theoretically informed quantitative social research. The course provides three research credits, is graded S/U (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory), and satisfies the Writing Seminar requirement for more advanced students. The main focus is on advanced students who have a quantitative QP close to completion, a quantitative QP to revise for publication, or a quantitative dissertation chapter to complete. To receive credit for the Writing Seminar, you must “have one QP signed off, or permission of instructor.” Talk with me if you are unsure how this requirement affects you. Students must have completed their theory and methods/stats requirement (through 542) before taking this course, and have a fairly advanced paper in progress. I also recommend that you have a faculty adviser to work with you throughout the semester (e.g., your QP or dissertation adviser).

Each student will present twice during the semester. What you get out of this course depends entirely on what you put into it. The final course requirement is a completed QP, a paper ready to submit to a refereed journal or academic conference, or a completed dissertation chapter. Our sessions will be a mix of analytic critiques, review of computer code and output, discussion of relevant analytic critiques, and tricks of the trade for interpreting, presenting, and writing about data. This course is not a statistics course, although I will review statistical techniques and interpretation as needed from our discussions.

In the seminar we will spend most of our time commenting and discussing your written work/programs/output. This will provide you the opportunity to practice what you've learned in previous courses and to learn from each other, all the while honing your writing and analytic skills. We will also talk about the journal review process. I've posted the ASA's *Publishing Options: An Author's Guide to Journals* (2009) on Sakai for your perusal, and later in the semester I will provide some examples of journal reviews for you, from quantitative Rutgers faculty.

II. Books: There are no required books per se for the course. But I highly recommend two books:

Jane E. Miller. 2005. *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Donald J. Treiman. 2009. *Quantitative Data Analysis: Doing Social Research to Test Ideas*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The latter book is by my former graduate adviser, and it updates the course I took from him in graduate school. Over the years I've borrowed liberally from his course in my own teaching (for both 501 and 502), also updating to include newer techniques like logistic regression and multinomial logistic regression. His focus is exactly ours: "how to conduct theoretically informed quantitative social research—that is, social research to test ideas" (p. xiii). If you can afford it, it's an excellent source for those of us doing and writing about quantitative research.

Both of these books provide many important "tools of the trade" for those who want to think, write, and speak about quantitative data. They are the kind of books you'll want to read through once and then actively use when writing, especially when you need to understand techniques, interpret output, or present or phrase your writing

The only required reading is what you need for your paper topic. I have provided a bibliography on Sakai, which I'll continue to update as I find new references. I include these so that you will have background reading on the techniques you use, and examples of how they are used in practice. A number of the illustrative articles are written by our own faculty (and if the faculty sent me a copy, I've included them on Sakai). I'd advise you to read a number of applications of the technique(s) you use.

III. Course Requirements: The grading for the course is S/U. There are *four basic requirements*: (#1) post the original version of your paper, and facilitate its discussion, during the first half of the course, (#2) post a revised version of your paper, and facilitate its discussion, during the second half of the course, (#3) turn in a final paper that is ready (or nearly ready) for prime time (either a final QP, a paper ready for submission to a journal or conference, or a completed dissertation chapter).

Finally, in addition to knowing how to conduct and write about theoretically informed quantitative social research, it's also important to know how to constructively critique others' work. Thus (#4): each of you will be the lead critic twice during the semester (once in round one, and once in round two). You can choose to be the lead critic twice for the same person, or for two different people. We'll assign papers the first day of

class, so come with your calendars. In addition, everyone is required to post comments on everyone else's work each week. We'll do this through Sakai's Discussion site.

Please post your paper for presentation **one week prior (the Thursday before we discuss it)**, into the appropriate folder in the "Readings" section of Sakai. Each of you has full access to the Sakai site.

Your comments on the paper to be discussed *are due by 12 noon the day before (Wednesday)*. While each person will facilitate his/her own paper, the "lead critic" will start the discussion and be expected to be more thorough in his/her critique. Avoid ad hominem remarks. Be constructive! Because life happens to all of us, you can miss one set of critiques over the semester, but don't miss your "lead critic" comments! To make this class work, you need to make a commitment to your peers to be both a provider and recipient of comments. Don't be a free rider!

Feel free to post other things to Sakai (see the Discussion page), including output, questions about analyses, questions re wording, the best way to present data, etc.

I don't like incompletes, and neither should you. So, plan to get the paper to me within one week after classes end (no later than Thursday May 6th).

IV. Miscellaneous:

- 1) It is your responsibility to determine if you need to undergo IRB review. Read through the [IRB annual memo](#) to understand the rules and to find the appropriate forms if you do need IRB review.
- 2) All interim and final papers must be typed. Use Word or Excel to prepare tables.
- 3) We have only 14 meetings. Attendance and participation are critical. **The norm for graduate courses is: thou shalt not miss class! If you do, you'd better have an excellent excuse, and let me know ahead of time.**

V. Presentation Dates:

Week 1 (January 21): Intro (come with calendar to assign dates); description of paper in progress

Round one:

Week 2 (January 28):
Presenter: Neha
Lead Critic: Jess

Week 3 (February 4):
Presenter: Shatima
Lead Critic: Alexis

Week 4 (February 11):
Presenter: Anjali
Lead Critic: Laurie

Week 5 (February 18):
Presenter: Laurie
Lead Critic: Anjali

Week 6 (February 25):
Presenter: Jess
Lead Critic: Neha

Week 7 (March 4):
Presenter: Alexis
Lead Critic: Crystal

Week 8 (March 11):
Presenter: Crystal
Lead Critic: Shatima

Spring Break: No class March 18th!

Round two (tentative; we'll need to combine two in one week or set up an extra presentation day to get all seven students in)

Week 9 (March 25):
Presenter: Neha
Lead Critic: tba

Week 10 (April 1):
Presenter: Shatima
Lead Critic: tba

Week 11 (April 8):
Presenter: Anjali
Lead Critic: tba

Week 12 (April 15):
Presenter: Laurie
Lead Critic: tba

Week 13 (April 22):
Presenter: Jess
Lead Critic: tba

Week 14 (April 29):
Presenter: Alexis
Lead Critic: tba

Presenter: Crystal
Lead Critic: tba

FINAL PAPERS DUE: Thursday, May 6th

VI. Research and Writing Citations (for your writing pleasure):

Alford, Robert T. 1998. *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract" [Sakai]

American Sociological Association, "Publishing Option: An Author's Guide to Journals, May 20, 2009. [Sakai]

Becker, Howard S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee Clarke, Lee. "Notes on Proposing" and "On Writing and Criticism" [Sakai]

Germano, William. 2005. "Passive is Spoken Here." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2005. [Sakai]

Jasper, James. "Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers" [Sakai]

Miller, Jane E. 2005. *The Chicago Guide to Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Peters, Mark. "Like a Bowl in a China Shop." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 9, 2006. [Sakai]

Rosenfield, Sarah. "Some Things To Think About While Reading Papers" [Sakai]

Strunk, William Jr., and E.B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Donald J. Treiman. 2009. *Quantitative Data Analysis: Doing Social Research to Test Ideas*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

And, for some humor: "How to Write Good" [Sakai]

[Thanks especially to the faculty who designed the Quantitative Analysis Seminar: Debby Carr, Zaire Dinzey-Flores, Julie Phillips, Patricia Roos, and Kristen Springer.]