

**Social Research Methods**  
**Sociology 920:501<sup>1</sup>**  
**Fall 2011**  
**W 1:10-3:50**

(Draft: September 5, 2011)

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This course aims to impart a critical perspective of, and an empirical familiarity with, the range of methods available to sociological researchers. We will examine three, broadly defined, methodological approaches to doing sociology: survey, experimental design; ethnography and qualitative interviews; and historical/comparative studies. These three methodological approaches correspond to three distinct conceptualizations of social life and of the science dedicated to studying it. Yet even as you get your hands dirty trying to figure out the specifics of each method, you should keep in mind that no single approach can adequately account for the richness and complexity of human interaction and social structures. To overcome the reductionism inherent in one method, it is always advisable to reach out for a novel take on the issue at hand. The ultimate goal of this course is to instill in you the desire, as a matter of principle and conviction, to push past the conventional boundaries among the main sociological methods. We encourage you to appreciate the potential and limits of each method through required readings and exercises and by having you design and execute your own mixed methods research project as your final paper.

### **COURSE LOGISTICS**

***Attendance and Participation:***

To put it bluntly, the norm for graduate courses is: thou shalt not miss class! You must have an excellent reason to miss a session and, unless not humanly possible, you are expected to let us know well ahead of time if you cannot make it. Moreover, you are expected to come to class fully prepared to analyze, discuss, and debate the issues raised in the assigned readings. This course is fundamentally designed as a seminar, and its success depends on active engagement and exchange.

***Course Readings:***

We will upload many of the readings on Sakai, however we urge you to buy hard copies of the following three texts, available at the Douglass bookstore and via the usual online book vendors:

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<sup>1</sup> This syllabus builds on the Fall 2010 syllabus by Phaedra Daipha and Patricia Roos. We thank Phaedra Daipha for her input.

- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Miller, Jane E. 2005. *Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

If you want a “methods text book” that provides an overview of various sociological methods, we particularly recommend one by Russell Schutt. You’re not required to buy it, but you can get this or earlier editions fairly easily:

Schutt, Russell K. 2009. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

The syllabus will specify additional required readings each week (available through Sakai, see “Weekly Readings,” or “Articles” by author’s last name). We provide two other types of supplementary readings, also available on Sakai: (1) articles/chapters that illustrate the method under discussion (see the syllabus weekly for “Sample Articles”), and (2) other articles written by our very own faculty that further illustrate the variable, dynamic, and creative ways in which methods are actually used in sociological inquiry.

### ***Course Requirements:***

- Each student is required to facilitate discussion of at least one article over the course of the semester. We will distribute a sign-up sheet on the first day of class. On the day you facilitate, come prepared with 3 questions to facilitate conversation for about 15-20 minutes of class. Your questions should engage with at least some of the bulleted topics for that week. For facilitated articles, see asterisked articles (\*) in weekly readings.
- A set of six assignments meant to both conceptually and empirically deepen your comprehension of the course material and develop your analytic writing abilities. If you think ahead, you can use several of these assignments to explore topics and conduct analyses for your final paper. All assignments should be circulated to the entire class on Sakai no later than 12 noon Tuesday, the day before the class in which they are due (to submit, use the “Discussion-Assignment Submission” section of Sakai). (40 percent of grade).
- Two drafts of the proposal for your final paper. The first draft will be due November 16<sup>th</sup>, the second November 30<sup>th</sup>. Both proposals should be submitted to Sakai no later than 12 noon Tuesday, the day before class. The first proposal should be approximately 2 pages long, and describe your thesis, research questions, and the methods you will use (include 3-5 references). The second proposal should build on the first, be 3-5 pages long, and outline your thesis, research questions, data, methods, literature, and 5-7 references. (10 percent)

Note: please talk with us about your proposed final project prior to the due date. We will hold extra office hours as needed. Each of you is required to make an appointment to formally talk with each of us about your final paper (with a draft of your proposal in hand).

- In-class presentation of final paper, on December 7th. Plan for a 7-10 minute power point presentation, followed by a 5 minute Q&A session. (10 percent)
- Final paper. Each student is expected to write a 15-20 page final paper on a mixed methods research project. For your final paper, you must use at least two of the three broad social science research methods we discuss in the course (survey or experimental; ethnographic or interview; historical or comparative/historical). This paper is due December 14<sup>th</sup>. (40 percent)

***Summary of due dates (note these are class due dates; except for the 9/21 IRB certification and the 12/7 presentations, all must be uploaded to Sakai by 12 noon the previous day):***

September 14<sup>th</sup> (week 2): Assignment 1  
 September 21<sup>st</sup> (week 3): deadline for getting IRB certified  
 September 28<sup>th</sup> (week 4): Assignment 2  
 October 5<sup>th</sup> (week 5): Assignment 3  
 October 26<sup>th</sup> (week 8): Assignment 4  
 November 2<sup>nd</sup> (week 9): Assignment 5  
 November 16<sup>th</sup> (week 11): 1<sup>st</sup> draft of proposal  
 November 21<sup>st</sup> (week 12): Assignment 6  
 November 30<sup>th</sup> (week 13): 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of proposal  
 December 7<sup>th</sup> (week 14): In class-Power-point presentations  
 December 14<sup>th</sup>: Final papers

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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<b>Week 1</b> <b>(September 7<sup>th</sup>)</b>	<b>Introduction to Social Science Inquiry</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation in social science research</li> <li>• Basic theoretical debates and methodological practices</li> <li>• Methodological Rock-Paper-Scissors game</li> <li>• IRB certification</li> </ul> <p>READING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbott, <i>Methods of Discovery</i>, chapters 1 and 2</li> </ul> <p>ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ass. #1: Analytic Review</li> </ul>
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**Week 2  
(September  
14th)**

**The Basics of Social Research**

- Discussion of Ass. #1
- Selecting and formulating a research problem
- Main steps for conducting research
- Attributes and variables
- Units of analysis
- Levels of measurement
- Association vs. causality
- Ecological fallacy
- Conceptualization and operationalization

READINGS:

- \*Miller, Alan, S., and Rodney Stark. 2002. "Gender and Religiousness: Can Socialization Explanations Be Saved?" *American Journal of Sociology* 107: 1399-1423.
- Miller, Chs. 1-2

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):

- Schutt, Chs. 2, 4
- Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 190-202)

**Week 3  
(September  
21st)**

**The Logic of Causation**

- Cause and effect
- Elaboration Paradigm
- Bivariate and trivariate tables
- Statistical interaction and 3D tables
- Descriptive analysis: Crosstabulation
- Chi square analysis

READINGS:

- Babbie, Earl. "The Elaboration Model." Ch. 15 in the *Practice of Social Research*. 10<sup>th</sup> edition.
- Babbie, Earl, "Notes on Percentaging Tables"
- Miller, Chs. 3-4

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):

- Schutt, Ch. 6 (pp. 202-20); Ch. 14 (pp. 514-534)

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #2: Bivariate tables (hypothesizing relationships)

**Week 4  
(September  
28th)**

**Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs**

- Classic experimental design
  - Control groups
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- Internal and external validity
  - Solomon 4-group design
  - Quasi-experimental designs

READING:

- \*Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108:937-75.

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):

- Schutt, Ch. 7

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Correll, Shelley J. 2004. "Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations." *American Sociological Review* 69:93-113.
- Pager, Devah, Bruce Western, and Bart Bonikowski. 2009. "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment." *American Sociological Review* 74:777-99.
- Rudman, Laurie A., Richard D. Ashmore, and Melvin L. Gary. 2001. "'Unlearning' Automatic Biases: The Malleability of Implicit Prejudice and Stereotypes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81:856-68.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:

- Ass. #3: Trivariate tables (testing hypotheses using elaboration paradigm)

**Week 5  
(October 5<sup>th</sup>)**

**Sampling and Survey Design**

- Descriptive vs. inferential statistics
- Sampling theory/standard error
- Sampling designs
- Survey and questionnaire design
- Reliability/validity

READINGS:

- \*Carr, Deborah. 2004. "My Daughter Has a Career; I Just Raised Babies": The Psychological Consequences of Women's Intergenerational Social Comparisons." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 67:132-54.

Recommended Background Reading (skim as needed):

- Schutt, Ch. 5; Ch. 8
  - Schutt, Ch. 13
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**Week 6**  
(October 12<sup>th</sup>)

**Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Research**

- Reading, Appreciating, and Critiquing Quantitative Research
- Distinctions between Qualitative and Quantitative Research
- The Relationship Between Theory and Research
- Establishing Credibility

READINGS:

- \*Krivo, Lauren J., Ruth D. Peterson, and Danielle C. Kuhl. 2009. "Segregation, Racial Structure, and Neighborhood Violent Crime." *American Journal of Sociology* 114:1765-1802.
- \*Kelly, Erin L., Phyllis Moen, and Eric Tranby. 2011. "Changing Workplaces to Reduce Work-Family Conflict: Schedule Control in a White-Collar Organization." *American Sociological Review* 76:265-90.
- \*King, Marissa D., and Peter S. Bearman. 2011. "Socioeconomic Status and the Increased Prevalence of Autism in California." *American Sociological Review* 76:320-46.
- \*Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need?: On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field Based Research." *Ethnography*. 10: 5-38.
- National Science Foundation. 2004. *Workshop on Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research*. Report prepared by: Charles C. Ragin, Joane Nagel, Patricia White, for the National Science Foundation: Sociology Program; Methodology, Measurement & Statistics Program; Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences.  
Read:
  - General Guidance for Conducting Qualitative Research
  - The Distinctive Contributions of Qualitative Research, by James Mahoney
  - A Note on Science and Qualitative Research, by Sudhir Venkatesh

**Week 7**  
(October 19<sup>th</sup>)

**Ethnography**

- Why Ethnography?
- Mechanics of Fieldwork: Observing and Writing
- Ethics and IRB

READING:

- Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
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**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS**

Ass. #4: Fieldnotes (Report and fieldnotes from ethnographic observation)

**Week 8  
(October 26th)****Qualitative Interviews**

- Survey vs. Qualitative Interviewing
- Creating an Interview Protocol
- Interviewing techniques and etiquette
- Theoretical Sampling

**READING:**

- Weiss, Robert, S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method Of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press: chapters 1, 2, and 4
- Interview protocol for “Forbidden Knowledge: Controversy as a Form of Social Control in the Production of Nonknowledge.” *Sociological Forum* .26: 475-500.
- Interview protocol for Roos, Patricia A., Mary K. Trigg, and Mary S. Hartman. 2006. “Changing Families/Changing Communities: Work, Family and Community in Transition.” *Community, Work and Family* 9:197-24.
- Kempner, Joanna, Jon F. Merz, and Charles L. Bosk. 2011. “Forbidden Knowledge: Controversy as a Form of Social Control in the Production of Nonknowledge.” *Sociological Forum* .26: 475-500.

**SAMPLE ARTICLES:**

- Roos, Patricia A., Mary K. Trigg, and Mary S. Hartman. 2006. “Changing Families/Changing Communities: Work, Family and Community in Transition.” *Community, Work and Family* 9:197-24.
- Edin, Kathryn, Laura Lein. 1997. Work, Welfare and Single Mother’s Survival Strategies. *American Sociological Review*. 62: 253-266.

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:**

- Ass. #5: Interview (Report and partial transcript from qualitative interview)
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**Week 9**  
**(November 2nd)**

**Coding and Analyzing Qualitative Data**

- Manually? Qualitative data analysis software?
- Open coding, selecting themes, focused coding
- Practice with your fieldnotes/interview transcripts

READING:

- Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, chapter 6

**Week 10**  
**(November 9th)**

**Historical Methods**

**Guest speaker: Paul McLean**

- Doing archival research
- Tracing social change over time
- Theorizing past events
- Denaturalizing categories

READINGS:

- Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, chapters 1-6
- \*McLean, Paul. 2005. "Patronage, Citizenship, and the Stalled Emergence of the Modern State in Renaissance Florence." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47:638-64.
- \*Horwitz, Allan V. 2010. "How an Age of Anxiety Became an Age of Depression." *Milbank Quarterly* 88:112-38.

Recommended Background Reading

- Craig Calhoun. 1998. "Explanation in Historical Sociology: Narrative, General Theory, and Historically Specific Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 104: 846-71.
- Clemens, Elisabeth S. 2007. "Toward a Historicized Sociology: Theorizing Events, Processes, and Emergence." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33:527-49.

SAMPLE ARTICLES:

- Böröcz, József. 2000. "The Fox and the Raven: The European Union and Hungary Renegotiate the Margins of 'Europe'." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42:847-75.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS;

- 1<sup>st</sup> draft of proposal due
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**Week 11**  
**(November**  
**16th)**

**Comparative/Historical Sociology**

**Guest speaker: Catherine Lee**

- Comparing across time and place
- The Millian approach
- Small N- and large N-analysis
- The negative case and counterfactual analysis

**READINGS:**

- Charles Ragin. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Chapters 1-4.
- Mahoney, James. 2003. "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences." *Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, James Mahoney and Dietrich Reuschmeyer, New York: Cambridge University Press. pp 337-72
- Orloff, Ann Shola and Theda Skocpol. 1984. "Why Not Equal Protection? Explaining the Politics of Public Social Spending in Britain, 1900-1911, and the United States, 1880s-1920," *American Sociological Review* 49(6): 726-750.

**SAMPLE ARTICLES:**

- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. Pp. 47-111 in *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China.*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore, Barrington, Jr. 1966. "Preface" and Chapter VII, "The Democratic Route to Modern Society" in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Boston: Beacon.
- Stephens, John D. 1989. "Democratic Transition and Breakdown in Western Europe, 1870-1939: A Test of the Moore Thesis." *American Journal of Sociology*.94:1019-1077.

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS:**

- Ass. #6: Archival Research

**Week 12**  
**(November**  
**21st)**

**Mixed Methods**

- Proposal discussion
- Defining mixed methods

**(Mon.=Wed.**  
**this week)**

**READINGS:**

- Abbott, *Methods of Discovery*, chapters 6 and 7 (skim)
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chapters 3-5)

- \*Small, Mario. 2011. "How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:57-86.

**SAMPLE ARTICLES:**

- Roth, Wendy and Jal D. Mehta. 2002. "The Rashomon Effect: Combining Positivist and Interpretivist Approaches of Contested Events." *Sociological Methods and Research* 31: 131-73.
- Quinlan, Elizabeth, and Andrea Quinlan. 2010. "Representations of Rape: Transcending Methodological Divides." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 4:127-43.
- Alise, Mark, A., and Charles Teddlie. 2010. "A Continuation of the Paradigm Wars? Prevalence Rates of Methodological Approaches Across the Social/Behavioral Sciences." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 4: 103-26.
- Petersen, Trond, and Ishak Saporta. 2004. "The Opportunity Structure for Discrimination." *American Journal of Sociology* 109:852-901.
- Cherlin, Andrew J., Linda M. Burton, Tera R. Hurt, and Diane M. Purvin. 2004. "The Influence of Physical and Sexual Abuse on Marriage and Cohabitation." *American Sociological Review* 69:768-89.

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS;**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of proposal due

**Week 13  
(November  
30th)**

**Writing Up**

- Presenting and writing up results
- Questions re final papers

**READINGS:**

- Miller, Chs. 2, 5 (pp. 81-97); Skim Ch. 6
- Miller, Chs. 11-12
- Emerson, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chapter 7

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT CLASS;**

- In-class power point presentations

**Week 14  
(December 7th)**

**Final Paper Presentations**

**December 14th \*FINAL PAPERS DUE\***

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## MISCELLANEOUS

### *IRB certification:*

Each of you is required to complete the IRB certification no later than week 3. We will go over the logistics prior to this. For further details on how to complete the certification see:

<http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/default.php#general> (General description of Rutgers rule on IRB compliance)

<http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/default.php#HSCP> (Human subjects certification; you will link to and complete the online exam).

### **Rutgers has an IRB Advisor: IRB Advisor, Fall 2011**

Dr. Kathryn Greene, the IRB Advisor, has been very successful helping faculty and students improve the quality of IRB submissions (and therefore accelerating the approval process). Kathryn advises applicants on how to smoothly and successfully complete the process for IRB submission. Her activities include several University-wide presentations each semester on different Rutgers campuses, keeping "office hours" before IRB deadlines, and responding to emails sent to [irbadvisor@orsp.rutgers.edu](mailto:irbadvisor@orsp.rutgers.edu)

### IRB Seminars:

How to Smoothly and Successfully Complete the Process for IRB Submission will include a presentation by IRB faculty reviewers followed by a question and answer session (total time between 1.5 and 2 hours). Faculty, staff and students (graduate and undergraduate) will all benefit from attending.

**September 20, 2011 (Tuesday) 10:00am-12pm, College Ave Campus, SC&I Building (corner of College Ave & Huntington), Room 222 (Interaction Lab)**

**RSVP to: [carivera@grants.rutgers.edu](mailto:carivera@grants.rutgers.edu)**

**October 10, 2011 (Monday) 11am-1pm, Newark Campus, Center for Law and Justice, Room 572**

**RSVP to: [carivera@grants.rutgers.edu](mailto:carivera@grants.rutgers.edu)**

**October 24, 2011 (Monday) 10:00am-noon, Cook Campus Center, 202AB**

**RSVP to: [carivera@grants.rutgers.edu](mailto:carivera@grants.rutgers.edu)**

### *Choosing data sets:*

➤ SURVEY DATA

- General Social Survey (GSS). You will use the GSS to do various assignments for this course, and (if you so choose) for your final paper. The [GSS data and codebook](#) are available online. These are cross-sectional samples of the U.S. population from 1972 to 2008 (the data are available yearly in the early years, every other year later on). You'll probably want to focus on one year (e.g., 2008), but feel free to use multiple years as you move into your final project. Talk with us if you have a dataset you'd prefer to use other than the GSS. For example, there are other online datasets you can choose, such as the ones listed immediately below, or you may have access to your own data.
- World Values Survey. This online database focuses on political and sociocultural change across countries. It has four waves, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005 (a 2010 survey is forthcoming). Excellent for those interested in comparative analysis.
- <http://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm>. This site includes several surveys, in the same easy-to-use format as the GSS: American National Election Study, IPUMS (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series), American Community Survey 2006-08 (Census Microdata for US), as well as a few others

➤ HISTORICAL DATA:

- Rutgers Special Collections and University Archives  
<http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/scua.shtml>
- National Library of Congress online manuscripts <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>
- Penn's online archives  
<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/flash.cfm?CFID=2022796&CFTOKEN=14695275>
- New York Public Library online images:  
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/>
- Jack Lynch's (RU English professor) page on 18<sup>th</sup> century history  
<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/18th/history.html>
- Resources listed by ASA comparative-historical section  
<http://www2.asanet.org/sectionchs/research.html#databases>

***Research, Thinking, and Writing: [articles available on Sakai]***

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

American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract"

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

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.

- Clarke, Lee. "Notes on Proposing" and "On Writing and Criticism"
- Germano, William. 2005. "Passive is Spoken Here." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2005.
- Jasper, James. "Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers"
- 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.
- Rockquomore, Kerry Ann. 2010. "Writing IS Thinking." *Inside Higher Education*, July 19. [ <http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/summer/summer6>, retrieved July 21, 2010]
- Rosenfield, Sarah. "Some Things to Think About While Reading Papers"
- Stein, Arlene. 2009. "Discipline and Publish: Public Sociology in an Age of Professionalization." Pp. 156-71 in *Bureaucratic Culture and Escalating Problems: Advancing the Sociological Imagination* (edited by David Knottnerus and Bernard Phillips). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Strunk, William Jr., and E.B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*. Fourth Edition. New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- And, for some humor: "How to Write Good"

More examples of good methods, from Scatterplot:

<http://scatter.wordpress.com/2011/08/28/a-beautiful-method/>