

ISF 189: Interdisciplinary Research Methods

Fall 2017

University of California, Berkeley

TuTh: 9.30 am - 11 am

Room: 4 Evans Hall

Lecturer: Shreeharsh Kelkar

Interdisciplinary Studies Field Major

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Room: 269 Evans Hall

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1-4 pm (or email for appointment; if my door is open, just knock and walk in)

Course Description and Learning Objectives:

The goal of this class is to survey the different methods through which we, as researchers, can make knowledge claims about the world. You will not necessarily become an expert in each method (indeed, the only way to know that is to actually do the research), but rather, you will understand how these different methods fit into the knowledge-making enterprise, where they come from, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and how to develop your judgment in using them to untangle the threads that make our social world so complex. By the end of this class, you will know what it means to construct a research problem, what methods or combination of methods with which to attack this problem, and how to evaluate the evidence with which you can make a knowledge claim about the social world. While this class can help you with various kinds of research (including science and engineering), it is meant as an introduction to social science research, broadly construed, and its various methods—surveys, regressions, participant observation, interviewing, and content analysis, among others. It will also help you in your professional life, whether in for-profit or non-profit corporations, where you will be continuously making and evaluating knowledge claims to convince others.

Grade Determination:

There are no exams in this class; instead, you will be doing a lot of small assignments. At the end of this course, you have to produce a prospectus that will form the basis of your senior thesis. The grade breakdown is as follows:

Attendance: 10 pts (This includes coming to class and participating in the group activities.)

Forum Posts, Class Assignments, and Class Presentation: 55 pts

Prospectus: 35 pts

Bibliography: 4 pts (10-15 research papers listed; each one broken down into claim, evidence, and relevance).

Annotated bibliography: 3 pts (summarize the bibliography, categorize it into three or more relevant categories).

Project Map: 3 pts (Craft your own research question based on your prior work, your hypothesis, and the data that you plan to analyze to support your claim; explain how your data provides sampling and variation).

Prospectus draft: 5 pts

Final Prospectus: 20 pts

Total: 100 pts

The grading scheme for the class is as follows:

Range and Grade
$90 \leq A \leq 100$
$80 \leq A < 90$
$70 \leq B < 80$
$60 \leq B < 70$
$50 \leq B < 60$
$45 \leq C < 50$
$40 \leq C < 45$
$35 \leq C < 40$
$0 \leq F < 35$

Laptop Policy:

No laptops, tablets, or cell phones will be allowed during class unless I give you explicit instructions to use them. I encourage you to print out the readings, annotate them, and bring them to class, so that we can discuss them closely. At other times, I can project parts of the readings and/or your forum postings so that we can discuss them collectively. There is a wide literature that shows that overall, students are distracted from the topic at hand because of their laptops and phones, and that students are often distracted by the laptops of other people. For those of you that prefer to take your notes on your laptops, there's [some research](#) that shows that taking hand-written notes forces you to synthesize your points, thereby creating better notes.

Class Plan

W	Date	Concept or Keyword or Topic	Readings, Assignment and Class Lecture
1	22 Aug	No Class	
	24 Aug	What is research?	No readings.
2	29 Aug	Claims and Evidence; Types of Claims: Stylized Facts and Explanations	<p>Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams. 2008. Making Claims. In <i>The Craft of Research</i>. 120-126.</p> <p>Hirschman, Daniel. "Stylized Facts in the Social Sciences." <i>Sociological Science</i> 3 (2016). [Extract, 604-5]</p> <p>Abbott, Andrew. 2004. Explanation. In <i>Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences</i>. [Extract, p8-9]</p> <p>Drum, Kevin. 2016. Suicide Rates are Up but the Most Obvious Explanations are Probably All Wrong. <i>Mother Jones</i>. http://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2016/04/suicide-up-obvious-explanations-wrong/</p> <p>Forum Question (4 pts):</p> <p>In the Kevin Drum piece, there is both a statement of a stylized fact as well as a tour through possible explanations of this stylized fact. In your forum post:</p> <p>(a) Describe the stylized fact accurately and with as much detail as possible in your own words (50 words) (1 pt);</p> <p>(b) How might the CDC have arrived at this stylized fact? Click on the links in the post and explain in your own words (100 words) (1 pt).</p>

			<p>(c) Come up with one way that you can investigate the relationship between the suicide rate and the Great Recession. For example: some states were more affected by the recession than others; do those states have a higher suicide rate? Is this a meaningful pattern? Come up with one other way of investigating this relationship. (300 words) (2 pts)</p>
	31 Aug	<p>Types of Explanations: Causal vs. Interpretive</p> <p>No class</p>	<p>Little, Daniel. 1990. Causal Analysis, Interpretation Theory, Statistical Analysis. In <i>Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science</i>. Westview Press. [Extracts]</p> <p>Forum Question (1 pt):</p> <p>Quantitative methods produce causal explanations while qualitative methods produce interpretive ones. True or false? Give reasons, with examples. Draw mostly on the readings but feel free to bring in your own examples if you think they are useful. (300 words)</p>
3	5 Sep	<p>Introduction to Methods: content analysis, found data, surveys, field interviews, ethnography</p>	<p>Khan, Salman and Dana Fisher. 2014. Research using available data, Survey research, Field interviewing, Content analysis, and Field observation. In <i>The Practice of Research: How Social Scientists Answer Their Questions</i>. [Extracts]</p> <p>Forum Question (3 pts):</p> <p>Pick your favorite explanation for the rise in suicides (see your forum post of Aug 29). For that explanation, design a project around each of the 5 methods you read about (content analysis, surveys, interviews, found data, ethnography). For each method, explain what data you would use and whether your explanation would be more causal or interpretive.</p>
	7 Sep	<p>Concepts, Variables, and Operationalization.</p>	<p>Babbie, E. R. 1998. Concepts and Variables. In <i>The Practice of Social Research</i>. pp12-17.*</p> <p>Becker, Howard. 2008. Concepts. In <i>Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while doing it</i>. 109-145.</p> <p>Forum Question (3 pts):</p> <p>Are concepts the same as variables? Explain why or why not. Draw on the readings but do not simply quote from them. Give examples, if you can.</p> <p>In your last forum post you designed 5 projects each based on a method. For each project, come up with a concept that the</p>

			<p>project will be about. Explain. For at least one, use one of the tricks suggested by Howard Becker.</p>
4	12 Sep	<p>Sampling and Variation; Validity and Reliability</p>	<p>Becker, Howard. 2008. Sampling. In <i>Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research while doing it</i>. 109-145.</p> <p>Trost, Jan E. "Statistically non-representative stratified sampling: A sampling technique for qualitative studies." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 9.1 (1986): 54-57.</p> <p>Khan, Salman and Dana Fisher. 2014. Validity and Reliability. In <i>The Practice of Research: How Social Scientists Answer Their Questions</i>. 18-20.</p> <p>Forum Question (3 pts):</p> <p>The statistically non-representative (i.e. non-random) sampling that Trost describes can also be described as theoretical or conceptual sampling. Do you agree with this statement? Explain why or why not. Illustrate with the example that Trost uses.</p> <p>Becker argues that sampling is key to producing variation in the data or cases. Are variation and validity the same thing? Explain why or why not.</p> <p>For the methods that you designed in the last class, explain how you will sample i.e. your sampling frame. Explain why this sampling frame is best suited for your purposes.</p>
	14 Sep	<p>Case-study: Why do some parents refuse to vaccinate their children?;</p> <p>Summarizing prior work</p>	<p>Reich, Jennifer. 2014. Neoliberal Mothering and Vaccine Refusal. <i>Gender and Society Blog</i>. https://gendersociety.wordpress.com/2014/09/02/neoliberal-mothering-and-vaccine-refusal/</p> <p>Lupton, Robert and Christopher Hare. 2015. Conservatives are more likely to believe that vaccines cause autism. <i>The Monkey Cage Blog</i>. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/03/01/conservatives-are-more-likely-to-believe-that-vaccines-cause-autism/?utm_term=.e836fb0e5d76</p> <p>Mele, Christopher. 2017. Minnesota sees largest outbreak of measles in almost 30 years. <i>The New York Times</i>. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/05/us/measles-minnesota-vaccines.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur&r=0</p> <p>Joslyn, Mark. 2017. These 3 things help make sense of the dangerous Minnesota measles outbreak. <i>The Monkey Cage Blog</i>. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-</p>

			<p>cage/wp/2017/06/01/these-3-things-help-make-sense-of-the-dangerous-minnesota-measles-outbreak/</p> <p>Cohen, Philip. 2015. Charter, private, and wealthy schools lead California vaccine exemptions. <i>Family Inequality Blog</i>. https://familyinequality.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/more-on-california-vaccine-exemptions/</p> <p>Healy, Kieran. 2015. Vaccination Exemptions in California Kindergartens. https://kieranhealy.org/blog/archives/2015/01/29/vaccination-exemptions-in-california-kindergartens/</p> <p>Fowler, Erkia and Sarah E. Gollust. 2015. News coverage of vaccine controversies drives down support for vaccines. <i>The Monkey Cage Blog</i>. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/09/news-coverage-of-vaccine-controversies-drives-down-support-for-vaccines/</p> <p>Grossman, Shelby, Jonathan Phillips and Leah Rosenzweig. 2016. Polio is back in Nigeria, and the next vaccination campaign may have a surprising consequence. <i>The Monkey Cage Blog</i>. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/08/23/polio-is-back-in-nigeria-heres-why-local-communities-will-bargain-hard-on-the-next-vaccination-surge/</p> <p>Rönnerstrand, B. 2013. Social capital and immunisation against the 2009 A(H1N1) pandemic in Sweden. <i>Scandinavian Journal of Public Health</i>. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23843025</p> <p>Bruenig, Elizabeth. 2015. Don't Blame Anti-Vaxxers for the Measles Outbreak. Blame American Culture. <i>The New Republic</i>. https://newrepublic.com/article/120877/disneyland-measles-outbreak-caused-distrust-american-society</p> <p>Forum Question (3 pts):</p> <p>Read the articles above and answer the question: Why do some people refuse vaccination? Your answer must try to synthesize some of the findings above. Try to generalize (e.g. "Those who refuse vaccines do so for three main reasons...") but also try to be true to particulars (e.g. what points of commonality can you see between American, Swedish, and Nigerian vaccine refusal?). Remember to give specific examples from the readings . Use some of the "tricks" that Howard Becker outlines in his piece on "Concepts." (300 words at least).</p>
5	19	Case-study:	Joffe-Walt, Chana. 2013. Unfit for Work: The Rise of Disability

	<p>Sep</p> <p>Why are so many Americans on disability?</p> <p>Using prior work to design sampling frames</p>	<p>in America. <i>NPR</i>. http://apps.npr.org/unfit-for-work/</p> <p>McCoy, Terrence. 2017. Disabled, or Just Desperate? Rural Americans turn to disability as jobs dry up. <i>The Washington Post</i>. http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/local/2017/03/30/disabled-or-just-desperate/</p> <p>McCoy Terrence. 2017. Generations, Disabled. A family on the fringes pays for the “right diagnoses.” <i>The Washington Post</i>. http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/local/2017/06/02/generations-disabled/</p> <p>Ruffing, Kathy. 2013. The Facts about Disability Insurance. <i>Off the Charts Blog</i>. https://www.cbpp.org/blog/the-facts-about-disability-insurance</p> <p>Vallas, Rebecca. 2017. What the Washington Post Missed on Disability. <i>Talk Poverty Blog</i>. https://talkpoverty.org/2017/03/30/labor-secretary-promised-defer-trump-thats-problem-workers/</p> <p>Bruenig, Matt. 2017. Data Contradicts Washington Post’s Social Security Disability Welfare Cheating Story. <i>Naked Capitalism Blog</i>. http://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2017/06/matt-bruenig-data-contradicts-washington-posts-social-security-disability-welfare-cheating-story.html</p> <p>Forum Question (3 pts):</p> <p>Imagine that NPR and the Washington Post have gotten together and are determined to produce a new series on disability based on interviews, taking into account some of the criticisms of their earlier series. You are the reporter who has been tasked with doing this study; you’ve been given a budget that will allow you to do 30 long-form interviews; you can do these interviews in multiple cities, your funds are sufficient to cover travel for 5-7 cities. Given these constraints, create a sampling frame for your interviews in terms of cities you will visit (you could do all the interviews in 1 city if you wish), as well as the kinds of people you will interview (race, gender, age, occupation, or any other factor that you derive). Give detailed</p>
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			<p>reasons for the particular choices that you make, drawing on the readings (the meta readings and the examples). If you are looking for additional data, here are two sources:</p> <p>The American Community Survey (ACS): https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/</p> <p>Reports of the Social Security Disability Insurance Program: https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/di_asr/</p>
	<p>21 Sep</p>	<p>Case-study: Why is US politics so polarized?</p> <p>Comparing research methods</p>	<p>Gelman, Andrew. 2008. Rich state, poor state, red-state, blue-state: it's all about the rich. Statistical Modeling, Causal Inference, and Social Science. http://andrewgelman.com/2008/01/22/rich_state_poor_1/</p> <p>Abramowitz, Alan. 2014. How race and religion have polarized American voters. The Monkey Cage Blog. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/01/20/how-race-and-religion-have-polarized-american-voters/</p> <p>Gelman, Andrew. 2014. How better educated whites are driving political polarization. The Monkey Cage Blog. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/01/23/how-better-educated-whites-are-driving-political-polarization/</p> <p>Grossman, Matt and David Hopkins. 2016. How different are the Democratic and Republican parties? Too different to compare. The Monkey Cage Blog. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/08/how-different-are-the-democratic-and-republican-parties-too-different-to-compare/</p> <p>Hochschild, Arlie. 2016. I Spent 5 Years With Some of Trump's Biggest Fans. Here's What They Won't Tell You. Mother Jones. http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/08/trump-white-blue-collar-supporters/</p> <p>Cramer, Katherine. 2016. For years, I've been watching anti-elite fury build in Wisconsin. Then came Trump. Vox. https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2016/11/16/13645116/rural-resentment-elites-trump</p> <p>Pacewicz, Josh. 2016. Here's the real reason Rust Belt cities and towns voted for Trump. The Monkey Cage Blog. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/20/heres-the-real-reason-rust-belt-cities-and-towns-voted-for-trump/</p>

6	26 Sep	Causality, Narration and Experiments The Ethics of Research	<p>Gaddis, John Lewis. 2002. Chapter 6: Causation, Contingency, and Counterfactuals. In <i>The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past</i>. 91-109.</p> <p>Khan, Salman and Dana Fisher. 2014. Experimentation. In <i>The Practice of Research: How Social Scientists Answer Their Questions</i>. 24-26, 41-50.</p>
	28 Sep	Case-study: why did Hillary Clinton lose the 2016 presidential election? Types of Causes	<p>Silver, Nate. 2016. Education, Not Income, Predicted Who Would Vote For Trump. FiveThirtyEight. http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/education-not-income-predicted-who-would-vote-for-trump/</p> <p>Collingwood, Loren. 2016. The county-by-county data on Trump voters shows why he won. The Monkey Cage Blog. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/19/the-country-by-county-data-on-trump-voters-shows-why-he-won/</p> <p>Carnes, Nicholas and Noam Lupu. 2017. It's time to bust the myth: Most Trump voters were not working class. The Monkey Cage Blog. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/05/its-time-to-bust-the-myth-most-trump-voters-were-not-working-class/</p> <p>Silver Nate. 2017. The Comey Letter Probably Cost Clinton The Election. FiveThirtyEight. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-comey-letter-probably-cost-clinton-the-election/</p> <p>Johnson, Jenna. 2016. 'Something is happening that is amazing,' Trump said. He was right. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/something-is-happening-that-is-amazing-trump-said-he-was-right/2016/11/06/ab9c0b48-a0ef-11e6-8832-23a007c77bb4_story.html?src=longreads</p> <p>Stein, Jeff. 2017. A new tell-all about the Clinton campaign is a searing indictment of the candidate herself. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2017/4/24/15369452/clinton-shattered-campaign</p> <p>Benkler, Yochai, Robert Faris, Hal Roberts, and Ethan Zuckerman. 2017. Study: Breitbart-led right-wing media ecosystem altered broader media agenda. Columbia Journalism Review. https://www.cjr.org/analysis/breitbart-media-trump-harvard-study.php</p>

7	3 Oct	Case-study: is Facebook causing filter bubbles? Validity	<p>Bakshy, Eytan, Solomon Messing, and Lada A. Adamic. "Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook." <i>Science</i> 348.6239 (2015): 1130-1132.</p> <p>Read these three responses of the Facebook study:</p> <p>Sandvig, Christian. https://socialmediacollective.org/2015/05/07/the-facebook-its-not-our-fault-study/</p> <p>Tufekci, Zeynep. https://medium.com/message/how-facebook-s-algorithm-suppresses-content-diversity-modestly-how-the-newsfeed-rules-the-clicks-b5f8a4bb7bab#.k5zhbio4f</p> <p>Leeper, Thomas. https://thewpsa.wordpress.com/2015/05/09/what-can-we-learn-from-10-1-million-facebook-users-its-complicated/</p>
	5 Oct	Writing a survey	Babbie, Earl. 2013. Chapter 8: Surveys. In <i>The Practice of Social Research</i> . pp 228-269.
8	10 Oct	Coming up with an interview protocol	Weiss, Robert Stuart. 1994. Interviewing. In <i>Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies</i> . 61-120.
	12 Oct	Doing content analysis	Neuendorf, Kimberly A. 2002. Chap. 1: Defining Content Analysis. In <i>The Content Analysis Guidebook</i> . 1-26.
9	17 Oct	Conducting participant observation	Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 1995. Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research. In <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i> . 1-16.
	19 Oct	Survey results	No readings. Students will present the results of the survey they created and distributed.
10	24 Oct	Creating a prospectus	Lipson, Charles. 2005. Refining Your Topic, Writing a Proposal and Beginning Research. In <i>How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper</i> . 66-88.
	26 Oct	Library Session on how to look for secondary sources	We will meet in 405 Moffitt for that session.

1 1	31 Oct	Student Presentations Working on prospectus	Kulick, Don. "The Gender of Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes." <i>American Anthropologist</i> 99.3 (1997): 574-585. [ethnography]
	2 Nov	Student Presentations Working on prospectus	Binder, Amy. "Constructing Racial Rhetoric: Media Depictions of Harm in Heavy Metal and Rap Music." <i>American Sociological Review</i> (1993): 753-767. [content analysis] Bibliography due.
1 2	7 Nov	Student Presentations Working on prospectus	Lawrence, Eric, John Sides, and Henry Farrell. "Self-segregation or deliberation? Blog readership, participation, and polarization in American politics." <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 8.1 (2010): 141-157. [surveys]
	9 Nov	Student Presentations Working on prospectus	Gershon, Ilana. "Un-friend My Heart: Facebook, Promiscuity, and Heartbreak in a Neoliberal Age." <i>Anthropological Quarterly</i> 84.4 (2011): 865-894. [interviews] Annotated bibliography due.
1 3	14 Nov	Student Presentations Working on prospectus	Gelman, Andrew, et al. "Rich State, Poor State, Red State, Blue State: What's the Matter with Connecticut?." <i>Quarterly Journal of Political Science</i> 2 (2007): 345-367. [found data]
	16 Nov	Student Presentations Working on prospectus	Go, Julian. 2000. Chains of Empire, Projects of State: Political Education and US Colonial Rule in Puerto Rico and the Philippines. <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i> 42.02 (2000): 333-362. [comparative case study] Project map due.
1 4	21 Nov	Prospectus Presentations	Draft of prospectus due Nov 22.
	23 Nov	No Class – Thanksgiving Weekend	
1 5	28 Nov	Prospectus Presentations	
	30 Nov	Prospectus Presentations	
1	4	No class	

6	Dec		
	8 Dec	No class	Final Prospectus due.

Honor Code

The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code: “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” The expectation is that you will adhere to this code both inside the classroom and outside. Reviewing lecture and reading materials and studying for exams can be enjoyable and enriching things to do with fellow students. This is recommended. However, unless otherwise instructed, homework assignments are to be completed independently and materials submitted as homework should be the result of one’s own independent work.

The University code of ethics is very severe on academic misconduct, i. e. plagiarism and cheating. All written work submitted for a course, except for acknowledged quotations, must be expressed in the student's own words. It must also be constructed upon a plan of the student's own devising. Work copied without acknowledgement from a book, from another student's paper, from the internet, or from any other source is plagiarized. Plagiarism can range from wholesale copying of passages from another's work to using the views, opinions, and insights of another without acknowledgement, to paraphrasing another person's original phrases without acknowledgement. All sources must therefore be documented and all usage of other material must be clearly cited in your papers. Plagiarism and cheating will have dramatic consequences for you, from failing the assignment to failing the entire course. All cases will also be referred to the Student Judicial Affairs, which can impose a variety of sanctions that can extend all the way to University expulsion. Please feel free to **ask your instructor** about how to integrate secondary materials into your own writing. For a full copy of the University code, see: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/code-of-conduct>. For guidelines on plagiarism, see: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/cite-responsibly>.