Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to the research methods that are most often used in the field of urban studies. All of you have undoubtedly engaged in some form of research at some point during your academic and professional lives. However, you may not always have been conscious or deliberate in your choice and use of research methods. There are a variety of methods that are useful and appropriate for conducting urban research. None is intrinsically better or worse than any other. Rather, the methodology (or methodologies) you use depends on the question you are asking. Some questions are best answered through qualitative research such as interviews or historical investigation. Other questions are better addressed through quantitative research techniques like regression analysis. This course will focus principally on qualitative research techniques. It is designed to help you think more deliberately and scientifically about your methodological approaches as you design and carry out social research.

Course Requirements

Class Participation: Weekly class sessions for this course will include discussions of the assigned reading material. Therefore, it is essential that you come to class each week well prepared. This means, obviously, that you must do the reading beforehand. Informed discussion of the material is one of the most important components of this class. Your participation in the class will be facilitated in two principal ways:

- **Presentations of readings:** Students will share responsibilities for presenting the readings each week. Presentations should consist of a brief (5-10 minute) overview of the reading and consider in particular methodological issues or questions raised by the reading.

- **Reaction pieces:** For each reading (excluding the text), all students are required to prepare a paragraph containing comments or questions that can be used as a basis for contributing to class discussions. You should pay particular attention to methodological issues, themes, or questions which are raised by the readings. Reaction pieces may include a brief summary of the reading, but they should focus principally on reacting to the material rather than summarizing it. Reaction pieces should be between 1 and 2 pages (single-spaced) in length. They will be due at the end of each class session.
Research Proposal: The final project for this course is a paper based on original research using one or more of the methods covered in the course (see below). To facilitate the research and writing of this paper, you will be asked to prepare an 8-10 page (double-spaced) research proposal, due Monday, November 11. The proposal will identify a research question that interests you and describe in detail both how you intend to investigate this question and why it is worth exploring. I will provide additional guidelines for the research proposal early in the semester. All proposal topics must be approved in advance by me. Once you have selected a topic please schedule a meeting with me so that we can discuss it.

Research Paper: The research proposal will serve as your framework and guide for preparing a 12-15 page (double-spaced) research paper. I will provide additional guidelines for the paper later in the semester. Papers will be due Monday, December 16, 4:30 pm.

Each of the above components will account for the following proportions of your final grade:

- Research Proposal 30%
- Research Paper 40%
- Reaction Pieces 20%
- Class Participation 10%

Required Books:

Full text versions of the additional readings are posted on the course Canvas site.

Class Schedule

September 9: Course Overview; Introduction to Urban Inquiry
- Babbie, chapter 1

September 16: Paradigms
- Babbie, pp. 30-42; Kuhn (entire book)

September 23: Social Theory
- Babbie, pp. 43-59.
September 30: Research Design

- Babbie, chapter 4.

October 7: Literature Review

For this class, students should select 5-6 journal articles, read them, and write a short literature review of 3-4 pages (double-spaced) based on these readings which will be due at the beginning of class. This class session will be structured as follows:

- We’ll break out into groups of between 3-4 students each.
- We’ll then take roughly 20 minutes for everyone to read the literature reviews of their fellow group members.
- Then each group will spend 15 minutes or so discussing each literature review individually.
  - Each student will take a few minutes to present their literature review.
  - Then fellow group members will have a chance to comment.

**Note:** Please bring at least four copies of your literature review to class.

October 14: Measurement

- Babbie, chapter 5.

October 21: Field Research

- Babbie, chapter 10.
October 28: Qualitative Data Analysis

- Babbie, chapter 13.

November 4: Community-Based Participatory Research


November 11: Data Sources Workshop (Meet in Library, Instruction Room B)

Research proposals due. No reading assignment.

November 18: Unobtrusive Research

- Babbie, chapter 11.

November 25: Case Studies; Comparative Research


**December 2: Research Week**
Work on research paper. No class.

**December 9: Research Presentations**
Class presentations of research papers. No reading assignment.

**Final papers due Monday, December 16, 4:30 pm.**