Course Description
Soc 509 is the course number for graduate seminars in sociology covering various methods. This Secondary Data Analysis seminar primarily covers analyses of existing survey data.

The course is, in part, the second in the 2012 Chicago Area Study sequence; however, I have broadened it for other students working on quantitative papers, masters and dissertations. I have designed the course to mimic the process you would follow to write a journal article, but the course can also be used to produce a master's paper or revise a dissertation proposal. One of the critical tenets of academia, of course, is “publish or perish,” thus effectively planning and executing research projects are critical skills. In this course, we will model this process, defining a tangible product to complete by the end of the course and a plan of action for delivering that product.

In general, the course will be less structured than some 509s, and the content (especially in the final weeks of class) will depend to some extent on the needs and interests of class participants. I will be providing considerable “behind the scenes” insight into the process of preparing, writing and publishing quantitative research in academia. This is similar to the kind of “apprenticeship” that you would receive in a research assistantship. Those assistantships often come as part of larger teams, and allow you to learn not only from your own faculty mentor but also other faculty and students. This seminar also provides the opportunity to learn not only from me but also from one another, including through peer feedback on assignments. Such experiences are critical to your development as a scholar.

Generally, the class will follow a discussion style. When we meet on Thursdays I will organize our meetings similar to my research project meetings. Each student will have an opportunity to present to the group about his or her progress. We will share challenges and obstacles and discuss possible solutions. I will also use some of our meeting time to discuss issues individually with students. Additionally, each week, we will cover a particular theme, and we will have some readings/assignments to prepare in advance of class and to discuss during class.

Instructor: Rachel A. Gordon
ragordon@uic.edu Sociology Office: 4140A BSB, 3-3857
IGPA Office: Rice Bldg, 815 West Van Buren Suite 525, 3-0295

Office Hours: We will have numerous opportunities to interact during class, and immediately following class. Additional individual meetings can be set by appointment.

Email is usually the best and the quickest way to reach me!

Class Meeting Times
Lecture Thursdays 9:30-12:15 4102 BSB
Grading and Assignments

Paper

A final paper will be due by the end of finals week (5:00 on Friday December 14).

The paper will build on the components created in class assignments, and should be responsive to feedback received on those assignments.

The paper will include a sketch of an Introduction (with well articulated research questions/hypotheses and a basic justification for them), a complete Method and Results section, and a sketch of a Discussion (summarizing the results and their importance; reflecting on how the results answer the research questions/whether the results confirm the hypotheses).

You must follow clear style guidelines in writing your paper. For students writing a journal article, these will be the style guidelines of the target journal. For students writing a masters paper or writing a dissertation proposal, these will be the style guidelines of their discipline (ASA or APA style).

Papers will be graded on a 100 point scale. Late papers will receive a 10 point per day deduction, to a minimum of zero points.

Assignments

There will be nine short assignments throughout the class.

There will be three major components to every assignment (after the first):

1) Completing your own assignment.
2) Giving one of your classmate’s constructive feedback on their prior assignment.
3) Evaluating the helpfulness of prior feedback on your prior assignment (from me and one of your classmate’s).

I will grade the first two components, which will factor into your numerical grade. For the first component I will give a grade of: 0=assignment not fully completed, 1=assignment completed but with major room for improvement, 2=assignment completed fully or with minor room for improvement. For the second component I will give a grade of: 1=feedback given; 0=no feedback given. The third component will not factor directly into grades, but it will help you learn about the reviewing process and it will allow me to watch for cases in which students are not providing detailed feedback to others.

Assignments are due by 9:30 on Thursday mornings (the start of class) via box.com and/or via hard copy. Late assignments will receive a zero.

Students who are using the 2012 Chicago Area Study must document their IRB certification, complete a Confidentiality Form by the 2nd week of class, and turn in a Substudy Agreement by the 5th week of class. The Substudy Agreement must be modified, as needed, based on feedback from me and should be further revised and approved if the research questions/hypotheses and their operationalization (variables used) changes over the course of the study. Students may not use the 2012 Chicago Area Study for purposes beyond those agreed upon in the Substudy Agreements.

Participation

Attendance and participation are required. It is essential that you stay up to speed every single week of this course, in order to stay on track for completing your final product. Each week you will build on what you have already done. This means that you could quickly fall behind if you do not devote steady time to the class throughout the semester. Participation is also essential to your learning, so you need to come to every class and engage in the discussions. Because attendance and participation are so important, I will directly factor them into final grades. Each week, you will receive a ‘0’ if you did not attend class, a ‘1’ if you attended class but did not contribute to discussion, and a ‘2’ if you attended class and contributed to discussion.

The paper will count for 60%, the assignments 30%, and participation 10% of your final grade. Your final grade will be determined using the cutoffs of A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=below 60.
Schedule of Topics and Assignments. An attachment provides the schedule of topics and assignments. There will be one or two short readings most weeks. The schedule may be adjusted depending on how quickly we progress through various topics and depending on whether student individual projects lead to our revising the topic list. Some of you may also be more experienced in some areas than others, and in the area where you have background you may want to identify more advanced topics (e.g., additional Stata commands to accomplish the same task). It is also true that, as with any research project, you may need to move back and forth among the topics. For example, as you operationalize your variables and scrutinize your data you might revise your research question.

Readings. I will make readings available on “box.com” (you can either get a free account at box.com, or see if the graduate student accounts are available yet through the University of Illinois-box agreement (http://www.uic.edu/depts/acc/news/#post_1626).

Statistical Software. I will use Stata 12 for all of my teaching about organizing and executing statistical programming. Most students took Soc 402 with me or have otherwise been exposed to Stata. If you have not been exposed to Stata, you can borrow my book to read the chapter about the basics of Stata. You may want to bring a laptop to class to try out Stata commands on the days that I introduce them (although this is not required). Stata is also available for installation on your own PC for a monthly fee through the UIC ADDA (formerly called “Server Services”) http://www.uic.edu/depts/acc/lans/adda.shtml, for $90 for a year-long remote access license (which requires continuous internet connection) from the Webstore (webstore.uillinois.edu), or for a perpetual license from http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplan.html (the gradplan has a range of prices for different versions, so if you decide to purchase the software through this option, talk with me about versions first!). Stata is also available in the sociology computer lab and other labs on campus.

Prerequisites. Any student who has not already discussed with me their registration for the class should do so at the end of the first class. The course is designed for graduate students who have already completed basic statistics and methods courses (e.g., Soc 401/402 and Soc 500/501 in sociology) and are ready to complete an independent research project, such as an academic journal article, masters, or dissertation proposal. We will use the Stata statistical package and other software throughout the class. Basic familiarity with some statistical software (preferably including Stata) is needed.

Classroom Behavior. As a seminar, this class relies on discussion. All interactions should be respectful, even when providing constructive criticism or offering a different viewpoint. To avoid distractions, please turn off cell phones during class. If you happen to forget to do so, please turn the phone off when it first rings (do not answer calls in the classroom). Save text messaging and computer typing (other than essential note-taking on the current lecture/discussion) for after class! As graduate students know from their own teaching and TAing experiences, texting (or reading email, surfing the web) during class is disrespectful to the instructor and to your fellow students. If I notice that you are texting (or reading email, surfing the web), I will call on you or ask you to stop. I will consider repeated violations evidence of non-participation in class.

Academic Integrity. Students should understand and follow university policy regarding academic integrity including (but not limited to) cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. In Soc 509, this includes both statistical results and written products. See http://www.uic.edu/depts/dos/studentconduct.html

Dropping the Course. I will follow campus policy regarding course drops. Incompletes will only be given in exceptional circumstances. As per university policy, students requesting incomplete grades must be making satisfactory progress and propose a specific plan and timeline for completing the course work. See http://www.uic.edu/depts/oar/registration/drop_policy_grad.html

Disabilities. Students with disabilities should inform me of the need for accommodations and should register with the Disability Resource Center (Phone: 312/413-2183 or Video Phone : (312) 957-4822). See http://www.uic.edu/depts/oaa/disability_resources/index.html

Religious Holidays. In accordance with university policy, students who must miss class to observe a religious holiday should notify me by the tenth day of the term. See http://www.uic.edu/depts/oea/docs/religiosuholidays_07_12.doc
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Major topic</th>
<th>Subtopics</th>
<th>Activities/Assignments</th>
<th>New Stata commands</th>
<th>Assignment Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aug. 30</td>
<td>Some basics</td>
<td>Engaging in collaborative research; Figuring out substudies and co-authorships; Giving and getting input.</td>
<td>In class</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Wk2 -- -- --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept. 6</td>
<td>Your hook</td>
<td>Writing good research questions; Writing hypotheses; Figuring out the niche of your study; Figuring out your &quot;story line;&quot; Choosing a target journal.</td>
<td>Write RQs and justify why they matter</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Wk2 -- --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>Your sample (1)</td>
<td>Choosing the data to answer your research questions; Identifying its strengths and weakness (keep your notes!); Describing the sample (based on the documentation, with citations!); Some Stata basics</td>
<td>Write sample description</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Wk3 Wk2 --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sept. 20</td>
<td>Your sample (2)</td>
<td>Accessing data; Defining and describing an analytic sample; Basics of good organization (choosing a file naming convention; choosing a commenting convention; labeling your data).</td>
<td>Write program to access data; Revise sample description</td>
<td>use, merge, keep, drop, if, generate, replace, label data</td>
<td>Wk4 Wk3 Wk2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>Your variables (1)</td>
<td>Operationalizing research questions; Identifying the variables needed to define key constructs in your study; Choosing a variable naming convention. Labeling variables and values.</td>
<td>Write program to define key variables; Use tables, figures and text to describe the key variables</td>
<td>graph, histogram, describe, summarize, tab1, label variable, label define, label values</td>
<td>Wk5 Wk4 Wk3</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>Special topics: Missing data</td>
<td>Understanding various approaches to missing data; Choosing how to handle missing data in your study</td>
<td>Individualized (no graded assignments)</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>-- Wk5 Wk4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>Your variables (2)</td>
<td>Identifying the variables needed to define mediators and moderators for your study; Describing how those variables relate to your key variables</td>
<td>Write program to define mediators/moderators (m/m); Describe the m/m; Describe the relationships between the m/m and key variables.</td>
<td>ttest, sdtest, oneway, tabulate, pwcorr, graph</td>
<td>Wk7 -- Wk5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>Your variables (3)</td>
<td>Identifying the variables needed to define covariates for your study (considering issues of selection; considering sample size); Describing how those variables relate to your key variables</td>
<td>Write program to define covariates; Describe the covs; Describe the relationship between the covs and other variables.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Wk8 Wk7 --</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct. 25</td>
<td>Special topics</td>
<td>Complex sampling designs. Writing about descriptive results.</td>
<td>Individualized; Write full Method section (data and measures) and partial Results (relationships among variables)</td>
<td>aweights</td>
<td>Wk9 Wk8 Wk7</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nov. 1</td>
<td>Your analysis plan</td>
<td>Choosing an analytic technique that fits your data and research questions</td>
<td>Write analysis plan</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Wk10 Wk9 Wk8</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov. 8</td>
<td>Your results/ Special topics</td>
<td>Running basic OLS regression models and interpreting results. [Logit models] [Complex sampling designs]</td>
<td>Write program to estimate and interpret one basic research question; Write up results.</td>
<td>regress, predict, margins [logit] [svy]</td>
<td>Wk11 Wk10 Wk9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>Your results/ Special topics</td>
<td>Nonlinear relationships. Testing assumptions.</td>
<td>Continue regression analyses and write-up</td>
<td>n/a [individualized]</td>
<td>-- Wk11 Wk10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nov. 22</td>
<td>Your results/ Special topics</td>
<td>Running and interpreting mediation models.</td>
<td>Continue regression analyses and write-up</td>
<td>n/a [individualized]</td>
<td>-- -- Wk11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>Your results/ Special topics</td>
<td>Running and interpreting moderation models.</td>
<td></td>
<td>n/a [individualized]</td>
<td>-- -- --</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Final paper due by 5:00 pm Dec.</td>
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