THESIS WRITING SEMINAR
2012

Course Instructor:
Sukriti Issar

Course description

This course guides students through the process of writing up independently conducted empirical research for the Development Studies thesis. What is a good research puzzle? How do you find a good empirical case to make your point? What does the structure of the thesis look like? How do you make a theoretical argument and then link it to primary data that you have collected? What are the best approaches for presenting your research design? What does "good writing" mean in practice? Course lectures, deconstructing research papers, class debate, teamwork, workshopping of student writing, and reading examples of BA theses will help us give answers to these questions and translate them in the practice of thesis writing. By December 15, students are expected to have finished an introductory chapter containing the research design and theoretical framework of the thesis as well as one empirical chapter. The empirical chapter can either draw from fieldwork conducted prior to this semester, or from document analysis conducted during the fall semester.

Reading materials are organized along both theoretical and practical dimensions. The course meets once a week. Lectures, readings, and in-class discussions will focus around critically analyzing research papers, sample theses, and the students' own writing and experiences conducting research. Topics will include writing up theory in conjunction with your data, building analytical and theoretical arguments, developing theoretical ideas, organizing and structuring your writing, editing and revising your own writing, correct citation procedures, and research ethics.

Requirements

Participation: This will be a very participatory course. Therefore you are expected to complete assignments and readings on time as well as contribute to class discussion. Lectures and discussions are intended to supplement, not replace, the readings. Upcoming topics will be previewed briefly at the conclusion of each class to assist students in making the most of their reading; reading guides and questions will be posted on Canvas.

In-class updates: Every second week starting week 3, each student is expected to briefly update the class on the following aspects of the thesis:

    1. Research puzzle

    2. Progress made during the past two weeks on writing and locating literature and data

Writing Conferences: Biweekly individual writing conferences will be held during office hours. You must sign up online for a 30-minute time slot. Writing conferences provide a valuable

opportunity for you to receive individual attention and discuss drafts of your writing projects for the course and any reading/writing/language questions or problems you wish to discuss. Attendance at conferences is mandatory, and students are expected to be fully prepared and to participate actively. Missed conferences will not be made up unless under exceptional circumstances. Please email your instructor 24 hours ahead of time if you can't make it to a conference in order to reschedule.

Thesis Progress Reports: 1-2 page report on the your progress to be submitted to your instructor when you come to your writing conference. This report should outline:

1. What you have done in the last 2 weeks: What did you read, analyze, write about?

2. Any questions, clarifications, or concerns

3. Your writing goals for the next two weeks

Written Assignments: All written assignments should be formatted in double-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman, 1" margin. Careful proofreading is a must. Please submit your assignments to Canvas. Place your name and the assignment due date as the filename.doc. Submit all assignments as Word documents – this will make it easier for your instructor to give you in-text comments and revisions. Late assignments will be penalized. If you have a disability and need accommodations for assignments please feel free to come and speak with us about it

1. **September 19**: Assignment 1: Introduction and Outline of Thesis: 10/100 points (6-10 page introduction plus appendix of outline) Due at third class meeting

2. **October 17**: Assignment 2: First draft of (preferably) empirical chapter: 15/100 points

3. **November 19**: Assignment 3: First draft of (preferably) theoretical chapter, and revised draft of the chapter submitted in mid-October: 20/100 points

4. **December 15**: Assignment 4: Final Draft of two thesis chapters (Theory/Introduction Chapter plus one empirical chapter, 25-30 pages each): 40/100 points (20 points each)

5. Attendance, Class Participation, Writing Conferences and Thesis Progress Reports: 15/100 points

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work or ideas without acknowledging them as the source. This rule applies to all writing assignments in this course, and applies to both published sources (e.g. books, research papers) and your data (e.g. newspaper reports, interviews). Plagiarism is seen as a serious violation of academic ethics and will be punished according to the regulations in force at Brown University. Please do acknowledge your sources whenever your work has relied on the written or spoken words or thoughts of others.

Assignment 1 (Due Sept 19): Introduction and Thesis Outline. In this assignment you will write a 6-10 page introduction to your thesis. Make sure to cover: research question, case selection and justification, contribution to the literature, theoretical outline, basic argument if you have it thought out, methods and design, substantive contribution. This is a first draft of your thesis introduction, so referencing literature is not essential. The goal is that you start writing and

thinking seriously about your project. You must also submit a brief outline of your thesis, where you provide tentative titles and short descriptions (1-2 sentences) for each of the chapters. Think about what purpose each chapter will serve.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Sep 5): Introduction to the course

Presentation and general administration of the course

1. Finding/keeping an advisor.
2. Basic elements of a Development Studies thesis
3. Complete questionnaire: where are you in your research process?
4. Preparation for Assignment 1: Introduction and Outline of your Thesis

Week 2 (Sep 12): Getting a first grasp: Writing social science

Goals: explore writing strategies; dissect a research article

1. Joan Bolker, *Writing your Dissertation in 15 Minutes a Day* (read Chapter 3, "Getting Started Writing")
2. Howard Becker, Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists* (read Chapter 3, "One Right Way")
3. David Snow et al. 2007. "Framing the French Riots: A Comparative Study of Frame Variation," *Social Forces,* 86(2): 385-425.
4. Nuts and Bolts: Chicago Style, citing data and sources in-text, footnotes, and bibliography, avoiding plagiarism, research ethics (http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html)

Week 3 (Sep 19): Writing your introduction: Literature Review and Thesis Statements
*DUE: Introduction and Outline of your Thesis; in-class updates

Goals: review strategies for writing literature reviews and constructing thesis statements/arguments; identify main elements (puzzle, argument, case selection, etc) in student theses and Ferguson book introduction.

1. Chapter 1 (Introduction) of theses by Liz Adler and Sophie Fuchs.
2. James Ferguson (1990), *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho,* (Preface and Introduction)
3. Becker, Chapter 8, "Terrorized by the Literature"
4. Helpful links for writing thesis statements:
   http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/thesisstmt.html
   http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/thesis-statements/

Week 4 (Sep 26): Linking theory and evidence Part I: Hypotheses and/vs. Theory

Goals: review basic research design elements (questions, hypotheses, theory), think about how to link theory and evidence in theory-driven/hypothesis-driven research.

1. John W. Cresswell (2009), *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed-Methods Approaches,* 3rd ed. (Sage Publications). (Read: Chapter 7, "Research Questions and Hypotheses")
2. Booth et al. 2008 (read Chapters 7 and 8; Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Williams, Joseph M., (2008) *The Craft of Research*, University of Chicago Press)
3. James Gibbon. 2008. God is great, God is good: Teaching god concepts in Turkish Islamic sermons. *Poetics* 36: 389–403.

Week 5 (Oct 3): Analyzing Data: Interviews

*In-class updates

Goals: understand how coding of qualitative data is done, and read Becker's famous article using interviews

1. An Introduction to Codes and Coding. From *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, by Johnny Saldana, 2009. Sage Publications.
2. Coding Handout
3. Becker, Howard. 1953. Becoming a Marijuana User. *American Journal of Sociology*, 59:3: 235-252.

Week 6 (Oct 10): Analyzing Data: Case Study

Goal: learn the characteristics of case studies, issues of sampling and generalization

1. Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12: 2: 219-245.
2. Rueschemeyer, Dietrich. Can one or a few cases yield theoretical gains? In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press
3. Wynne, Brian. 1992. Misunderstood misunderstanding: social identities and public uptake of science. Public Understanding of Science, 1: 281-304.

Week 7 (Oct 17): Linking theory and evidence in Qualitative Writing

*DUE: First draft of a chapter; in-class updates

1. Booth et al. 2008 (read Chapters 9 through 11; Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Williams, Joseph M., (2008) *The Craft of Research*, University of Chicago Press)
2. Sandelowski, Margarete. Writing A Good Read: Strategies for Re-Presenting Qualitative Data. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 1998, 21, 375–382.

Week 8 (Oct 24): Claims, evidence and warrants

1. Atul Kohli. 2007. "State, Business, and Economic Growth in India," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 42:87–114.
2. Lipson, How to write a BA Thesis, chapters 9 and 10.

Week 9 (Oct 31): Reading Theses as Exemplars

Each student will read a thesis of their choice [see the website for past student theses]. Come prepared to present examples from the thesis and explain how you can apply these examples to your work.

Week 10 (Nov 7): Linking theory and evidence: continued, and Revising/Editing

* in-class updates

1. Issar: draft paper
2. Becker, Chapter 4, "Editing by Ear"
3. George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"

Week 11 (Nov 14): Theorizing and writing the literature review

Goals: learn strategies for revising your work and the different types of revisions you'll have to make

1. Alasuutari, Pertti. 1996. Theorizing in Qualitative Research: A Cultural Studies perspective. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(4): 371-384.
2. Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chapters 1 and 2, "The Discovery of Grounded Theory" and "Generating Theory")

Week 12: No Class

*DUE on November 19: First draft of the second chapter, revised draft of previously submitted chapter

Week 13 (Nov 28): Writing the Conclusion

1. Duneier, Mitchell. 2011. How not to lie with Ethnography. *Sociological Methodology,* 41: 1-11.
2. Donmoyer, Robert. 2012. Two (Very) Different Worlds : The Cultures of Policymaking and Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 2012 18: 798-807.
3. Ferguson *Anti-Politics Machine* (Conclusion)

Week 14 (Dec 5): Student Presentations

Week 15 (Dec 12): Student Presentations

*DUE: Final drafts of both chapters, December 15