Carleton University  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  

Sociology 4900A  
Honours Thesis Seminar  
Fall 2018 – Winter 2019

Instructor: Augustine Park  
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Phone: 613 520 2600 ext. 2593  
Email: Augustine.Park@carleton.ca  

Office hours: Thursdays (Fall & Winter – seminar days only)  
10:20am – 11:20am  
or by appointment

Course time: Thursdays, 11:35am – 2:25pm  
6 September 2018 to 6 December 2018 and  
10 January 2019 to 4 April 2019

Course location: TBA

Pre-Requisite(s): fourth-year standing in the Sociology BA Honours with a CGPA of 9.0 or higher in the Major or by permission from the instructor

Precluded Courses: None.

Course Description

This course is mandatory for students writing an Honours Thesis in Sociology. The seminar provides support for students in the process of developing a research project, carrying out data generation and analysis, and writing the thesis. The seminar consolidates, refines and advances both disciplinary skills (i.e., methods, theory, engagement with substantive fields etc.) and transferable skills (i.e., communication, analytic etc.) acquired throughout the Sociology degree programme and provides a space for collaborative intellectual engagement with autonomous research projects. Thus, the seminar will be your community of practice as knowledge-producers.

Course Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students should be able to:

- Design and execute an independent, sociological research project;
- Apply sociological methods to generate knowledge about a social phenomenon;
- Apply sociological theory to interpret a social phenomenon;
- Evaluate the reliability of non-academic sources about a social phenomenon;
- Explain key debates in selected academic literature(s), including identifying key findings and contentions, and assessing social scientific research;
- Work autonomously (through effective time and project management) and collaborate productively in teams; and,
- Communicate clearly and effectively in written and oral forms.
Course Readings

**Required readings:** There are no assigned readings for this course. Instead, you are responsible for reading peer-reviewed scholarship in your area of research. As explained below, your first assignment for the course requires that you generate a preliminary bibliography. This listing of scholarly sources will form the basis of your “required readings” for this course, which should be constantly growing and evolving. In general, a principle of practice to keep in mind is to read at least 2 academic articles/chapters per week throughout the Fall and Winter Terms, which is roughly equivalent to the weekly reading load in a regular course. At our individual consultations, I may ask you to update me on your independent reading to help keep you on track.

**Reference material:**

- All assignments must be submitted using a recognised referencing style such as APA, ASA or Chicago style. Be internally consistent.
- The following books may be useful resources and are available at MacOdrum Library:

Supervision

Students are welcome to make individual choices relating to thesis supervision. In 2018-2019, I will act as the automatic supervisor for all students in this seminar; however, students may choose to seek out a different supervisor.

**For students who seek out a different supervisor**, you should do so as early as possible and by no later than Week 3 of Fall Term (by the time you submit your Research Question assignment). If you do not have a supervisor by this time, I advise against continuing to look. The search might be a distraction from the work at hand, and faculty are increasingly unlikely to accept a new student later in the Fall Term as they accumulate more commitments. The character of the supervisory relationship is up to you and your supervisor, but your supervisor should act as the primary source of guidance relating to the conception, design and conduct of your research, a main source for thinking about theory and a principal source of counsel on writing. For example, you could ask your supervisor to help you refine your research question and come up with a design, refer you to scholarly sources (including empirical, theoretical and methodology literatures), and to offer advice while conducting research, engaging in data interpretation and writing up. You might also ask your supervisor to review your applications to grad school or for scholarships, or to suggest strategies for time management. You should submit all course assignments to your supervisor for comment (in addition to submitting to me for a mark), and should arrange to meet your supervisor at least twice per term. Your supervisor should provide you feedback on your work. While I will also provide feedback, my feedback will be supplementary to what your supervisor suggests. An ideal supervisor would be someone who you get along with, who shares your desires/attitudes relating to supervision (e.g., how hands-on/hands-off, how frequently you meet, how much written feedback they provide and how quickly etc.). Preferably, your supervisor would have expertise relating to your project whether it is methodological, theoretical or empirical, but for an undergraduate thesis, this is not, strictly speaking, necessary. If you choose to have a different supervisor, your supervisor and I will jointly generate the grade on your final thesis. It is your responsibility to ensure that the supervisor is available for consultation on the final grade.
Group Writing

On most dates when we are not holding a formal seminar, there will be an optional Group Writing session. Group Writing will take place in our seminar classroom during regularly scheduled seminar time. I will normally attend, unless I am holding individual consultations. Participating in Group Writing ensures that you devote, minimally, 3 hours per week to your thesis, and because the seminar is already part of your schedule, using that time for Group Writing ensures you protect time for your thesis. Based on past experience, students who did not participate in Group Writing tended to allow other commitments to take over time that should have been devoted to their theses, whereas students who participated in Group Writing were able to protect their thesis time. You are, therefore, strongly urged to participate in Group Writing sessions.

Items to Note

○ Please be sure to check cuLearn and your Carleton email account regularly (at least twice per week) so we can communicate with each other.
○ This syllabus is subject to modification throughout the year at my discretion. Any changes to the syllabus will be responsive to the seminar, the needs of students and the dynamics of thesis projects as they evolve. This syllabus, therefore, is a starting point and we, as a group, can make changes that meet our developing needs.
○ Electronic devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, phones) are permitted in seminar for course-related activities. If you are using your device for activities unrelated to the course, you will be asked to stow your device out of sight.
○ You are encouraged to write by hand in the seminar. I recommend having a notebook/notepad dedicated to your thesis process that you bring to each seminar. I also recommend that you use this notebook for taking memos or journaling your research process.

Course Requirements and Methods of Evaluation

Evaluation System

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar Regulations, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>57-59</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>53-56</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>50-52</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Course Grading Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item for Evaluation</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question and Preliminary Bibliography</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20 September (week 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Design</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11 October (week 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Pitch</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11 or 18 October (weeks 6-7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis Proposal</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15 November (week 10)</td>
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</tbody>
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Assignment Descriptions

Research Question and Preliminary Bibliography

What? This assignment is comprised of two components:

- Your proposed research question: 500 words mapping out a puzzle, stating your proposed research question, and explaining the significance of your inquiry.

- A preliminary bibliography: No fewer than 25 peer-reviewed, scholarly articles or books (or book chapters) relating to your research question. The sources may be empirical, theoretical or methodological but must bear a direct relationship to at least one dimension of your project as you currently conceive it.

Purpose: To define, receive feedback on, and to receive approval on your research question early in the Fall Term. To ensure an early start to engaging with literature, to develop a familiarity with conversations in your field, to start sorting literatures for themes and relevance and to think about the relationship of your project to existing knowledge.

Note:
- It is very tough to craft a good research question. So, you may be asked to re-work your research question repeatedly. While that might feel frustrating, believe me: It's worth it!
- The preliminary bibliography will form the basis of your “required readings” for the remainder of the course (although you are encouraged to swap sources in and out as your project develops). Many of these sources will become part of the review of literature in your thesis; some of these sources you will read but will not “use”, and you will most certainly add further sources as your thesis research progresses.

Project Design

What? An assignment detailing your proposed project design. What is involved in project design varies according to the type of project each student is undertaking. While the estimated page lengths vary per type of project, the number of expected pages does not correlate to the amount of work required.

- For students engaged in literature-based projects, the assignment requires: identification of the empirical and theoretical literatures to be deployed in the study; thematically or categorically clustering literatures; an explanation of why you have selected each literature; a brief, overview/general description of “what’s going on” in each literature that pertains to the thesis (key themes and debates); and, an explanation of how each literature will be used to address dimensions of the project. You will not, at this stage, have mastered the literatures or know definitively how you will engage your literatures. In fact, at this stage, you will probably not have read that much of your literature. But you should have read, digested and processed enough to be able to sketch out what
you believe will be the major “moves” you will make. You should make use of sources as illustrations, which should include both direct discussion of some sources and listings of others that you think you will use in each cluster. This will take an estimated 3-6 pages, but there is no minimum or maximum page limit.

- For students engaged in textual/primary document-based projects, the assignment requires: identification of the textual sources you will use as data as specifically as possible (e.g., National Post letters to the editor on the pipeline debate; the minutes of the Senate committee on Aboriginal Peoples; Correctional Services of Canada policy documents on solitary confinement; episodes from the first season of Stranger Things; the WWII exhibit in the Canadian War Museum; tweets from Donald Trump; lyrics from all songs on the Black Panther soundtrack etc., etc.); an explanation of why you have chosen these particular texts; the number of sources and why; inclusion/exclusion criteria/parameters (including, for example, timeframe, place, type of text, audience, author, theme etc.); a strategy for accessing the sources and discussion of feasibility for access; a strategy for “sampling” or selecting texts (e.g., random, level of public impact [measured how?], uniqueness, policy significance etc.); and, your proposed approach to analysis. Listing the specific texts you will use will get you ahead in your larger process, but is not required for this assignment. Nonetheless, you should have done a preliminary search of your texts for this assignment so that you know that the material you intend to analyse is, indeed, available. This will take an estimated 1-5 pages, but there is no minimum or maximum page limit.

- For students engaged in human participant research, the assignment requires a complete first draft of the Carleton University Research Ethics Board application (protocol and appendices). You will make revisions to this draft application based on my feedback, then resubmit it to me (and, if relevant, your supervisor) for approval. You may not submit your ethics application to the Research Ethics Board (CUREB) without my prior approval. Once I have approved your application, you will submit it to the REB no later than the deadline of your Thesis Proposal. The length of your assignment is determined by the application form and number of appendices you will need to generate.

**Purpose:** To define and to receive early feedback on your project design. Defining your design early will enable an early start to carrying out your research and ensure a careful assessment of feasibility. The feedback received on the project design should be implemented in the development of the Thesis Proposal. This assignment is also designed to ensure students engaging in human participant research clear ethics early in the academic year.

**Note:** You may not know exactly what your design will be at this stage and, in any case, research design is evolving. Don’t stress! But, you should be arriving at greater clarity and should be at the stage where you’ve done the necessary groundwork to propose a viable design. You should also assess feasibility at this point. For example, if you hoped to do human participant research but have not figured out a way to access your population, you will need to re-orient. Similarly, if you wanted to do textual analysis but cannot access your texts, you will need to re-orient.

### Design Pitch

**What?** A 30-minute oral presentation and discussion comprised of: (1) your proposed research question, (2) your proposed research design, (3) your concerns, challenges and obstacles relating to design, along with issues in relation to which you would like to solicit feedback from your colleagues, and (4) responding to questions or comments from your colleagues. Normally, your presentation should take 10-15 minutes leaving the remaining time for discussion. You should base your presentation on the Project Design assignment. There is no separate submission for the Design Pitch.
Purpose: To share your project with your colleagues, to identify and start to grapple with challenges, and to receive constructive feedback from fellow researchers; then, to meditate on collegial feedback and discussion to make improvements to your design for your Thesis Proposal.

Note: While there are no marks associated with it, all students will need to do the Design Pitch in order to fulfil the requirements of the Thesis Proposal.

Thesis Proposal

What? A 2,000-2,500 word proposal for your thesis project, specifically: a detailed explanation of your research question, a discussion of the significance of your research, a working argument, a preliminary theorisation, the location of your project in literature, your methods and data sources, and ethical considerations. Your proposal should, demonstrably, integrate feedback from your colleagues on your Design Pitch and the evolution of your own thinking based on collegial discussion of your project.

Purpose: To develop a detailed roadmap of your project to guide your data generation and analysis, and to carve out a starting point for your theorisation and the argument you will build in your thesis. Your proposal will act as a blueprint for conducting your research and writing, and will include a timeline to help you organise your timely completion.

Note:
○ You are welcome to use material from your research question and design assignments in developing your proposal; however, ensure that your proposal reflects an evolution in your project from the early stages of project development.
○ Students carrying out human participant research must have received my approval to submit their ethics application to the CUREB by no later than the deadline for the thesis proposal (earlier is better since the CUREB is likely to ask you for further revisions!). Thus, the thesis proposal deadline should be considered the deadline for your ethics application. If your ethics application is not submitted by this date, the proposal assignment will be considered late and be subject to the late penalty. Attach the final, submitted ethics application to your Thesis Proposal submission.

Early Draft and Detailed Outline

What? This assignment is comprised of two components:

○ An early draft of components of your thesis of no less than 3,000 words (approximately 12 pages) (but preferably 3,750+ words) composed of pieces of any of the following: explanation of research question, theory section, methods section or review of literature, plus

○ A detailed outline of your argumentation based on your data analysis, including how you will mobilise data to evidence your analysis and argument. The outline can be point-form, a map or flowchart or whatever format works best for your process, but should be as detailed and specific as possible.

Purpose: To ensure solid progress towards the completion of your thesis in a timely manner, and to ensure early feedback on your writing (including structural/organisational issues, use of theory, mobilisation of literature, development of your argument and analysis, and treatment of data).

Note: Students carrying out human participant research may provide coding (data analysis process) in lieu of the outline as human participant research may put some students on a different timeline. If this applies to you, please inform your discussant in advance and ensure that you do not share raw, identifiable data.


Discussant Comments

What? A thoughtful peer review of the Early Draft and Detailed Outline of one member of your base group based on guiding questions I will provide. This assignment is delivered orally working in your base group.

Purpose: To provide collegial feedback on the work of another researcher; to reflect on one’s own work through encountering the work of a colleague; to learn to engage productively with constructive criticism as a necessary step in the revision process.

Note: While you are required to deliver your discussant comments in class, you will be marked only on the written submission.

Advanced Draft and Plan for Completion

What? This assignment is comprised of two components:

- An advanced draft of components of your thesis of no less than 6,250 words (approximately 25 pages) (but preferably 7,500+ words) composed of pieces of the following: introduction, theory section, methods section, review of literature, analytic sections, plus

- A plan listing all of the remaining work to be done for your thesis and a feasible timeline for completing the work.

Purpose: To ensure solid progress towards the completion of your thesis in a timely manner, and to ensure feedback on your thesis at a more developed stage. To think through a realistic pathway to timely completion.

Notes: The approximately 25 pages you submit for this assignment can include a revised version of the approximately 12 pages you submitted with your early draft assignment. Submitting 25 pages for this assignment would mean that you’ve written roughly half of the entire thesis. Since the final thesis is due 3½ weeks after this assignment is due, I encourage you to try to submit more than the minimum 25 pages.

Poster Presentation

What? A visual and textual presentation of your study outlining your research objectives, research design, and key findings or conclusions. You will use your poster (which will be displayed) as a “prop” to talk through your research with “audience” members who will circulate through the space. The poster presentation will take place on the last day of seminar for the year, but will be open to all members of the Sociology community at Carleton to visit and talk with you about your research.

Purpose: To share your findings with your colleagues and with other scholars; to encourage timely completion of your thesis; and, to practice communicating with a new audience about your research.

Note: This is a pass/fail assignment. To pass (and thus receive the 5%), all of the following must be fulfilled: (1) you must produce a poster, (2) you must attend the presentation date to talk about your study with the audience, and (3) your poster must demonstrate completion of your study.

Thesis
What? The final scholarly report of your study that: explains your puzzle and your research question; lays out the significance of your study; advances an argument and provides an analytic (rather than merely descriptive) exploration of a social phenomenon; dialogues with scholarly literatures through a rigorous review of literature; creatively applies a theoretical framework; provides a rigorous engagement with methods; and, clearly presents findings. Your thesis should be between 11,250-13,750 words (to an upward maximum of 15,000 words), i.e., approximately 45-55 pages (to an upward maximum of 60 pages).

Assignment Policies

Instructions, evaluation criteria and submission format for all assignments will be explained in seminar and posted to cuLearn and/or provided in hardcopy at least 2 weeks prior to the deadline.

Policy on Written Assignments

All written assignments (i.e., Research Question and Preliminary Bibliography, Project Design, Thesis Proposal, Early Draft and Detailed Outline, Advanced Draft and Plan for Completion, Discussant Comments and Thesis) should comply with the following assignment policies:

Submission: Written assignments are to be submitted by no later than 11:00am on the deadline date. All written assignments should be submitted to me via cuLearn. (If you choose to have a supervisor, you should submit all assignment to your supervisor in the format they request.) Your Discussant Comments should be submitted to me via cuLearn, and to the base group member assigned to providing you feedback via email by 11:00am on the deadline date. For all assignments, submitting earlier is preferable.

Return: Marks on all written assignments leading up to your Thesis will be returned as soon as possible, but no later than 3 weeks from the date of submission via cuLearn. If you have a supervisor, that person will recommend the mark for your Thesis and I might ask them for their input on marks for the other major assignments. If you do not have a supervisor, I will solely generate the mark for the Thesis. The final Thesis mark will be returned within a reasonable timeframe taking into consideration University regulations.

Late: Completing work late is a significant disservice to yourself and to your seminar colleagues. You cannot participate fully in seminar activities without completing work on time. Therefore, the late penalty in this seminar is intentionally very steep. The late penalty for written assignments is -10% for the first day, then -5% for each subsequent day, including each weekend day, without appropriate documentation of a medical or personal emergency. For the purposes of assigning late penalties, 1 day is measured from 11:01am on a given day till 11:00am the following day. Late assignments should be submitted via cuLearn. If you are submitting something late, come talk to me – I want you to succeed in this seminar!

Extensions: Deadline extensions on written assignments are granted only in cases of documented medical or personal emergency. You should notify me as soon as possible when requesting an extension. Do so prior to the deadline whenever possible.

Submission Format: Written assignments must be submitted in Microsoft Word or a Word compatible format. There are no requirements relating to spacing, margins, or font, but your documents must be easily legible. You must include the word count with your submission.

Appeals: Grade appeals on any written assignment are welcome but will only be considered if accompanied by a reasoned argument in writing that directly engages with the feedback provided. You
must submit your written grade appeal no later than 1 week after your mark is returned. Any request for re-evaluation may result in an increased mark, the status quo, or a lowered mark.

Policy on Oral Assignments/ Assignments with Oral Components

Oral assignments/assignments with oral components (i.e., Design Pitch, Discussant Comments and Poster Presentation) should comply with the following assignment policies:

Submission/ Late/ Extensions/ Submission Format: The oral component must be delivered in class on the scheduled date. Oral components cannot be delivered late. There are no extensions on the oral component. In the case of a documented medical or personal emergency, you should speak with me to develop an appropriate, case-by-case approach to addressing your absence. However, take note that being absent for the oral component of an assignment is a disservice to yourself, to your colleagues and to the seminar.

Return: See the description for each assignment.

Appeals: N/A