SOC 98L Fall 2012

Racism and Anti-Racism in Comparative Perspective

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Tuesdays 1-3; William James Hall, room 501
Office hours: Mondays 3-6 or by appointment – contact Travis Clough at tclough@wjh.harvard.edu. My schedule tends to be jam-packed. You will need an appointment. Please do plan in advance.

Objectives:

The empirical focus of this seminar will be the frameworks through which members of various racial groups understand their experiences with racism and discrimination, and how they respond to such experiences. We will also consider the broader context in which groups experience racial equality and inequality. This requires delving into the sociological literatures on stigma, collective identity, group formation, symbolic boundaries, class cultures, and a range of other topics.

The practical focus of the seminar is to teach you how to conduct qualitative research. This involves learning how to formulate a problem and create a research design, how to collect and analyze data, and how to present results.

The first half of the semester will be spent reading theoretical and substantive literatures that will guide our empirical inquiry. We will also discuss basic methodological readings on how to define a sociological question. At the same time, you will be asked to choose a researchable topic. This will be less easy than you think!!

During the second half of the semester, you will continue to read a range of studies that will feed your general understanding of the topics you will have chosen. We will also become more familiar with qualitative methods. Topics will include how to locate oneself in a literature, grounded research, the logic of comparative research, the selection of respondents, taking field notes, interviewing, coding, and analyzing data. The last week will be dedicated to the presentation of your results.

Meetings will be organized largely as a research workshop where we discuss the research problems each member encounters as your respective project moves along. The readings and deadlines provided below may have to be adjusted according to the pace at which you are developing your projects and the size of the class. Thus this syllabus is not an exact roadmap but a blueprint of where we are heading. We will have to adapt to the often unpredictable logic of unfolding social inquiry!
Requirements and Grading:

Students will be asked to make two or three class presentations (depending on class size) and to post two discussions of the literature being discussed in class. You will also write two short statements on your research question in preparation for the term paper (2 and 4 pages long respectively) and prepare an interview schedule. Participation, presentations, and memos will count for half of the final grade (respectively for 15%; 20%; and 15%). The final paper will count for the other half. Memos should be posted on the course website at least 24 hours before class meetings.

The main criteria of evaluation for the final paper are demonstrating a good understanding of the logic of research, an ability to build on the literature and make connections, organization, quality of the writing, thoroughness of empirical research, and creativity.

In memos and presentations, you are asked to analyze, i.e., provide key concepts and definitions, describe the author’s argument, compare arguments across authors, draw inferences, etc. You should provide both textual evidence for your analysis and offer examples that can demonstrate the ideas being discussed.

By asking students to engage the required readings analytically, and by asking you to articulate complex thoughts in writing, I believe you can establish a more active relation with the materials you study. As a result, you come to the class having already written about the readings, and having a lot of insightful things to say. You should also come in having formulated thoughtful questions for your comrades to ponder!

At various times, I intend to make use of the method of peer evaluation, which allows students to offer feedback to one another. You will be reading one another interview schedules or memos and will be asked to offer written comments on another student’s work. I will be monitoring the peer evaluation closely, and I hope this will create an experience of collective and transparent learning, and heightened dialogue and engagement with the material.

Collaboration:

All work should be entirely your own and must use appropriate citation practices to acknowledge the use of books, articles, websites, lectures, discussions, etc., that you have consulted to complete your assignments.

Due Dates:

- Two-page description of your research question is due September 25.
- First draft of your interview schedule is due October 16.
• Four-page description of your research question, expected results, and data collection strategy is due October 23 (exemplars will be provided).

• Final interview schedule is due on October 30 (revised based on pilot interviews and comments to final proposal).

• Presentation of preliminary findings to the class is on December 4 (an extra session may be added depending on class size).

• Final paper is due on December 11.

To insure fairness toward your more organized/punctual comrades, you will be penalized for turning in your assignment late.

Books:

The following books are available at the Harvard Coop and at the Lamont reserve:


Optional:


Other readings:

Available on the course website or at the Lamont reserve.

Course outline:

Week 1 (Sept 4): An overview of the course and its organization aimed at judicious shoppers.

Those interested in taking the class should email me a one-page statement about their motivation and background in the topic by 6pm on September 8th. Email: Mlamont@wjh.harvard.edu. I will email to all the list of students who are accepted in the class in the evening of the 8th.

Weeks 2-6 (September 11- October 9) will be spent surveying collectively, and reporting on, relevant theoretical and substantive research. Together with basic methodological texts, these
Readings will inform our research throughout the semester and will remain points of reference. They will also help you formulate the questions to be explored empirically in your term paper.

Week 2 (Sept 11): Getting to work: Current sociological approaches to the study of identity and meaning-making

We will discuss the basic structure of a research design, as illustrated by my own research and that of some of my graduate students who work on racism and anti-racism. We will assign presentations and memos.


-Kristin Luker, Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences. Chapters 1 and 2.

The two papers by Lamont et al will be emailed to you as you will not have access to the course’s website in time to read them.

Week 3 (Sept 18): Race and Ethnicity

- Cornell, Stephen and Douglas Hartman, Ethnicity and Race. Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 8. Browse through the other chapters.

Guest speaker: Linda Haapajarvi, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, “Mixity and Integration in Paris and Helsinki.” Linda will present her ongoing work with immigrants to Finland and France. We will discuss Cornell and Hartman in light of her work.

Week 4 (Sept 25): Identity


Discussion of how to get access to a research site; discussion of Human subjects Institutional Review Board approval. Browse through:


**A two-page description of your research questions is due September 25.**

Optional:


**Weeks 5 and 6 (Oct 2 and 9): Narrowing your Research Questions and Defining your Research Strategy.**


Other optional references on research designs:


**Weeks 7-12: (October 16- November 27) will be spent on the production of your papers. We will focus on the various steps of research as you encounter them in your project. At that time, you will be intensely engaged in data collection, implementing your research design.**

We will also discuss substantive books that may feed your thinking on your topic. The titles below will be adjusted once I know what topics you want to explore. The attached list may provide you inspiration for relevant literatures.

**Week 7 (Oct 16): Interviewing**


I will conduct mock interviews in class with some of you on your topic!!!
First draft of your interview schedule is due October 16

**Week 8 (Oct 23): Racial Conceptualization and Racial Schemas**


**Optional:**


Your four-page project description is due on October 23.

**Week 9 (Oct 30): How does Class Influence Inter-racial Interactions?**


Final interview schedule is due on October 30

**Week 10 (Nov 6): Stigmas and Responses to Stigma: Disciplinary Perspectives**


*Guest speaker:* Jacqueline Bhabha, Harvard School of Public Health: “A Research Program in the Study of Stigmatization” *(to be confirmed)*

Optional:


**Week 11 (Nov 13): Data Analysis**


**Week 12 (Nov 20): Transforming the American Racial Order**


Optional:


**Week 13 (Nov 27): No Meeting**

We will not be meeting to free you to focus on completing the data collection and analysis phase of your project and to prepare your class presentation.

**Week 14 (Dec 4): Student Presentations**

We will meet twice during the week of December 4th for student presentations and to provide feedback for term papers.

**Papers are due on December 11.**

Useful references on how to present results include:


Other literatures you may find helpful in defining and researching with your research project (most are available at the Lamont reserve):


