

Fall 2005
Wednesday 4:15, Thesis Room 4203
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Advanced Policy Seminar: Social Science Theory and Methods

This course has two simultaneous strands of student activity. First is reading and discussing the assignments that should lay a theoretical and methodological base for informed social science research in education, and in education policy studies. These readings should help you think about how you will frame and design your dissertation research.

The second strand of activity is your own reading and construction of individual bibliographies, research questions, and essays in your area of possible dissertation interest. In order to develop a dissertation research project, you will need to read in several different areas, or literatures. To research the various topics that make up *Radical Possibilities*, for example, I had to know many different literatures well: economics of cities and metropolitan areas, tax law, approaches to poverty rates and measures, social movement theory, the new historiography on the civil rights movement, and the literature on community organizing and parent organizing. Because your project is a dissertation, it probably won't be so all-encompassing. But there will still be several categories (sub-topics to your main focus) you will need to develop, and these will lead you to need to know several different bodies of work. It is primarily out of these bibliographies that your research questions will emerge. (And your research questions will lead to the study design you craft.)

Most students end up identifying 3 or 4 categories, one of which is methodology. The methodology category – as one example of a category - will include the theory behind what you will do to collect, analyze, interpret, and theorize from your data. It will also include mention of the actual strategies. For this semester, and for the second doc exam, methodology is the LEAST developed category. It will be fleshed out in detail next semester during your final course, as you write your proposal. (That is why the more practical readings are located in the second half of this course.)

At various times during this semester, you will present to us your ideas on, and descriptions of, what you have been reading and writing to prepare your bibliographies, categories, and research questions. This work is required for your second doc exam in the Urban Ed Program, and will prepare you for writing your dissertation proposal when you get to that. A solid draft of your bibliographies is the course final. If you are not a student in the Urban Education Department, we can discuss what your final product will be for the course.

Assigned Readings and Class Topics

8/31 Week One

Introduction to the two strands of activity.

Samples of pre-proposal Bibliographies by other students.

Discussion of National Science Foundation guidelines for qualitative and mixed methods social science research.

Sample Dissertation Proposals

9/7 Week Two

How do you generate research questions? What is the relationship between reading relevant literatures and your research questions?

C. Wright Mills. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. Appendix, On Intellectual Craftsmanship. (Handout)

M. Burawoy. *Ethnography Unbound*. (A major sociologist discusses how to link data, theory, history, and political economy.)

9/14 Week Three

How do you generate research questions that will help you to complexify your explanations?

M. Burawoy. (2000). *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*. (Takes *Ethnography Unbound* one important step further, theorizing how research can link local issues and global flows – as Appadurai calls them.)

*Student Presentations *

You will report on what you are reading, thinking, and writing to develop your questions, categories and your bibliography. The point is to examine and refine why you are reading what you are reading, and to figure out how the reading furthers your thought regarding your potential dissertation topic.

9/21 Week Four

How do I design a research study that critiques and extends extant theory?

J. Anyon. (2005). *Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education, and a New Social Movement*. (Read particularly the chapters which exemplify Burawoy's approach to theory – in this case theory about social movements and critical pedagogy.)

Student presentations

9/28 Week Five

How can I study others without reifying, essentializing, or 'exotifying' them?

D. Yon. (2000). *Elusive Culture: Schooling, Race, and Identity in Global Times*.

Student Presentations

No Class 10/5 or 10/12

10/19 Week Six

How did this important sociologist of education design her study and how did she apply Bourdieu's theory?

A. Lareau. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*.

Student Presentations

10/26 Week Seven

How could I use theory and historiography to research education policies critically?

D. Carlson. (in press). "Nasty Portfolios" (This article on a popular education policy uses Foucault's theories as a source of critique.)

T. Gale. (2001). Critical Policy Sociology: Historiography, Archaeology, and Genealogy as Methods of Policy Analysis. *Journal of Education Policy* (UK), 16, 5: 379-393. (Electronic 'sendout').

Student Presentations

11/2 Week Eight

How can I design a study that would use critical theories in research with urban communities?

P. Pedraza. (2005). *Latino Education: An Agenda for Community Action Research*. (Action research that is based in/on theoretical work)

*Student Presentations

11/9 Week Nine

What advice does a conventional researcher give to beginning researchers and how can I use this advice now?

J. Creswell. (2002). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 2nd Ed. (Easy reading, practical, but no theory. I don't agree with his rather simplistic views regarding data and theory, but he does provide good, on-the-ground advice about designing research.)

Student Presentations

11/16 Week Ten

Can getting an advance look at how I could collect, organize, analyze, and interpret data help me develop research questions and design my study?

M. LeCompte and J. Schensul. (1999). *Analyzing and Interpreting Ethnographic Data*. (Whole book: down-to-earth useful. An advance look at what you will 'do' with your data, how you will organize, analyze, and interpret it. Understanding this process should help you by allowing you to plan backwards – to figure out how you will design your study and collect your data.)

Student Presentations

11/23 Week Eleven

What strategies should I prepare myself to utilize?

T. Wengraf. (2001). *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Semi-structured, Biographical, and Narrative Methods*. (Lots of detail on various kinds of research interviews).

S. Wilkinson. (1999). Focus Groups: A Feminist Method. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 2: 221-44.

See also Schensul (1999) and Trotter and Schensul (1998) in Recommended Reading below. We'll get into more detail on methodology next semester when you are writing your proposal.

Student Presentations

11/30 Week Twelve – How does this classic research approach its 'subjects' ?

James C. Scott. (1992). *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (A classic in subaltern studies. Watch how he uses his data to critique Gramsci's notion of hegemony, and to question Foucault's notion of the normalization of power. Read Introduction, and Chapters 1-6.)

Student Presentations

12/7 Week Thirteen – How do these anthropologists suggest you write about people who are not YOU?

J. Clifford and G. Marcus, Eds.. (1986). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*.

* Student Presentations*

12/14 Week Fourteen – Should you consider utilizing discourse analysis in your study?

James P. Gee. (1999). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*.

Final Student Presentations

Recommended Readings

France Winddance Twine, Ed. (2000). *Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies*. (They report dilemmas like this one: An African American researcher studying race in Brazil kept being mistaken for a domestic or a sex worker....)

Dorothy Smith. (2005). *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* This well-known Canadian theorist-researcher has her own way of doing things.

Geyla Frank. (2000). *Venus on Wheels: Two Decades of Dialogue on Disability, Biography, and Being Female in America*. (You can't tell a ['disabled'] person by the clothes (s)he wears!)

Brian K. Axel. (2002). *Historical Anthropology and Its Futures*. (Historical anthropology certainly has a place in education research.)

Gloria Ladson-Billings. *Critical Race Theory*. (Brilliant and penetrating. In Denzin and Lincoln. I have copies.)

Patti Lather. (1991). *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy Within the Postmodern* (Note especially her concept of 'catalytic validity')

Ruth Behar. (1997). *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*.

Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. (A model of research theorists at work.)

S. Schensul. (1999). *Essential Ethnographic Methods: Observations, Interviews, and Questionnaires*. (Ethnographer's Toolkit, Vol. 2) . (They are not sophisticated in their approach to theory/method, but they nevertheless provide important practical tips.)

R. Trotter and J. Schensul (1998). Research methods in applied anthropology. In H.R. Bernard (Ed.) *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. (pp. 691-736). (How to construct surveys.)

N. Fairclough. (2003). *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. (Important, but more complicated and less accessible than James Gee.)

Fals Borda, O. (1979). Investigating Reality in Order to Change It: The Colombian Experience. (See also the discussion in *Liberation Sociology*, 2001, by J. Feagin and H. Vera.)

Lev Vygotsky. *Mind in Society; or Thought and Language*, Rev. Ed. (for language and society in identity development)

C. Dauite and C. Lightfoot, Eds. (2004). *Narrative Analysis: Studying the Development of Individuals in Society*.