1. Course Description

This course is designed to make you more skilled consumers and producers of sociological knowledge. It is built around engagement with individual research projects, visits from outside speakers, reading and discussion, and (primarily) on you presenting your research in progress. With the latter, research at all stages is welcome – from initial ideas to data analysis in progress to full drafts of articles. We intend to meet you where you are, providing a supportive environment in which you receive constructive feedback on your work. This course is required for all Ph.D. students during their first three years in the program.

2. Learning Goals

Students in this class will:

(1) Develop their knowledge and understanding of sociological research methods.

(2) Receive feedback from faculty and peers on current research projects.

(3) Contribute to their classmates’ ongoing research, through constructive review and discussion.

(4) Develop knowledge of the basic process of writing an empirically based article for submission to a sociology journal.

3. Credit Hours

Students are expected to spend approximately twelve hours per session, outside of class. Because students receive 4 credits for the class (over the course of the year). Our expectation is that students spend three hours per unit, per week of class.
4. Readings

Each week will include short reading(s) in addition to the material submitted by your classmates for discussion as described below. All readings are available on the class Latte site.

5. Course requirements

Attendance
Attendance is required for each class meeting. This class will only work, be interesting and productive for you if everyone is present and prepared to participate. Please try to be on time out of respect for all of us. If you cannot attend class for religious or health reasons, please email Karen or Gowri ASAP.

Participation
Participation is also required. This semester students will take a turn at introducing another student’s paper. In posting a paper on latte a week before, the student-author will write a cover memo outlining some of the main challenges and questions s/he would like discussed in class. In the first five minutes of the seminar, the student-presenter will introduce the paper’s themes and pose questions in order to initiate discussion. The floor will then be open for engaging in the substantive questions of the project, the research design, the direction of the outline, the style of writing, whatever the student-author solicits and other students think might be useful. Everyone in the class will be expected to provide written feedback to the student-author.

Most weeks, the first half of class will be spent discussing the substantive topic in the assigned reading. This year the proseminar will be organized around the theme: On Ethics and Evidence. The second half of class will focus on a student’s research project and how it might improve.

Presentation on Research
Students will be asked to present their research at least once each term. Please circulate your materials by 5pm the Thursday before the Thursday you will present. Anything can be circulated—outlines, proposals, data, memos, etc.—as long as it relates to an ongoing research project. It would also be helpful to include a note explaining what you are sending to the group and what kind of feedback you would like.

Analytic Memo/Paper Draft
Finally, students are also expected to submit an analytic memo that pertains to a new or ongoing research project. Ideally, the memo should focus on key issues related to a research project that will be submitted for publication after your third year. Analytic memos can run between 4 and 10 double-spaced pages (they are shorter in the fall term) and try to address the following questions:

1) What are your main research questions?
2) In what areas or sub-areas of the discipline do you locate your research?
3) What is your study design and research methodology? Consider
describing your theoretical foci or hypotheses, sample parameters, selection of cases or subjects, and levels of analysis.

4) What is the structure of your argument? Will it be interpretive or causal?

5) Who is your intended audience? If you have primary and secondary audiences in mind, explain how you might reach each of them and whether you will be able to do so with the same document.

6) What progress have you made in developing this project this year?

If you have questions or concerns, please let us know early in the semester so we can work on this assignment together.

PLEASE NOTE: Students may also submit a paper draft in lieu of the analytic memo.

6. Grades

Credit for the course will be earned by your participation in class—including attendance, contributions to discussion, and engagement with both your own and your classmates’ intellectual endeavors—and the timeliness, completeness, and quality of your written assignments. You will not receive credit for the course unless you complete all of the assignments.

7. Academic integrity

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policy on academic integrity: [http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/sdc/ai/index.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/sdc/ai/index.html). If anything is unclear, please ask.

8. Reasonable accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please talk with Karen or Gowri as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability, please contact Jessica Basile, Director of Graduate Student Affairs: basile@brandeis.edu

Fall Course schedule

Week 1: August 30 – Introduction & Discussion of Uses of Sociological Thinking


Thorne, Barrie. 1997. “Brandeis as a Generative Institution: Critical Perspectives, Marginality, and Feminism.” In Feminist Sociology: Life Histories of a Movement,

**Week 2: September 13 – Qualitative Literacy**


**Week 3: September 27 --**

**Week 4: October 11 – Professor Kim Scott (Arizona State University) Colloquium**

**Week 5: October 25**

**Week 6: November 8**

**Week 7: November 29 – Workshop memos/papers**

**Week 8: December 6 – Workshop memos/papers**

**Memo Draft Due: December 14**