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.

To help you in this endeavor, the first half of this year-long course is structured around several key issues impacting sociological research today, including theory, causality, mechanisms, inference, case studies and argument. Presumably at least one (and probably many or all) of these issues affects or will affect your research in some way. The goal of the course is therefore for you to draw from what we read and discuss together in class about these issues and think about how they might impact (and hopefully improve!) your current research project.

Learning Goals

Through this process, 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.

Grad Unit hours

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, conducting research, writing, reading other students work and commenting on it, and the like).

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.

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 Mike 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 organized around the theme of the university as a workplace). 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 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.

Other students will provide feedback to the presenter, both in writing and in the class discussion.

Assignments

In addition to presenting, there will be two written assignments for this class, one each semester.

In spring term, the paper will be due: May 8
Students are expected to submit an analytic memo that updates the fall assignment. It should focus on key issues in a research project to be submitted for publication after your third year. It can be a draft of a paper or an analytic memo that addresses 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?

The paper should be 8-10 pages double-spaced. If you have questions or concerns, please let us know early in the semester so we can work on this assignment together.

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.

More than grades … we will present 5Ps awards at the end of the year for “Published Papers Previously Presented in Proseminar.” The prize is a can of peas and your name in lights in Pearlman.

Academic integrity
You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policy on academic
If anything is unclear, please ask.

**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 Mike as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability, please contact Katharine Linnehan (klinneha@brandeis.edu, x63418)

**Spring Course schedule**

**Week 1:** January 26—A Brandeis Imprint?

**Thorne, Barrie,** “Brandeis as a Generative Institution”

**Collins, Patricia Hill,** “That’s Not Why I Went to School”

**Week 2:** February 2—Do Babies Matter?

**Mason, Mary Ann and Nicholas Wolfinger,** *Do Babies Matter? Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower*

**Week 3:** March 2—Discussion of publishing in an Anthology


Correspondence and feedback in the process for publication in *Concurrent Imaginaries, Postcolonial Worlds: Toward Revised Histories*, edited by Diana Brydon, Peter Forsgen, and Gunlög Fur, will be uploaded as well as an earlier draft of the article.

**Imoagene, Onoso,** article

**Week 4:** March 9—Onoso Imoagene colloquium and meeting

**Week 5:** March 16—Student presentation

**Roth, Wendy,** article

**Week 6:** March 23—Wendy Roth Colloquium and meeting

**Week 7:** April 6—Student presentations

**Week 8:** April 27—Student presentations

**Paper due:** May 8