

Sociology 326
Historical Sociology
Colby College, Fall 2022

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Course Meetings (Diamond 221)
Tuesday/Thursday, 2:30-3:45PM

Office Hours (Diamond 209)
Tues./Thurs., 12:30-2:00, or by appointment
Sign up [here](#).

Overview:

Historical methods are foundational to analyses of social change. This course provides an in-depth survey of contemporary social-scientific methods for exploring processes of social transformation. We will examine how to formulate historical research questions; how to identify, collect, and interpret historical evidence; how to navigate digital and physical archives; and techniques for inferring causality using historical materials.

Key Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Learn the strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of historical evidence, how to identify and collect them, and how to mobilize them in a sociological argument
- 2) Improve ability to understand, recognize, and deploy major techniques of causal inference using historical methods
- 3) Improve skills in evaluating methodological choices in works of historical sociology
- 4) Gain practice designing a small-scale sociological project using historical methods

Course Requirements:

This class is designed to familiarize you with historical methods in sociological research. This entails both understanding the theoretical and philosophical apparatus that underlies historical inquiry, and learning the art and craft of dealing with historical evidence. Because an original historical research project is not generally feasible within the span of a single semester, our primary goal instead will be to develop a solid proposal for such a project. There are, accordingly, two primary kinds of assignments for this class: (1) Doing the readings and actively engaging with them, to be evaluated through class participation, discussion leadership, and reading reflections; and (2) a proposal for a project using historical sociological methods, to be developed in stages over the course of the semester through a series of scaffolded assignments and in-class workshops.

The composition of your final grade will be as follows:

1. Preparation, attendance, and active participation (15%). This course will be run as a discussion seminar, with limited lecturing. Its success depends upon the active engagement and participation of all members of the class. Accordingly, both attendance and active participation are mandatory. Active participation means doing the readings, thinking about them, and putting your thoughts, questions, and opinions on the table during class. You will be penalized for inadequate attendance, preparation, or participation.

You should come to each class armed with *at least one question* that the readings raised for you, and *at least one passage* you found confusing, inspiring, problematic, or insightful that you would like to discuss. These questions and passages will provide a good starting point for our conversation. As you read, therefore, ask yourself: what kinds of questions do these readings raise for me? Do they seem to complement or contradict one another in interesting ways? What might the author be missing, or not paying enough attention to? Does the argument ring true in light of my own experience?

2. Discussion leader (5% each, 10% total). Each student will be responsible for serving as discussion leader (or co-discussion leader, depending on enrollment) twice over the course of the semester. As discussion leader, you will be responsible for preparing a short (5-minute) presentation laying out the main themes of the readings and some of the questions they raised for you. You will also be responsible for moderating the conversation.
3. Reading reflections (1% each, 15% total). For all classes where you are not serving as discussion leader, you will submit a short (no more than one paragraph) reading reflection before each class. These reflections could discuss something you found particularly interesting or insightful in the readings, something you did not understand and would like to discuss further, a passage that you would like to unpack in greater detail (please indicate page numbers), or a reflection on how you might apply the principles in the readings to your own project. You may skip one reflection at any point in the semester. Daily reflections must be posted to Moodle by 9:00AM on the day of each class.
4. Research proposal (60% total). The final project for this course will be a 10-page research proposal that lays out a research question, situates it in existing sociological scholarship, and explains how you propose to investigate it both empirically and methodologically. You will develop this proposal in stages over the course of the semester, each of which will constitute an intermediate assignment in its own right:
 - a. A preliminary statement of interest (5%) (due in class on **Thursday, September 22**) that lays out the topic you wish to investigate and the reason you are interested in studying it, a preliminary research question, and a discussion of the potential case(s) you propose to use to study it.

- b. A statement of motivation (5%) (due in class on **Thursday, October 6**) that presents an initial review of the relevant historical and theoretical literatures relevant to your case, and explains how your research question complements or builds on those literatures. **We will workshop this statement in class.**
- c. A statement of evidence (5%) (due in class on **Thursday, October 20**) that presents an initial review of the sources of data you might be able to examine as part of your project.
- d. An initial proposal (5%) (due via Moodle on **Sunday, November 6**) that revises and combines the above sections. **We will workshop this initial proposal in class on Tuesday, November 8.**
- e. A statement of logic of inquiry (5%) (due via Moodle on **Thursday, November 17**) that discusses the specific historical methods you plan to use to investigate your question, and why they are appropriate for your research question.
- f. A revised proposal (5%) (due on **Sunday, December 4**) that includes revised versions of all above sections as well as preliminary hypotheses and an abstract. **We will workshop this revised proposal in class on Thursday, December 8.**
- g. A final proposal (25%) (due on **Monday, December 19 at 4PM**) that incorporates the feedback you have received.
- h. An auto-critique of your proposal (5%) (due on **Monday, December 19 at 4PM**) in which you critique your own proposal, highlighting its weaknesses and ways you might address them.

Essential Classroom Policies:

- 1) Classroom etiquette: Be respectful of each other and of each other's opinions.
- 2) Electronic devices: During class time, you are expected to pay attention, take notes, ask questions, and engage with the ideas under discussion. Mobile phones and computers can make it more difficult for you and those around you to achieve these goals. For this reason, mobile phones must be turned off (or put on silent mode) and put away for the duration of the class. Computers must only be used for course-related purposes (notetaking, reading, in-class research, etc.). Students who disregard this policy may lose their laptop privileges and/or be asked to leave the class.

For further policies, see the fine print (p. 10).

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Required Texts:

The following books are required for this course. They are available in the bookstore or through course reserve, or online from your favorite bookseller:

- Andrew Abbott. 2014. *Digital Paper: A Manual for Research and Writing with Library and Internet Materials*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Additional Readings:

A few additional required readings will be available as PDF files on the course website in Moodle. These are marked below with the ® symbol.

Weekly Plan:

This syllabus is a provisional document, and is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and through Moodle.

PART I: PRELIMINARIES

Class 1 (September 8)

History as Sociology

Recommended: ® RICHARD LACHMANN, “The Sense of a Beginning.” Pp. 1-15 in *What Is Historical Sociology?* (Polity, 2013)

Recommended: ® DAMON MAYRL AND NICHOLAS HOOVER WILSON, “What Do Historical Sociologists Do All Day? Analytic Architectures in Historical Sociology.” *American Journal of Sociology* 125(5): 1345-94 (2020). **Read pp. 1352-55, 1365-77.**

Class 2 (September 13)

Historical Sociological Research

ANDREW ABBOTT, *Digital Paper*, Preface and chapters 1-2 (pp. ix-35)

Class 3 (September 15)

Getting Started: Questions and Cases

ANDREW ABBOTT, *Digital Paper*, chapter 4 (pp. 64-90)

® JOHN WALTON, “Making the Theoretical Case.” Pp. 121-37 in *What Is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, edited by Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker (Cambridge, 1992)

PART II: HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Class 4 (September 20)

Finding Sources

ANDREW ABBOTT, *Digital Paper*, chapters 3, 5, and 6 (pp. 36-63, 91-128)

Class 5 (September 22)

Primary Sources I: Power and Preservation

® ALIZA LUFT, “How Do You Repair a Broken World? Conflict(ing) Archives after the Holocaust.” *Qualitative Sociology* 43: 317-43 (2020).

® FRANCIS X. BLOUIN AND WILLIAM G. ROSENBERG, “The Archivist as Activist in the Production of (Historical) Knowledge.” Pp. 140-60 in *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives* (Oxford, 2011).

GABBY ORR, “Former White House Officials Describe Trump’s Habit of Ripping Up Documents and Haphazard Record Keeping.” [CNN.com](https://www.cnn.com), February 8, 2022.

****Assignment 1 (Statement of Interest) due**

Class 6 (September 27)

Primary Sources II: Provenance and Interpretation

® JOHN D. MILLIGAN, “The Treatment of an Historical Source.” *History and Theory* 18(2): 177-96 (1979).

® MARTHA HOWELL AND WALTER PREVENIER, “Historical Interpretation: The Traditional Basics.” Pp. 69-87 in *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Cornell, 2001).

****Bring an item from your own personal archive to class today.**

Class 7 (September 29)

Primary Sources III: Archives

® DAMON MAYRL AND NICHOLAS HOOVER WILSON, “The Archive as a Social World.” *Qualitative Sociology* 43: 407-26 (2020).

® ZACHARY M. SCHRAG, “Archival Research.” Pp. 186-207 in *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (Princeton, 2021).

****Visit to Colby Special Collections – Meet at Miller Library**

Class 8 (October 4)

Secondary Sources

- ® THEDA SKOCPOL, "Preface." Pp. xi-xvii in *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge, 1979). **Read pp. xi-xii, xiv-xv.**
- ® THEDA SKOCPOL, "Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology." Pp. 356-91 in Theda Skocpol (ed.), *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1984). **Read pp. 382-83.**
- ® IAN S. LUSTICK, "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *American Political Science Review* 90(3): 605-18 (1996).
- ® W.E.B. DU BOIS, "The Propaganda of History." Pp. 711-29 in *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (Free Press, 1992 [1935]).

Class 9 (October 6)

Proposal Workshop 1

NO READINGS

****Assignment 2 (Statement of Motivation) due. Bring 4 copies to class.**

NO CLASS OCTOBER 11 – FALL BREAK

PART III: CAUSAL INFERENCE (AND ITS DISCONTENTS)

Class 10 (October 13)

Causality and Explanation

- ® CHARLES C. RAGIN, "Heterogeneity and Causal Complexity." Pp. 19-33 in *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (California, 1987). **Read pp. 23-30.**
- ® ALEXANDER L. GEORGE AND ANDREW BENNETT, "Case Studies and the Philosophy of Science." Pp. 127-49 in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT, 2005). **Read pp. 129-31.**
- ® ANDREW ABBOTT, "Time Matters." Pp. 280-98 in *Time Matters: On Theory and Method* (Chicago, 2001). **Read pp. 285-94.**
- ® PHILIP S. GORSKI, "The Poverty of Deductivism: A Constructive Realist Model of Sociological Explanation." *Sociological Methodology* 34(1): 1-33 (2004). **Read pp. 1-8, 14-22, 28-30.**

Recommended: ® DAVID HUME, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (Clarendon, 1960 [1740]). Book I, §2-6 (pp. 73-94).

Class 11 (October 18)

Processes and Mechanisms

- ® JON ELSTER, “Mechanisms.” Pp. 3-10 in *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, 1989).
- ® MATTHEW LANGE, “The Within-Case Methods of Comparative-Historical Analysis.” Pp. 40-69 in *Comparative-Historical Methods* (Sage, 2013). **Read pp. 42-55.**
- ® ALEXANDER L. GEORGE AND ANDREW BENNETT, “Process-Tracing and Historical Explanation.” Pp. 205-32 in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT, 2005). **Read pp. 205-18, 222-24.**

Class 12 (October 20)

Temporality

- ® PAUL PIERSON, “Placing Politics in Time” (selection). Pp. 1-2 in *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton, 2004).
- ® WILLIAM H. SEWELL, JR., “Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology.” Pp. 245-80 in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, edited by Terence J. McDonald (Michigan, 1996). **Read pp. 245-48, 254-65, 269-74.**
- ® JAMES MAHONEY, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology.” *Theory and Society* 29(4): 507-48 (2000). **Read pp. 507-26.**

****Assignment 3 (Statement of Evidence) due**

Class 13 (October 25)

Comparison

- ® THEDA SKOCPOL AND MARGARET SOMERS, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22(2): 174-97 (1980). **Read pp. 174-87, 191-97.**
- ® DAMON MAYRL AND NICHOLAS HOOVER WILSON, “Comparison after Positivism.” In *Comparison after Positivism*, edited by Nicholas Hoover Wilson and Damon Mayrl (Columbia, forthcoming). **Read pp. 8-13.**
- ® DIPESH CHAKRABARTY, “Provincializing Europe in Global Times.” Pp. ix-xxi in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. (Princeton, 2007 [2000]). **Read pp. ix-xv.**
- ® REBECCA JEAN EMIGH, “The Power of Negative Thinking: The Use of Negative Case Methodology in the Development of Sociological Theory.” *Theory and Society* 26(5): 649-84 (1997). **Read pp. 649-58.**

Recommended: ® JOHN STUART MILL, “Of the Four Methods of Experimental Inquiry.” Book III, Chapter VIII (pp. 278-91) in *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* (Harper & Brothers, 1890 [1843]).

Class 14 (October 27)

Counterfactuals

® LARRY J. GRIFFIN, "Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 98(5): 1094-1133 (1993). **Read pp. 1094-1104, 1127-30.**

® BARRINGTON MOORE, JR., "The Suppression of Historical Alternatives: Germany 1918-1920." Pp. 376-97 in *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (MacMillan, 1978).

PART IV: SOME EXAMPLES

Class 15 (November 1)

Public Health

® ALEXANDRE I.R. WHITE, "Global Risks, Divergent Pandemics: Contrasting Responses to Bubonic Plague and Smallpox in 1901 Cape Town." *Social Science History* 42: 135-58 (2018).

Class 16 (November 3)

The Politics of Knowledge

® ELIZABETH POPP BERMAN AND LAURA M. MILANES-REYES, "The Politicization of Knowledge Claims: The 'Laffer Curve' in the U.S. Congress." *Qualitative Sociology* 36: 53-79 (2013).

****Initial Proposal due Sunday, November 6**

Class 17 (November 8)

Proposal Workshop 2

NO READINGS

****Bring 4 copies of your proposal to class**

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 10 (SSSR MEETINGS) – WORK ON YOUR PROPOSAL

Class 19 (November 15)

Secularization

® DAMON MAYRL, *Secular Conversions: Political Institutions and Religious Education in the United States and Australia, 1800-2000* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 1-10, 157-238, 253-68.

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 17 (SSHA MEETINGS) – WORK ON YOUR PROPOSAL

****Assignment 5 (Statement of Logic of Inquiry) due**

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 20 (THANKSGIVING) – WORK ON YOUR PROPOSAL

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 22 (THANKSGIVING) – EAT YOUR TURKEY

Class 22 (November 29)

Racial Categories

® ANGEL ADAMS PARHAM, *American Routes: Racial Palimpsests and the Transformation of Race* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 1-15, 46-50, 68-153, 188-220.

Class 23 (December 1)

Economic Policy

® MONICA PRASAD, “Why Is France So French? Culture, Institutions, and Neoliberalism, 1974-1981.” *American Journal of Sociology* 111(2): 357-407 (2005).

****Revised Proposal due Sunday, December 4.**

Class 24 (December 6)

Policing

® JULIAN GO, “The Imperial Origins of American Policing: Militarization and Imperial Feedback in the Early 20th Century.” *American Journal of Sociology* 125(5): 1193-1254 (2020).

Class 25 (December 8)

Proposal Workshop 3

NO READINGS

****Final Proposal and Self-Critique due December 19, 4PM.**

THE FINE PRINT (FURTHER POLICIES)

Course Communication:

Moodle (<http://moodle.colby.edu>) will be our primary means of communication during this class. All students should be sure that they can access the readings and other features of the course.

Email is the best way to reach me. I will try to reply to you as quickly as possible, but I cannot always reply immediately. I will reply within 24 hours during the week, and by Monday morning for emails sent over the weekend.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to arrive on time and not to leave early unless arranged in advance with the instructor. You may miss up to three classes with no penalty, but excessive (four or more) absences will negatively affect your grade. You are responsible for all course announcements, assignments, and material covered on the days that you are absent.

If a serious family, health, or other problem arises during the course of the semester that will compromise your ability to attend class, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Colby is supportive of the religious practices of its students, faculty, and staff, and we are committed to ensuring that all students may observe their religious beliefs without academic penalty. If you observe a religious holiday that will impact your work in this course, please see me at the beginning of the term to discuss a reasonable accommodation.

While Colby College is supportive of athletic participation by its students, academics take priority over athletics. Both NCAA and Colby rules prohibit missing classes for practices. In the case of overlapping commitments between class and athletic competitions, you should meet with me as soon as possible to discuss those overlaps.

Grievances:

Although I try hard to grade fairly and consistently, grading is nevertheless an inexact science. If you are unhappy with your grade on an assignment, you can come to my office hours with a one-page written explanation of why you feel your grade should be different, as well as the original assignment. Based on this petition, I will decide whether to re-grade your exam or presentation. Be advised that your grade may move upwards or downwards should I decide to re-grade it!

Academic Honesty:

Honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility are cornerstones of a Colby education and provide the foundation for scholarly inquiry, intellectual discourse, and an open and welcoming campus community. These values are articulated in the Colby Affirmation and are central to this course. You must in no way misrepresent your work or be party to another student's failure to maintain academic integrity. Any violations of academic honesty will be referred to the Coordinator of Academic Integrity; sanctions may include suspension or expulsion.

Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Statement:

Colby College prohibits, and will not tolerate, sexual misconduct or gender-based discrimination of any kind. Colby is legally obligated to investigate sexual misconduct (including, but not limited to, sexual assault and sexual harassment).

Students should be aware that faculty members are considered responsible employees; as such, if you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to me or any other faculty member, we have an obligation to report it to Colby's Title IX Coordinator. "Disclosure" may include communication in person, via email/phone/text, or through class assignments.

If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact Colby Counseling Services (207-859-4490); the Director of the Gender and Sexual Diversity Program, Emily Schusterbauer (207-859-4093); or the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (207-859-4272).