SOC 509  
HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGICAL METHODS  
Spring 2021  
CRN: 40528  
Classes: Online, synchronous: Mondays 2:00 to 4:45 p.m.

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Drop-in Hours: Monday 12:00 to 1:30 p.m., and by appointment*

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Key founders of sociology such as Karl Marx and Max Weber, and key political/social theorists such as Alexis de Tocqueville, never considered social theory as separate from history and historical analysis. The prominent American sociologist Charles Wright Mills famously emphasized that all good sociology is historical sociology. Yet much of the social sciences today have become presentist, as they study the social and political world separate from history. Rather than interrogate why presentism has become the dominant pattern in the social sciences, we take advantage of the fact that comparative and historical sociology is an established subfield in American sociology today. This class offers an introduction survey of this subfield and aims to introduce students to different tropes in using historical sociology in their research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
This class is an introduction to the broad field of historical sociological research methods, and how to deploy this fascinating methodological orientation in studying today’s social issues. The key objectives of the class are the following:
1. The class serves as a short introduction to the subfield of comparative and historical sociology, and the significance of historical sociological research.
2. The class serves as a survey of the some of the assumptions and understanding of temporalities in historical sociology.
3. The class serves as a survey of the key approaches in historical sociological research.
4. A main objective of this class is to encourage and assist students in applying some of these methods on their research.

READINGS
All readings will be available to you via BB, except for those in the required books. There are only two required books. These are:

* Drop-in Hours will be via Zoom, a link will be sent to all during the first week.
These two books will be available for purchase from UIC bookstore. You can buy them on your own if you want (they are only available in these editions).

In addition to these books, the following books are also recommended (no need to purchase them unless you want to).


**CLASS STRUCTURE**

Each class will start with a lecture delivered by Atef. The lecture will not always be directly related to the week’s readings, but could situate the reading in the field, and offer specific tips on conducting historical sociological research. This will be followed by presentation and class discussion of the week’s assigned readings.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

*Attendance and Participation:*

While the readings may seem minimal in terms of the number of pages assigned, they are certainly dense material. Students are expected to attend all classes and do all the readings. In addition, students are asked to post questions online about the reading, and to read their classmates’ questions before coming to class. Questions should be posted by noon on the Sunday before our class meeting. This will give everybody time to read and think through the questions, which will guide our class discussion. The success of this class depends in large part on students’ preparation and readiness to discuss the materials each week.

*Presentations:*

Each student will be asked to present one time during the semester. This will involve presenting on an optional reading and facilitating the discussion of that reading. There will be a sign-up sheet during the first class. The readings for the presentations will be short, e.g., usually one chapter or an article that engages in some way with the required readings for that week. We will allocate about 15–20 minutes for these presentations at the end of each class. The presentation readings are optional for non-presenters, but I strongly encourage everyone to read them. In cases when there are two or more optional readings listed in the syllabus, I will discuss with you which reading to choose for your presentation. The presenter each week will be required to compile students’ questions and act as facilitator of the second part of the class. The presenter does not have to submit questions for the week when they are presenting.
CLASS POLICIES

Attendance:
As mentioned above, I expect students to come to every class. If you are unable to come to class, please notify me as soon as you can. If you miss any class, please make arrangements to get notes from one of your colleagues. Please notify me if you have a religious holiday that is in conflict with the class.

Extensions:
If you have any difficulty meeting the deadlines, please let me know in person. I am willing to accommodate reasonable requests.

Email Policy:
Please give me 24 hours to respond to your emails; I will respond as soon as I can within this window. During particularly busy times of the semester, however, my response may take up to 48 hours.

Meeting:
As I am expecting a lot from you in this class, I will be available to help you with the class materials. Please do not hesitate to come to me during office hours, or set up an appointment if my office hours do not work for you. I am happy to discuss with you any thoughts or questions you may have about the readings, the class, or even graduate school in general.

Zoom Protocol:
Since we will conduct most if not all the class via zoom, this will require cooperation from all of us as citizens of this class’s community. I urge all of you to follow this protocol:
  • Log on to Zoom at least 5 minutes in advance in case of any technical or logistical issues.
  • Add your pronouns next to your name in your Zoom window.
  • Locate yourself in a place with little to no background noise and disruption.
  • Turn your camera on (if you have issues with this, I understand, but please let me know).
  • Make sure there is adequate lighting so that you can be seen
  • Use headphones/earbuds to minimize background noise
  • Decide how you will take notes while keeping Zoom screen open
  • Remain on mute unless speaking or otherwise instructed
  • All Chat is public - do not use Chat (privately)
  • If you are having technical difficulties, or know you will be late, make sure to send an email to me before class begins

Accommodations:
If you need any accommodation, whether or not related to COVID-19, please notify me as soon as you can. The University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, and activities. You may contact DRC at 312-413-2183 (v) or 312-413-0123 (TTY) or consult the following: https://drc.uic.edu/students-2/new-to-drc/.
**Academic Integrity:**
Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with UIC guidelines and penalties for academic dishonesty. Integrity Policies can be found here: https://dos.uic.edu/community-standards/academic-integrity/.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**
The class has different types of assignments, most of which are geared towards maximizing students’ benefit from the class for their research.

1) **Critical Review (Due February 22)**
Write a 5- to 7-page critical review of one of the books listed at the end of the syllabus. These books are all recipients of the Best Book Award from the Comparative Historical section of the American Sociological Association (The Barrington Moore Book Award) or received an honorable mention over the last 20 years. The review should focus on the methods section of the book. It should include the following elements: a) the main question and the argument of the book; b) the methods (tools) and methodology (rationale and justification for using this approach); c) the data used and analysis, and d) your assessment of how the book used historical sociological methods.

2) **Short papers, geared towards writing a proposal, or the historical sociology section in your prospectus**

**Short Paper 1:** 5 to 7 pages (double-spaced, 12 pt. font) **Due March 8**
This is the first attempt for you to think of your research historically (or from the lens of historical sociology). Identify at least three ways to think of your project historically (for example, as a case study, or as a comparison, or through the use of oral history. You may think of key events, or key actors or actions from the past that inform your topic, etc. In short, the goal of this initial paper is to stretch our historical imagination.

**Short Paper 2:** 2–3 pages (double-spaced, 12 pt. font) **Due March 29**
This is the first step in thinking of your research topic as a proposal. The paper should include a short intro, and identification of a question or a challenge you are encountering.

**Short Paper 3:** 5–7 pages (double-spaced, 12 pt. font) **Due April 5**
This is the second step in thinking of your research topic as a proposal. The paper should focus on identifying a method that is suitable for your question. It should also include identifying the archives(s), the documents, and the types of data needed for your research.

**Short Paper 4:** 5–7 pages (double-spaced, 12 pt. font) **Due April 19**
This is the third step in thinking of your research topic as a proposal. The paper should focus on explaining the larger methodological orientation and justification for your research.

**Final Paper/Proposal:** 15–20 pages (double-spaced, 12 pt. font) **Due May 7**
This is to be submitted at the end of the semester as a complete (almost complete) proposal, which should include most elements, with further elaboration if needed, from previous papers.

I will provide detailed rubric for these papers during the semester.
Grades:
10%: Attendance and Participation
10%: Presentation
40%: Short papers (10% each)
40%: Final paper

It is highly recommended that:
1. Students submit abstracts to the annual conference on the Comparative Historical Social Sciences at Northwestern University.
2. Students join the section on Comparative Historical Sociology at ASA.
3. Students join the Social Science History Association and submit papers when possible.
4. Students join the network of Comparative Historical Sociology at SSHA.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Introduction
Monday January 11: Syllabus Distribution & the Love Affair between Theorizing and Historicizing
Reading:
Optional Readings:

Monday January 18: Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. No classes

Section 1: The Field of Historical Sociology
Monday January 25: Waves of Historical Sociology in the United States
Reading:
Optional Readings:

Monday February 1 - Comparative and Historical Sociology: Current State of Affairs
Readings:

Optional Readings:
Skocpol, Theda. “Doubly Engaged Social Science: The Promise of Comparative Historical Analysis.” In Mahoney, James, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds. Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. Cambridge UP, 2003, pp. 407-427

Section 2: Temporalities, Causalities and The Likes in Historical Sociology

Monday February 8: Temporalities
Readings:

Optional Readings:
Monday February 15: Can We Give Up Causalities (I)? Causes, Contingency, and Conjunctures

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Monday February 22: Can We Give Up Causalities (II)? What’s up with Mechanisms? (Critical Review 1 Due)

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Monday March 1: Path or Many Paths of “Dependence”

Readings:

Optional Readings:
Section 3: The Craft and Tropes in Historical Sociology

Monday March 8: Case Studies (Short Paper 1 Due)

Readings:


Optional Readings:


Monday March 15: Comparisons: Small and Big Ns

Readings:


Optional Readings:


Goldstone, Jack A. “Comparative Historical Analysis and Knowledge Accumulation in the Study of Revolutions.” In Mahoney, James, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds. Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. Cambridge UP, 2003, pp 41-89


**Monday March 22 (Spring Break-No Class)**

**Monday March 29- Events and Eventful Analysis (Short Paper 2 Due)**

**Readings:**


**Optional Readings:**


**Monday April 5- Oral History (Short Paper 3 Due)**

**Readings:**


**Optional Readings:**

Monday April 12- The Case for Historical Ethnography
Readings:

Optional Readings:

Section 4: Conclusion

Monday April 19- Students Presentations and Reflections- No readings (Short Paper 3 Due)

Monday April 26 (Last Class): Celebrations, And the Future of Historical Sociology, or Towards a Post-Positivist Historical Sociology
Readings:

Optional Readings:


FINAL PROPOSAL: Due May 7, 2021

BOOKS TO REVIEW


