

SOC 532: PRACTICUM IN COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY
FALL 2019

Time: Th 2:00-5:00pm
Venue: LSA 3207

Instructor: Professor Xiaohong Xu
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Office: LSA 3220
Office Hours: By appointment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course introduces the family of methods and reasoning called “comparative and historical sociology”. Over the last several decades, comparative and historical sociology has emerged as one of the most imaginative and vibrant intellectual fields in sociology and in the social sciences more broadly. It has created space for sociologists to ask bold questions about social change and engage theoretical issues in sociology, history, political science, economics, and anthropology through rigorous historical research (which, as we will see, does not necessarily concern events in the distant past but primarily involves emphasizing sequence, process and temporality).

One crucial feature of comparative and historical research is that each project requires the development and justification of a logic of inquiry and methodological architecture capable of responding adequately to the unique ambitions and considerations of that project. The course content is constructed based on three considerations. First, to showcase crucial characteristics in the development of comparative and historical sociology (the three “waves”). Second, to give us broad exposure to the variety of tools and traditions in the field (and to the assumptions behind them and the critical objections that have been raised). Third, to incorporate your interests and help advance your intellectual agenda.

Our objectives are to understand the foundational perspectives and key theoretical and methodological debates in comparative and historical sociology; to engage with course material deeply and critically, take stances on the arguments raised, and advance a productive relationship with the methodological tradition that is your own; to develop your own research agenda in light of our reflection on these perspectives and debates.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Active Participation (10%): The quality of our discussion rests on your degree of preparation, active engagement with the material, and willingness to share with others.
2. Presentation/Leading Discussion (20%): Each student will be responsible for presenting on the readings and initiating our discussion once during the semester. You will be assigned during our first class meeting. Your presentation should first and foremost identify the main arguments of each individual reading and attempt to highlight the stakes behind this argument (i.e., to what problem is the argument proposed as a solution?). If the reading is a research

book/paper, you are also expected to highlight its research design, methodological architecture, and the sources, data, and narratives that it uses to construct and substantiate its argument. You should also discuss how the various readings relate to one another, considering them as a set and highlighting points of contrast and complementarity. Finally, you should raise a few issues or questions that you believe will motivate a productive discussion.

3. Response Memos (20%): Six times over the course of the semester, you will prepare a short response memo (approximately 500-600 words) on the week's material. At least one of these memos must be on one of our three assigned books. When multiple readings are assigned, your memo can address a specific reading, a limited set of them, or all of them. Memos should combine analytical summary with critical engagement. They are due by Wednesdays at midnight and should be posted to the Canvas Discussions forum. (Late memos will not count toward your required six.) Then, in preparation for class on Thursday, you must read (and consider your responses to) the other students' memos—even on weeks in which you declined to post. (You are not required to reply on the forum to other students' posts, but I will enable that feature in case you feel so moved.)
4. Research Proposal (50%): The main written assignment for this course is the production of a highly polished research proposal, of approximately ten (double-spaced) pages in length, on a topic of your choosing. This proposal should identify a researchable problem, situate it theoretically, and elaborate a suitable research design. For students early in the program, this will likely be related to the development of your publishable paper project. For students further along, it might be an early statement of your proposed dissertation research. I will provide more detail on this assignment early in the semester and we will tackle it in multiple stages. A preliminary draft (which will be circulated to the other students) is due at 5:00pm on Friday, November 27; the final draft is due at 5:00pm on Thursday, December 12.

READINGS

Required:

Most of the readings for the course are available on the Canvas website. In addition, the following books are recommended for purchase:

Ermakoff, Ivan. *Ruling Oneself Out: A Theory of Collective Abdications*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1983. *The Old Régime and the French Revolution*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday. Other editions are acceptable.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (September 5): Introduction

Adams, Julia, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff. 2005. "Introduction: Social Theory, Modernity, and the Three Waves of Historical Sociology." Pp. 1-72 in Adams, Julia, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff (eds.), *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Suggested Supplemental Reading:

Mahoney, James, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. 2003. "Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas." Pp. 3-38 in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sewell, William H., Jr. 2005. Chapter 2 of *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 2 (September 12): Defining a Research Topic / Discussion of Proposal Assignment

Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (Pp. xi-xii, 8-13, 211-248)

Davis, Murray S. 1971. "That's Interesting! Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 1(4):309-344.

Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. 2014. *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 7, "The Community of Inquiry")

Suggested Supplemental Reading:

Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. 2014. *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Introduction)

Zald, Mayer N. 1995. "Progress and Cumulation in the Human Sciences after the Fall." *Sociological Forum* 10(3):455-79.

Week 3 (September 19): Exemplary Book 1.

Tocqueville, Alexis. 1983. *The Ancient Regime and the French Revolution*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday. The entire book. Other editions are acceptable.

Tocqueville, Alexis. 2000. "Introduction," *Democracy in America*. Translated by Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 4 (September 26): Comparison 1 (The Basics) / Discussion of Research Topics

*** Come prepared to discuss potential research topic(s).**

Mill, John Stuart. 1950 [1881]. "Of the Four Methods of Experimental Inquiry." Pp. 211-38 in *John Stuart Mill's Philosophy of Scientific Method*, edited by Ernest Nagel. New York: Hafner.

- Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (vii-xi, 1-68)
- Skocpol, Theda and Margaret Somers. 1980. "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22(2):174-97.

Week 5 (October 3): Exemplary Book 2.

- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Pp. xi-xvii, 3-99, 109-40, 147-57, 161-73, 284-93)

Week 6 (October 10): Comparison 2 (Criticisms and Extensions) / Discussion of Research Design
*** Have selected your research topic and come prepared to discuss dilemmas of research design.**

- Sewell, William H., Jr. 1985. "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case." *Journal of Modern History* 57(1):57-85.
- Mahoney, James. 1999. "Nominal, Ordinal, and Narrative Appraisal in Macrocausal Analysis." *American Journal of Sociology* 104(4):1154-96.
- Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Chapters 6 & 8)

Suggested Supplemental Reading:

- Lieberson, Stanley. 1991. "Small Ns, Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases." *Social Forces* 70(2):307-320.
- Burawoy, Michael. 1989. "Two Methods in Search of Science." *Theory and Society* 18 (6): 759-805.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1985. "Cultural Idioms and Political Ideologies in the Revolutionary Reconstruction of State Power: A Rejoinder to Sewell." *Journal of Modern History* 57(1):86-96.
- Steinmetz, George. 2004. "Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and 'Small N's' in Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 22 (3): 371-400.
- Tilly, Charles. 1997. "Means and Ends of Comparison in Macrosociology." *Comparative Social Research* 16:43-53.

Week 7 (October 17): Working with Cases

For Part I:

- Rueschemeyer, Dietrich. 2003. "Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?" Pp. 305-336 in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Walton, John. 1992. "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: Cambridge University Press.

Armato, Michael, and Neal Caren. 2002. "Mobilizing the Single-Case Study: Doug McAdam's Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970." *Qualitative Sociology* 25(1):93-103.

For Part II:

Emigh, Rebecca Jean. 1997. "The Power of Negative Thinking: The Use of Negative Case Methodology in the Development of Sociological Theory." *Theory and Society* 26:649-84.

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2014. "Exceptional Cases: Epistemic Contributions and Normative Expectations." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 55(02):223-43.

Suggested Supplemental Reading:

Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2005. "Negative Case Selection: The Possibility Principle." in *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*, edited by Gary Goertz. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 8 (October 24): Historical Process, Temporality, and Events

Abbott, Andrew. 1988. "Transcending General Linear Reality." *Sociological Theory* 6(2):169-86.

Mahoney, James. 2000. "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology." *Theory and Society* 29(4):507-48.

Sewell, William H., Jr. 1996. "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology." Pp. 245-80 in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, edited by Terrence J. McDonald. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Haydu, Jeffrey. 1998. "Making Use of the Past: Time Periods as Cases to Compare and as Sequences of Problem Solving." *American Journal of Sociology*, 104 (2): 339-371

Suggested Supplemental Reading:

Clemens, Elisabeth S. 2007. "Toward a Historicized Sociology: Theorizing Events, Processes, and Emergence." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33:527-49.

Griffin, Larry J. 1993. "Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 98:1094-133.

Week 9 (October 31): Theorizing and Engaging History / Student-Selected Readings

For Part I:

Kiser, Edgar and Michael Hechter. 1991. "The Role of General Theory in Comparative-Historical Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology*, 97:1-30.

Somers, Margaret R. 1998. "We're No Angels: Realism, Rational Choice, and Relationality in Social Science." *American Journal of Sociology* 104(3):722-84.

Gorski, Philip S. 2004. "The Poverty of Deductivism: A Constructive Realist Model of Sociological Explanation." *Sociological Methodology* 34(1):1-33.

Tilly, Charles. 2002. "Event Catalogs as Theories." *Sociological Theory* 20(2):249-54.

Dibble, Vernon K. 1963. "Four Types of Inference from Documents to Events." *History and Theory* 3:203-21.

Various Authors. 2008. "From the Archives: Innovative Use of Data in Comparative Historical Research." Pp. 1-11 in *Trajectories: Newsletter of the ASA Comparative and Historical Sociology Section*, 19(2).

For Part II:

* Select one comparative-historical reading (broadly construed) from your own topical area of interest and come prepared to present its logic of analysis to the class.

Suggested Supplemental Reading:

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2019. "Causality and History: Modes of Causal Investigation in Historical Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 45 (1): 581–606.

Paige, Jeffrey. 1999. "Conjuncture, Comparison, and Conditional Theory in Macrosocial Inquiry." *American Journal of Sociology* 105:781-800.

Weber, Max. 1978 [1906]. "The Logic of Historical Explanation." Pp. 111-131 in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, edited by W.G. Runciman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 10 (November 7): Exemplary Text 3.

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2008. *Ruling Oneself Out: A Theory of Collective Abdications*. Durham: Duke University Press. xi-xxx, 3-57, 181-210, 245-304, 323-345.

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2015. "The Structure of Contingency." *American Journal of Sociology* 121(1):64-125.

Suggested Supplemental Reading:

Collins, Randall. 2017. "Emotional Dynamics and Emotional Domination Drive The Microtrajectory of Moments of Collective Contingency: Comment On Ermakoff." *American Journal of Sociology* 123(1):276-83.

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2017. "Emotions, Cognition, and Collective Alignment: A Response to Collins." *American Journal of Sociology* 123 (1): 284–91.

Ermakoff, Ivan. 2013. "Rational Choice May Take Over." *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis*, 89–107.

Week 11 (November 14): Behind the Scenes: Article Writing and Revision

For Part I:

Krippner, Greta R. 2017. "Democracy of Credit: Ownership and the Politics of Credit Access in Late Twentieth-Century America." *American Journal of Sociology* 123(1):1-47.

Xu, Xiaohong. 2013. "Belonging Before Believing: Group Ethos and Bloc Recruitment in the Making of Chinese Communism," *American Sociological Review*, 78 (5): 773-796.

ASR R&Rs and revision memos provided by Xiaohong Xu.

For Part II:

* Read materials provided by guest speaker Dr. Luciana de Souza Leão.

Week 12 (November 21): *** NO CLASS: SSHA MEETINGS ***

Week 13 (November 28): *** NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING ***

***** Draft proposal due (for circulation) Friday, November 27, 5:00pm *****

Week 14 (December 5): Proposal Draft Workshop

* Read all other student proposals and be prepared with comments on each.

***** Final proposal due Thursday, December 12, 5:00pm *****