

COGR 201
Crafting Research:
Methods of Historical, Visual, and Geographic Inquiry*
Fall, 2021 Thursdays 3:00 – 5:50

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Course Description

This course focuses on the crafting of dissertation research in the social sciences and humanities and aims to chart a different pathway for teaching and learning about methods across different disciplines. Most courses devoted to methods focus on a canon of knowledge deriving from texts best described as ‘primers’ for doing research. While such literature has its uses, reading it can be a bit insufferable.

This seminar, by contrast, will feature some of the most engaging and even controversial literature in humanities and social sciences as the anchor for learning about methods. While we will critique these readings for content, our focus will be on the methodological architecture of these texts exemplified by the following types of questions: How did authors frame a research question and set-up their arguments? How did they situate their research within a body of literature? What kinds of archives did authors enlist for evidence in support of the claims in the arguments? What were the different types of data and evidence collected by authors? What was the organizational structure of the work in terms of chapters or subheadings? What was the “voice” of the writing in the text? What were the challenges – logistical and conceptual -- confronting authors in gathering evidence to support the argument? What theories did authors use in developing their narratives? What is a case study and when is it appropriate to compare different cases? Finally, how did authors justify the importance of their research? Such questions will frame the agenda of the course, highlighted each week by a specific theme.

Course Format

As of this moment (August), our course may or may not be in person but the situation is fluid and can change. Whatever happens, our basic format remains the same. Each session of the seminar will be chaired by 1-2 students who will make a presentation of 25-30 minutes, highlighting the relevant content but focusing on methodological issues raised by the reading(s) for the week. The presenter(s) will conclude by posing at least three questions for discussion. Each seminar participant, in turn, will also be responsible for posing at least one question for the discussion. The discussion to follow will, of course, examine substance but our primary task will be to determine how authors resolved the methodological challenges of putting their narratives together in accordance with some of the questions posed above. Roughly 10-15 minutes before the conclusion of each session, the instructor may intervene to provide closing comments on the discussion along with a preview of the material for the next session.

Course Requirements

Participants are expected to attend *all* sessions and to complete the readings listed for each session. For the 10-week seminar, each student will prepare two 3-page written “reflections” of the argument(s), methods, and compelling content in the readings for the week. One reflection will be in the week of the presentation; the second will be a week of his or her choosing. There is no set format for these reflection papers but they might best be likened to a critical book review and should analyze and critique how author(s) have built and supported their research. These reflections will be distributed to seminar participants by the late morning of the class meeting. Taking into account that participants may be in very different stages of their research, the final assignment will be flexible. It may consist of a research proposal, a critical review essay on a work from the course, a dissertation prospectus or chapter, an exam qualifying paper, a conference paper, etc. This final assignment will be coordinated with the instructor.

Weekly themes and readings will include the following:

* Syllabus subject to change

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 A World of 'Turns': Situating Method in Social Sciences and Humanities

Blank, Yissai and Rosen-Zvi, Issi (2010). "The Spatial Turn in Social Theory. *Hagar*. Vol. 10 (1): 1-6.
<http://in.bgu.ac.il/humsos/hagar/Site%20Assets/Pages/Archive/Introduction%2010-1.pdf>

Nash, Kate (2001). "The 'Cultural Turn' in Social Theory: Towards a Theory of Cultural Politics." *Sociology*. Vol. 35 (1): 77-92. [Read 77-82]. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0038038501035001006>

Carter, Philip M, (2013). "Mapping the Linguistic Turn in Social Theory." *Language and Linguistics Compass*. Vol. 7 Issue 11: 580-96. [Read pp. 583-85]. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/1749818x/2013/7/11>

Week 2 From Article to Book: Truth-Telling in a Universe of Power, Cynics and Skepticism

Roudakova, Natalia (2009). "Journalism as "Prostitution": Understanding Russia's Reactions to Anna Politkovskaya's Murder." *Political Communication*. Vol. 26 (4): 412-29.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10584600903053890>

Roudakova, Natalia (2017). *Losing Pravda: Ethics and the Press in Post-Truth Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [pp. 1-50]

Week 3 'Past as Prologue': Historicizing the Present in Comparative Research

Fields, Gary (2017). *Enclosure: Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror*. Berkeley: University of California Press [pp. ix-xiv, 1-6].

Khalili, Laleh (2013). *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counter-Insurgencies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press [pp. 1-64, 172-212].

Khalili, Laleh (2019). Lecture: "The Colonial Past and Violent Present of Confinement in Counter-Insurgencies." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmOt8408ckQ> [An extraordinary lecture; Start watching at 4:45]

Week 4 Landscape as Text: Drawing upon the Land Surface as Archive

Fields, Gary (2017). *Enclosure: Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror*. Berkeley: University of California Press [pp. 6-11].

Braverman, Irus (2009). *Planted Flags: Trees, Land and Law in Israel / Palestine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 5 Visuality and Physical Objects: Making Meanings from Material Culture and 'Things'

Rose, Gillian (2016). *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Methods*. 4th Edition. London: Sage [pp. 24-41].

Sturkin, Marita (Forthcoming, 2022). *Terrorism in American Memory: Memorials, Museums, and Architecture in the Post-9/11 Era*. New York: New York University Press. [pp. 1-128; We will read from a PDF supplied by Marita Sturkin that cannot be circulated.]

Week 6 Enslavement: Representing Racialized Landscapes of Confinement and Expansion

Johnson, Walter (2013). *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press [1-17, 126-279].

Johnson, Walter (2020). Video: “The Carceral Landscape.” Presentation at Ohio State University. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DciyjaQMcaY>

Week 7 Cartographies of Modernity: Mapping Narratives of Modern Statecraft

Scott, James C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press [pp. 1-142].

Scott, James C. (2012). “Interview.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddENAM6MG2k>
[A wonderful lesson on scholarship and writing]

Week 8 Disease: Uncovering the Politics of Conquest in Science, Engineering and Public Health

Sufian, Sandra (2007). *Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920–1947*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [Read Introduction, chapters 1-3, and chapter 7].

Week 9 Geography Imagined: Seeing Tourism as an Agent of Empire

Said, Edward (2000). Invention, Memory and Place." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 26 (2): 175-192. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344120?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

McDonald, Kate (2017). *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Imperial Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press [Read Preface, Chapters 1-3]

McDonald, Kate (2018). “Podcast on *Placing Empire*.” <https://www.podbean.com/media/share/pb-i56qk-8a95e5>

Week 10 Dissertation Rediscovered: Communication Networks in the Making of Revolution

Wood, Peter H. (2018). “Doing Real Research: How Julius Scott Hooked a Marlin.” *H-Net*.

DuBois, Laurent (2018). “Listening In: Lessons from *The Common Wind*.” *H-Net*
<https://networks.h-net.org/node/116796/blog/test-blog/3473234/h-haiti-forum-common-wind-honor-julius-scott#%E2%80%9CDoing%20Real%20Research%E2%80%9D%20%E2%80%93%20How%20Julius%20Scott%20Hooked%20a%20Marlin>

Scott, Julius C. (2018): *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*. London: Verso. [Forward, Preface, pp. 1-36, 76-158.]

