Syllabus

ENV 391 Environmental Social Sciences Research Workshop
LSRC A109
W 2:50-4:05

Nature and Purpose of the Course

This workshop is open to Ph.D. students at all stages of the dissertation process. This workshop will discuss research design, major research methods in the social sciences, and provide students with opportunities to present and critique each others’ work. Expectations for course participation vary slightly for students in different stages of their Ph.D. Please see course format below for more details. The research methods part of the course varies from year to year and students may register for credit in more than one year.

Course format: The course will be run as a seminar. The course has two components. The first component is a set of lectures/discussions on research design and research methods commonly used in the social sciences. For these lectures students are expected to do the readings in advance and actively participate in the discussion. All students are welcome to attend these classes, but they are expected to be most useful for students who are in the process of identifying dissertation ideas and preparing their dissertation prospectus. Students with an approved dissertation prospectus may choose to skip these lectures without penalty.

The remainder of the course will consist of student presentations and discussions. Each student will be expected to present one time during the semester and serve as the discussant one time. First year students will interview a faculty member about one of their research projects. The student should discuss how the faculty member came up with the research idea, what methods were used in the study and why, what obstacles the faculty member faced during the study and how they were overcome, and finally what lessons they learned from the research process that they would share with future researchers. Second year students and beyond will present either a preliminary research prospectus or preliminary research findings.

Each presenter will circulate to the group background material (e.g. PowerPoint slides, paper, related article) 3 days before their presentation. To maximize discussion, presentations should be limited to 20 minutes. Discussion leaders will start the discussion with 5 minutes of comments. The remainder of the time will be devoted to class discussion.
Grading: The course grade will be based 30% on classroom participation and 70% on the research presentation and paper. The research presentation should be accompanied by a short paper (1000 - 1200 words) submitted to the instructor. Students wishing to earn more than one credit will work with the instructor to design one additional course requirement that is consistent with the student’s tenure in the program and educational and research objectives.

Recommended Texts:


Schedule:

January 10th: Elements of Research Design and Types of Inference in Social Science Research (SSR)

Required:
KKV Chapters 1-3
Maxwell Chapter 1

Optional Further Readings:
Maxwell Chapters 2-4, Chapter 7

January 17th: Common Issues in SSR: Selection and Validity

Required:
KKV Chapters 4-5
Maxwell chapters 5-6

January 24th: Marty Smith, Simulation Methods

Required:


**January 31st:** Erika Weinthal, Comparative Case Methods

**Required:** TBA

**February 7th - March 28th:** Student Presentations

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