FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIO-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Bill Winders
bill.winders@gatech.edu
Office: Old CE 106
Office Phone: (404) 894-8401

HTS 7001
Thur., 6:00-9:00pm
Old CE 104
Fall 2013

Course Overview:
To answer questions, scholars and researchers must collect, analyze, and present data. This course will introduce an array of research methods – both historical and sociological – to students. We will begin the course by looking at the work “behind the research.” That is, how do we formulate questions? What is the organization and structure of social scientific inquiry? How do scholars present their research?

After formulating questions, of course, scholars must collect evidence to find answers. We will explore a wide variety of sources of data: archives, interviews, secondary data (e.g., census data), and so forth. Collecting such data is often as time-consuming as analyzing it.

In analyzing and presenting data, scholars have a number of methods from which to choose. Throughout the semester, we will explore both qualitative methods (e.g., ethnographies, oral histories, and historical and comparative methods) and quantitative methods (e.g., regression analysis). We will discuss the benefits and drawbacks of these different methods by reading and evaluating various examples of each type of research. The goal is to expose students to a number of different methodologies since different research questions often lend themselves to different methods.

Finally, we will examine the link between methods and theory. Particularly toward the end of the course, we will focus on this link by exploring how theories are often intimately linked to scholars’ choices of methods.

Requirements:
There will be several criteria for student performance in this course: class participation and several short assignments. In fulfilling these requirements, students are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code (www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Honor/).

Participation (30%)
Participation is essential for this class because each class session will center around discussion. So, make sure you do the reading and come prepared to discuss. To facilitate class discussion, each student should submit at least 2 questions about the readings by 10:00am (before class) on Wednesday.

Short Assignments (70%)
Throughout the semester, you will complete seven short assignments focusing on developing a research question and using different methodologies: oral history, survey (GSS) analysis, quantitative data collection, government documents, QCA, and data construction. We will discuss these assignments as they approach. These assignments will give you “hands-on” experience with a variety of research methods. We will also read examples of scholarly use of these methods, exploring their strengths and weakness.
Readings:
All books are available at the Engineer’s Bookstore at 748 Marietta Street. We will be reading each of the required books, so you should purchase or find a copy of each of these. The recommended books may be purchased at your discretion. While the recommended books are important works, we will only be reading parts of each of them.

Required Books:

Recommended:
**Kuhn, Thomas. 1962. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.**

Weekly Schedule
Aug. 22 Introduction: Getting Started with Research at Georgia Tech (and in Atlanta)

**Behind the Research: What Matters and Why?**
Aug. 29 Asking Research Questions
Kuhn, Thomas. 1962. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chapters 2-4.

Sept. 5 Methodologies, Data, and Presenting Research
Assignment #1 DUE: Developing a Research Question.

** Between Friday, September 6 and Thursday, September 12: Meet individually with Bruce Henson of Tech’s Library to discuss possible primary and/or secondary sources of data for your course research interests.**
Sept. 12  

*The Significance of Research: Ethics, Controversies, and Standards of Data*


---

**Solving the Puzzle: How Do We Answer Our Questions?**

Sept. 19  


Sept. 26  

“Giving Voice”: *Conducting Oral Histories.*


**Assignment #2 Due:** Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources.

Oct. 3  

*The Business of History: Exploring Patents, Business Records, etc.*

Usselman, Steven. 2002. *Regulating Railroad Innovation*. (Selected Chapters)

Oct. 10  

*The “Official” Record of the Past: Using Government Documents*


Oct. 17  

“Big Questions, Big Numbers”: *Using Surveys to Collect Data.*


Oct. 24  

*Through the Looking Glass: Quantitative Analyses*


**Assignment #3 DUE:** Oral History Interview.
Oct. 31  
*A Record of the Past: Using Government Archives*  
**Trip to the National Archives Facilities in Atlanta**  
Assignment #4 DUE: Congressional Hearings

Nov. 7  
*Behind the Numbers: Quantitative Methods.*  
Assignment #5 DUE: GSS Data Assignment.

Nov. 14  
*“Apples and Oranges”: Comparative Historical Methods.*  
Assignment #6 DUE: Archival Assignment

Nov. 21  
*A More Rigorous Comparison?: The Qualitative Comparative Approach.*  
Assignment #7 DUE: Using QCA to evaluate arguments

Nov. 28  
*No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday*

Data, Methods, and Theory: What’s the Link?  
Dec. 5  
*“Freedom Rising”: How do we explain the emergence of democracy?*  