

## **Research Methods/Applied Sociology Area Examination Guidelines**

### **Committee Composition**

The Research Methods/Applied Sociology Area Committee will consist of all faculty members who teach graduate courses in research methods, statistics, and/or applied sociology (Paul Ciccantell, Whitney DeCamp, Chien-juh Gu, David Hartmann, Elena Lisovskaya, Angie Moe, Jesse Smith, Zoann Snyder, and Kate Tierney).

### **Area Examination Committee Composition**

Each student electing to take an examination in the area will select a committee chair and two additional members from among the methods area committee faculty listed above. The student, in consultation with their exam committee chair, may request a faculty member who is not part of the area committee faculty but does have research or teaching experience central to the student's specialization area. Committee members should be selected based on the student's interests in the area and relevant course work. Students are encouraged to select their examination committee during their first year in the doctoral program.

### **Reading List**

In consultation with the exam committee, each student will develop and obtain approval of a reading list that includes comprehensive coverage of the epistemology of social research, core research methods, and topics to be addressed within each method as specified below by the Research Methods and Applied Sociology Committee. The reading list will also incorporate literature relevant to the student's specialization in the area.

#### *I. General Issues of the Epistemology of the Social Research*

- Durkheim, Emile. 1938. *The Rules of the Sociological Method*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, Max. 1949. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, edited and translated by E.A. Shils and H.A. Finch. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

#### *II. Core methods of social research*

- Applied Methods (General Works)
- Experimental designs
- Ethnography
- Field work
- Focus groups
- Comparative methods (historical and cross-national)
- Interviewing
- Survey Research

- Nonreactive methods (e.g., secondary data analysis and content analysis of written and/or visual texts)
- [Other, more specialized methods may be added at the committee discretion]

### *III. Topics to be covered with each method AND appropriate to a particular method*

- Research designs (applied/basic; deductive/inductive; quantitative/qualitative/mixed; longitudinal/cross-sectional, etc.)
- Analytical techniques:
  - Statistical methods / quantitative analysis
    - Descriptive statistics: uni-, bi-, and multi-variate techniques of statistical analysis; frequency distributions; and measures of central tendency. [More advanced techniques may be included at the discretion of a particular committee].
    - Inferential statistics: correlation; factor analysis; multiple regression; and statistical significance and means of its evaluation.
  - Qualitative methods of data analysis:
    - coding, classification, reflexivity, triangulation, etc.
    - researcher positionality, power imbalances, ethics of field research
    - considerations of trustworthiness (e.g. credibility, transferability, etc.)
    - inductive and deductive coding strategies
    - open coding, data condensing, thematic development
    - ethical concerns specific to smaller (easily identifiable) samples, data storage, masking, confidentiality
    - specific qualitative criterion
- Sampling techniques:
  - Probability sampling (students are expected to demonstrate understanding of specific techniques and the basics of probability theory)
  - Non-Probability sampling techniques
- Tests of validity and reliability
- Ethics in social and behavioral research

These are all basics for all students to know.

- Each particular committee will decide if and which additional topics should be included (or not).
- Each particular committee will prescribe and approve the list of readings for these (and additional if any) topics.

### **Area Examination Format**

The student will be given five days to complete the written portion of the area examination. Students will be expected to keep their answers to a 20 page maximum per question of double-spaced text with one inch margins. An oral examination will be scheduled within three weeks of completion of the written portion of the examination. The oral examination may cover content of the written examination, as well as other material from the core and the student's specialty reading lists.