

## LEGAL STUDIES HONORS SEMINAR

Legal Studies H195A / Fall 2023  
Thursdays, 9:00am – 12:00pm / Selznick Seminar Room / UC Berkeley

**Instructor:** Professor Calvin Morrill / [cmorrill@berkeley.edu](mailto:cmorrill@berkeley.edu)

**Office hours:** / Mondays, 10:00am – 12:00pm / or by email appointment / Note: office hours can be via Zoom or in-person at 2240 Piedmont, Room 306

**Office hours sign-up link:** <http://www.wejoinin.com/cmorrill@law.berkeley.edu>

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**Office hours:** Wednesdays, 10:00am– 12:00pm / or by email appointment / Note: office hours can be [via Zoom](#) or in-person at 2240 Piedmont, Room 259

**Office hours sign-up link:** <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/ntlti>

### Course Description

We welcome you to a writing- and research-intensive five-unit graded seminar (LS H195A), which is designed to guide you in the development and completion of an honors thesis research proposal. We will meet in class for three hours on Thursdays to introduce you to socio-legal inquiry using a variety of relevant social science and humanistic research methods. Class will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, and group workshops on writing assignments. We will work primarily in a seminar environment where exchange among us will be a key feature of the learning process.

Students are expected to work approximately fifteen hours per week (total) in and out of class reading, preparing pre-class assignments, and engaging in individual research in order to complete satisfactorily the honors thesis. In the fall semester, most weeks will require independent reading and a pre-class assignment. At regular intervals, students will also present their work and participate productively in workshops, and will submit four major assignments. Please be sure to read the syllabus carefully each week. In addition, we expect students to participate and consult with us regularly (in many cases, weekly) via office hours and/or appointments. All honors students will receive extensive written and verbal feedback on their pre-class and major assignments. We expect you to draw on that feedback in revising the components of your research proposal in subsequent assignments.

This seminar (H195A) constitutes the first part of the Legal Studies Honors Program. In the spring 2024 semester, honors students will sign up for both H195B and H195C. For H195B, students will work under the supervision of a faculty member (usually in the Legal Studies Program or Berkeley Law) to write an honors thesis. H195C is a two-unit seminar that is designed to help you make progress on your honors thesis by discussing and confronting, as a group, common pitfalls and challenges that arise when writing a thesis length paper. Ultimately, when a student's thesis is judged to be of honors-quality, students will receive departmental honors at graduation. Students must receive at least B+ in H195A in order to be eligible to enroll in H195B and H195C and to be eligible for departmental honors. At the end of the spring semester, students enrolled in H195B and H195C are expected to present their research at the 2024 Lauren Edelman Legal Studies Undergraduate Research Conference on **Friday, April 26, 2024**. Students must attend the entire conference with exceptions made only for other classes that meet that day.

## Grading

The grading for LS H195A will be determined as outlined in the table immediately below:

	Component	% Final Grade
1	Pre-class Assignments and Final Proposal Presentations	10%
2	Class Participation	10%
2	Major Assignment #1: Thesis Topic and Research Questions	10%
3	Major Assignment #2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	10%
4	Major Assignment #3: Statement of Anticipated Research Methods	10%
6	Major Assignment #4: Final Research Proposal and Abstract	50%

Class participation will be evaluated on the basis of active engagement in class discussions. Active engagement includes: on-time attendance, submitting materials on time for major workshops, providing constructive feedback and help to your classmates during mini-workshops and major workshops, and asking questions whenever you have them.

Pre-class assignments and final proposal presentations will be graded for on-time completion only. However, keep in mind that the more you put into your pre-class assignments, the more we can provide feedback that will assist you in your major assignments (all of which are based on previous pre-class assignments).

Each major assignment will be evaluated on a number of criteria, including:

- Socio-legal content
- Quality of any background research (especially for the literature review)
- Conciseness and clarity in writing
- Spelling and grammar (and, importantly, correcting any previously identified errors)
- Precision and sophistication of ideas
- Organization
- Ability to identify and address research limitations

As the goal of this course is to progress from an original idea to a completed proposal, credit will be given for demonstrated growth and improvement across assignments. Thus, grading is weighted towards the final product, which incorporates all previous work.

## Major Assignments

Descriptions and requirements for each of the major, take-home assignments appear at the end of this syllabus. Major assignments are due by 5:00pm to the LS H195A bCourses site on these dates:

- #1: *Motivation and Research Question* Monday, September 18
- #2: *Literature Review and Theoretical Framework* Monday, October 23
- #3: *Statement of Anticipated Research Methods* Monday, November 13
- #4: *Final Research Proposal with Abstract* Friday, December 15

Major assignments are to be submitted as **Microsoft Word files only** (Microsoft Word is available for free to Berkeley students at: <https://software.berkeley.edu/microsoft-365-apps-enterprise>). If you write using google docs, download your document as an MS Word file.

Unless otherwise indicated, major assignments must be uploaded to the appropriate assignment folder on bCourses, which can be found either in the Assignments tab or in the Modules list by their due dates. All submissions must be submitted in Word and follow the file labeling protocol detailed in the assignments. Major assignments will be reviewed and returned with feedback in the following week.

### **Pre-class Assignments**

Each week, there will be a short pre-class assignment, as indicated in the “Schedule of Class Topics” below. Unless otherwise indicated, pre-class assignments must be uploaded to the appropriate folder under the ‘Assignments’ menu tab of bCourses by **5pm on the Monday preceding the relevant (Thursday) class period**. In most cases, you will receive written feedback on your pre-class assignment within two days. You should use that feedback to improve your writing as the assignments are progressive.

### **Major & Mini Workshops Participation**

*Major workshops* (Classes 4, 9, and 11) comprise the entire class period and will provide all seminar members with substantial peer feedback at the initial and intermediate stages of developing their projects. All seminar members are expected to prepare not only by submitting the week’s pre-class assignment, but also by reviewing the documents uploaded by other students and by coming ready to discuss them. Further instructions appear in the “Schedule of Class Topics” below.

*Mini workshops* will be included during the final part of most class periods in order to engage in collaborative learning exercises, to discuss particular research examples either from the class or from graduate student or faculty research. In most cases, mini-workshops will involve group discussion of your pre-class assignments. Each student will receive individualized feedback from both the instructors and other students. In some cases, mini-workshops will involve research presentations by graduate students or faculty.

All seminar members are expected to participate actively by offering constructive feedback to your peers in both the major and mini workshops.

### **Proposal Presentations**

All students will present their preliminary research proposals during one of the final two class periods of the fall semester, November 30 and December 7. Further instructions will be provided well in advance of these dates.

### **Readings**

All readings will be available on bCourses organized by class module. You must complete these readings before the class period for which they are listed, as the readings are tailored towards our

in-class discussions and activities. Additionally, many of these readings will prepare you to undertake the original and library-based research required for the completion of your thesis.

### **Disability and Religious Accommodation**

If you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. You will need to be evaluated by the Berkeley Disabled Students Program (<https://dsp.berkeley.edu/>), which will recommend the appropriate accommodations. If you will need an accommodation based on your religious preferences, please let me know as soon as possible.

### **Course Policies**

- **General:** Please arrive on time for class so as not to disturb your classmates or instructors.
- **Attention:** Please do not participate in social media, messaging, emailing, or other work during class. It is often obvious and is distracting both to fellow students and to the instructors!
- **Respect:** The honors seminar works best when honors students treat one another with respect even when you disagree with what is being said and when you support one another throughout the year.
- **Helping One Another:** In past years, honors students have found it extremely valuable to form a google group for support, exchange of helpful ideas, or feedback on assignments. We will provide emails so that you can organize such a group if you would like. Remember, there is no grading curve in this class so please help one another! You will learn best in an environment where everyone is sharing knowledge.
- **Use of AI:** AI cannot be employed for a use that would constitute plagiarism if the generative AI source were a human or organizational author. For discussion of plagiarism, see: <https://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/academic-misconduct-intro/plagiarism/>

### **Student Learning Objectives**

Students in LS H195A will learn how to design and undertake original interdisciplinary empirical research at a level that would generally be expected of first-year graduate courses. The course specific objectives are:

- To develop a good empirical research question.
- To write a scholarly literature review framed around the research question that critically engages the extant literature.
- To identify and justify a feasible methodology through which to answer the research question.
- To complete a literature review framed around the research question.
- To develop a theoretical statement that explains how the proposed research will advance socio-legal knowledge.
- To know the basics of a variety of social science and humanities research methods.
- To engage the normative and policy implications of the research.
- To write a research proposal in the style of a National Science Foundation proposal.
- To improve one's writing skills.
- To present one's research in an academic workshop.
- To provide constructive feedback to peers.

Students who go on to LS H195B and H195C will continue to learn:

- To improve one's writing skills.
- To collect and analyze empirical data.
- To recognize and write about the strengths and weaknesses of data collection and analysis.
- To write about research findings.
- To integrate qualitative and quantitative research findings (where applicable).
- To offer policy or normative recommendations based on research findings.
- To provide engaged feedback to others on their research and writing.
- To complete the senior honors thesis.
- To present research findings in a professional conference setting.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASS TOPICS

### Class 1: Course Introduction and Introduction to Research Questions

Thursday, August 24

#### Pre-class assignment 1:

*For discussion:* Peruse the titles and abstracts in the sample of past honors theses attached to pre-class assignment 1 email. Note how the authors framed their topics in their thesis titles and abstracts.

*Submit:* Write up to two 1-paragraph descriptions of possible thesis topics of your own. These can be the ideas you submitted with your application for the program or can be different topics. They also can be very rough at this point. Please **email them to [Bonnie Cherry](mailto:bonniecherry@berkeley.edu) ([bonniecherry@berkeley.edu](mailto:bonniecherry@berkeley.edu)) by 5 pm on Monday, August 21**. Do not forget to put your name, date, and LS H195A in the upper left-hand corner of the document (this protocol should also be followed for all future assignments). All assignments should be submitted in Word (not PDF) so that we can comment on them.

#### Reading:

- Maitlis, Sally. 2011. "What Do You Care About? Studying What I Love." Pp. 75-77 in *Research Alive: Exploring Generative Moments in Doing Qualitative Research*, Arne Carlesen and Jane E. Dutton, eds. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press.

#### Class:

- Introductions
- Discussion of Thesis Process for the entire year
- Introduction to Socio-Legal Research Questions
- Advice on Choosing a Topic and Question
  - Ethical considerations
  - Feasibility!

#### Discussion:

- Be prepared to discuss one or two of your ideas in class very briefly. We will discuss your research topics and how they might be reframed as research questions.

## Class 2: Forming Research Questions

Thursday, August 31

### Pre-class assignment 2:

*For discussion:* Read the abstracts and introductions of three thesis *proposals* on the bCourses site from the “LS Honors Thesis Proposals” module, which appears towards the end of the modules.

*Submit:* Based on feedback you received on your topics, draft one or two research questions (as opposed to topics). If you are ready to narrow it to one question, that is great, but if you would like feedback on two questions, that is fine too. If you feel ready, try to draft few sub-questions (but this can also wait until next week). Remember to **upload your research questions to bCourses by 5pm Monday, August 28**. Again, these can be tentative at this point.

### Readings:

- Schutt, Russell K. 2019. “The Process and Problems of Social Research.” Pp. 89-104 in *Investigating the Social World* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- “Legal Studies Honors Template for Proposals and Theses.” University of California, Berkeley.
- Sample LS honors proposal abstracts and introductions (see above)

### Class:

- Presentation of Legal Studies Research Proposal Template
- Research Questions (continued)
- Introduction to Dependent and Independent Variables
- Feasibility!

### Mini-Workshop:

- Discussion of proposed research questions

### Supplemental Readings (optional):

- Lipson, Charles. 2005. Pp. 23, 24, and 66-77 in *How to Write a BA Thesis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Calavita, Kitty. 2016. “Introduction” and “Conclusion.” Pp. 1-10 and 148-153 in *Invitation to Law and Society: An Introduction to the Study of Real Law* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb & Joseph Williams. 2008. “From Topics to Questions.” Pp. 35-50 in *The Craft of Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Class 3: Linking Research Questions with Research Methods

Thursday, September 7

### Pre-class assignment 3:

*For discussion:* Read one complete thesis *proposal* in the module for Past LS Honors Thesis Proposals. Identify the research question, the general methodology, and how the thesis is socio-legal. Come prepared to discuss this in class.

*Submit:* Revise your research question based on feedback from last week and add some sub-questions. Make sure that your sub-questions are actually subsets of the overall question. If you have an idea what type of method you might use, add a sentence on that (if not, that is fine at this point). **Upload your research questions to bCourses by 5pm Monday, September 4.**

Readings:

- Luker, Kristin. 2008. "What is This a Case of, Anyway?" Pp. 51-75 in *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schutt, Russell K. 2019. "Social Research Strategies." Pp. 123-145 in *Investigating the Social World* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Class:

- Overview of Research Methods
- Relationship of Data Collection Strategy to Research Question
- The Link between Data Collection and Data Analysis
- Advice on Choosing a *Feasible* Data Collection Strategy
- Research Ethics and IRBs

Mini-Workshop:

- Discussion of the connections among research questions and research methods.

**Class 4: MAJOR WORKSHOP #1 – RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Thursday, September 14

Pre-class assignment 4:

*Submit:* In light of comments from last week, revise your research question and sub-questions and draft (or re-draft) a brief, initial statement of anticipated method(s). **Due 5pm Monday, September 11, uploaded to bCourses.** Bonnie will post all questions so that you can read each other's questions prior to class on Thursday.

*For discussion:* Review other seminar members' questions prior to class and come prepared to discuss both yours and other members' proposed questions.

**Workshop:** Discussion of Honors Students' Research Questions

Supplemental Readings:

- Booth, Wayne, Gregory Colomb & Joseph Williams. 2008. "From Questions to a Problem." Pp. 51-67 in *The Craft of Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**MAJOR ASSIGNMENT #1: Motivation and Research Question**  
**(Due by 5 pm, Monday, September 18)**

Be sure to read the detailed assignment and tips at the end of the syllabus.

## **Class 5: Literature Reviews and Theoretical Frameworks**

Thursday, September 21

### Pre-class assignment 5:

*For discussion:* Select one sample thesis proposal (in the LS Honors Thesis Proposals module) and carefully read its literature review. Pay attention to how that literature review is organized, and think about what works well and what you would do differently. Consider how you would organize your own literature review. What schools of thought or bodies of literatures might you prioritize? What debates could you engage with, and how would your research fill a gap in knowledge? You do not have to have specific answers to these questions as we will continue discussing these questions in the coming weeks – for now, brainstorming will suffice, but please come to class prepared to discuss these issues.

Nothing to submit, but begin thinking about your literature reviews, which are due Monday, October 23 and require a lot of work! Important advice: Begin your literature review now – you will not be able to write it at the last minute!

### Readings:

- Schutt, Russell K. 2019. “Searching and Reviewing the Literature.” Pp. 104-122 in *Investigating the Social World* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sample Literature Review (on bCourses: LS Honors Thesis Proposals module)

### Class:

- How to Write and Organize a Literature Review
- Writing a Theoretical Statement (and its relation to the Literature Review)
- Social Theory and Hypotheses
- Critical Theory

### Supplemental Readings:

- Schutt, Russell K. 2019. “Appendix A” and “Appendix B.” Pp. 1056-1107 in *Investigating the Social World* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ragin, Charles C. and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. “The Goals of Social Research.” Pp. 28-44 in *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Luker, Kristin. 2008. “Reviewing the Literature.” Pp. 76-98 in *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## **Class 6: How to Search the Literature**

Thursday, September 28

### Pre-assignment:

*For discussion:* Think about questions you have for the librarians on how to search the literature.

*Submit:* Think about which two or three literatures are most relevant to your research question and list them, along with a couple of sentences about how or why you see that literature as relevant to



your thesis. In addition, list one or two readings under each of these literatures. (*Note: For this and all future pre- class assignments, please include your research question and sub-questions at the top of the assignment to facilitate our review.*) **Due 5pm Monday, September 25, uploaded to bCourses.**

Reading:

- Library Guides (bCourses)

Class:

- Librarian-led presentation on using the law library and government documents
- How to search the literature
- How to organize literature as you read it

Supplementary Reading:

- Abbott, Andrew. 2014. "A Library Ethnography" and "Midphase Scanning, Browsing, and Brute Force." Pp. 15-35 and 110-128 in *Digital Paper: A Manual for Research and Writing with Library and Internet Materials*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### **Class 7: Qualitative Field Research and Interviewing**

Thursday, October 5

Pre-class assignment 7:

*For discussion:* Read one of the thesis proposals using interviews from the bCourses LS Honors Senior Theses (they are identified by methodology).

*Submit:* Revise your proposed literatures based on feedback from last week, and list 2-5 readings under each literature. You should include a total of 8-10 readings altogether. (*Note: This is a difficult pre-class assignment, but the goal is to make sure you have a good scheme for organizing your literature review as you move forward with your project.*) Seek help early if you need it! **Due 5pm Monday, October 2, uploaded to bCourses.**

Readings:

- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy. 2016. "In-Depth Interviewing." Pp. 106-144 in *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Samples of past Honors Theses using qualitative methods (on bCourses: Example Theses and Proposals > Theses by Methodology > Interviews)
- Note: Students who use this method for their thesis should eventually read all of the supplemental readings for this week.

Class:

- Logic of Qualitative Analysis
- Cases and Samples
- Interviewing
- Field observation, field notes, and qualitative analysis

### Mini-Workshop:

- Discussion of honors projects using field research or interviewing

### Supplemental Readings:

- Small, Mario Luis and Jessica McCrory Calarco. 2022. "Cognitive Empathy" and "Heterogeneity." Pp. 23-79 in *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Schutt, Russell K. 2019. "Qualitative Data Analysis." Pp. 720-737 in *Investigating the Social World*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Obasogie, Osagie K. 2010. "Do Blind People See Race? Social, Legal, and Theoretical Considerations." *Law & Society Review* 44: 585-616.
- Morrill, Calvin and Michael Musheno. 2018. "Preface," "Workin' It Out," and "Appendix A: Additional Notes on Data Collection, Analysis, Writing, and Generalizability." Pp. xi-xvii and 229-250 in *Navigating Conflict: How Youth Handle Trouble in a High-Poverty School*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## **Class 8: Archival Methods and Content Analysis**

Thursday, October 12

### Pre-class assignment 8:

*For discussion:* Review content analysis methods example from past student honors thesis examples and come prepared to discuss (on bCourses under the LS Honors Theses module).

*Submit:* Revise your theoretical/policy motivation and research question based on feedback you received on your first major assignment. Submit a clean version, which will be forwarded to your potential advisor. **Upload to bCourses by 5pm, Monday, October 9.** (Note: Separately, if you have a preference for an advisor, please let us know).

### Readings:

- Abbott, Andrew. 2014. "Midphase Scanning, Browsing, and Brute Force." Pp. 110-128 in *Digital Paper: A Manual for Research and Writing with Library and Internet Materials*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edelman, Lauren B. 2016. "Rhetorically Reframing Legal Ideals." Pp. 138-149 in *Working Law: Courts, Corporations, and Symbolic Civil Rights*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Samples of past Honors Theses using content analysis methods (on bCourses: Example Theses and Proposals > Theses by Methodology > Qualitative (or Quantitative) Content Analysis).
- Note: Students who are using content analyses for their theses should eventually read the portion of the Schutt supplementary reading on content analysis.

### Class:

- Content Coding and Analysis
- Applicability to History and Historical Documents
- Faculty or grad student research using content analysis

Mini-Workshop:

- Discussion of honors student proposed projects using content analysis
- Short coding exercise

Supplemental Reading:

- Schutt, Russell K. 2019. "Historical and Comparative Research and Content Analysis." Pp. 952-1004 in *Investigating the Social World*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fields, Karen. 1989. "What One Cannot Remember Mistakenly." *Oral History* 17: 44-53.

**Class 9: MAJOR WORKSHOP #2 – LITERATURE REVIEWS**

Thursday, October 19

Pre-class assignment 9:

*Submit:* Draft an introductory paragraph to your literature review that explains what literatures you are reviewing and why they are important. **Submit your introductory paragraph to bCourses by 5pm Monday, October 16.** For examples, look at the literature reviews in the sample thesis proposals in the LS Honors Thesis Proposals module on the bCourses site.

*For discussion:* Each of you will be assigned two other students' introductory paragraphs to comment on but you are welcome to comment on others as well. Come prepared to discuss both your own introductory paragraph and the two that you have been assigned.

*Workshop:* Discussion of Honors Students' Literature Review Introductory Paragraphs

**MAJOR ASSIGNMENT #2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**  
**(Due by 5pm, Monday, October 23)**

Be sure to read the detailed assignment and tips at the end of the syllabus.

**Class 10: Writing the Research Methods Section**

Thursday, October 26

Pre-class assignment 10:

*For discussion:* Review the research methods sections of two or three past senior honors theses (especially those that use a similar method to yours). Available on bCourses under the LS Honors Theses module.

*Nothing to submit.*

Readings:

- CPHS, Ethical Issues in Undergraduate Research Activities with Human Participants

Class:

- The Research Methods Section
  - Research Strategy
  - Sample
  - Variables and Measurement
  - Method of Analysis
  - Strengths and Weaknesses

Mini-workshop:

- Discussion of honors student methodologies

Supplemental Readings:

- Schutt, Russell K. 2019. "Conceptualization and Measurement," pp. 209-277 in *Investigating the Social World*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schutt, Russell K. 2019 "Sampling Methods" and "Units of Analysis." Pp. 304-333 and 355-359 in *Investigating the Social World*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

**Class 11: MAJOR WORKSHOP #3 – RESEARCH METHODS SECTIONS**

Thursday, November 2

Pre-class assignment 11:

*Submit:* Draft at least the first two sections (research strategy and sample/case selection) of your research methods sections. If you have more completed, that's great. If not, include an outline of the rest of your research methods section. **Due by 5pm Monday, October 30.** Read other students' abstracts and come prepared to discuss.

*For discussion:* Each student will be assigned two other students' methods drafts for comment.

*Workshop:* Discussion of all students' research methods section drafts.

**Class 12: Abstracts and Presentations**

Thursday, November 9

Pre-class assignment 12:

*For discussion:* Review the abstracts of several past honors thesis in the LS Honors Theses module.

*To submit (OPTIONAL):* Try drafting an abstract of 200-300 words. If you would like feedback, submit it via bCourses by 5:00pm on Monday, November 6. You may also send a draft abstract later via email to both Bonnie and Professor Morrill.

Readings:

- See Writing an Abstract at <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/writing-an-abstract>

Class:

- How to write an abstract
- Tips for Presentations

**MAJOR ASSIGNMENT #3:**  
**STATEMENT OF ANTICIPATED RESEARCH METHODS**  
**(Due by 5pm Monday November 13)**

Be sure to read the detailed assignment and tips at the end of the syllabus.

**NO CLASS THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16 (Individual Consultations)**  
**NO CLASS THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23 (Thanksgiving)**

**Class 13: STUDENT RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS I**  
Thursday, November 30

Half the class will do 10-minute presentations on their research proposals. Each presentation will be followed by 5 minutes of Q & A.

**Class 14: STUDENT RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS II**  
Thursday, December 7

The half of the class not presenting on November 30 will do 10-minute presentations on their research proposals. Each presentation will be followed by 5 minutes of Q & A.

**MAJOR ASSIGNMENT #4: FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL**  
**(Due by 5pm on Friday, December 15)**

Be sure to read the detailed assignment and tips at the end of the syllabus.

## <<MAJOR ASSIGNMENT DETAILS>>

### Major Assignment #1 Motivation and Research Question

**Due: 5pm, Monday, September 18, uploaded to bCourses**

**File Name: [Last Name]\_Assignment1\_[DateOfSubmission]**

**Document Format: MS Word, 1.5 spaced, left-aligned**

**Citation Format: Chicago (see <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>)**

***Please put your name on the assignment itself in the top left corner of the document***

#### **Assignment Objective:**

1. To write your personal motivation for the topic you have chosen.
2. To write a theoretical and/or policy motivation for your research question.
3. To clearly state your research question and, if applicable, sub-questions.
4. To write a brief paragraph describing your likely data and methods.
5. (optional) To describe any concerns you have at this point about your research question.

#### **Assignment Description:**

**Part I – Personal Motivation:** Provide a narrative statement about the scope, direction and boundaries of your research topic, including what has drawn you to this particular topic. This can be a narrative statement about why you are motivated to write about this topic and may (but need not) include a personal story of how you came to this topic and/or why it is meaningful to you.

**Part II – Theoretical/Policy Motivation:** Provide a motivation for your topic based on theory and/or policy. Here, you should move away from statements that place you in the narrative (such as “I am interested in XYZ” or “I became interested in this topic when XYZ happened”), and instead locate a “hook” that would entice other socio-legal scholars to care about your topic (the nature of this “hook” is further explained in Kristin Luker’s chapter (“What is This is a Case of, Anyway?” from her book, *Dancing Through the Social Sciences*), which we read earlier in the semester. The theoretical significance should explain how your project is based on existing literature. The policy significance may refer to ongoing legal dilemmas, miscarriages of justice, instances of discrimination or disenfranchisement, etc. If you are having difficulty locating a theoretical or policy significance in your project, come talk to either one of us in advance of this assignment’s due date.

Part III – Research Question and Sub-Questions: Very clearly and concisely, state your research question and sub-questions. Make sure that sub-questions are subsidiary to your main research question, not different questions. Write the research question in prose rather than outline form.

For example: My research question is: How does undocumented status matter in the workplace? My sub- questions are: (1) What kind of problems do undocumented persons face in the workplace?; 2) What do undocumented persons do about these problems?; 3) To what extent do undocumented persons understand their problems as legal problems; 4) How does generation matter in how undocumented persons feel about their workplaces? (From Mayra Lozano thesis, 2019)

Part IV – Brief Statement of Anticipated Data and Method: Write a paragraph that briefly states your anticipated data and method. For example, for the Lozano research questions above, you might say that you intend to conduct interviews with people who are undocumented and have workplace experience.

If you have any concerns about your question, or about potential ways to explore your question, briefly describe them.

### **Helpful Tips:**

As you work on this assignment, be sure to check your notes and readings from the first couple of classes in the semester. Again, Luker’s “What is This a Case of, Anyway?” provides a good overview and introduction to framing the academic motivation for your project. Similarly, examples of research questions in proposals and theses from previous years (found on bCourses) would be quite helpful.

If you find yourself adrift or unsure about how to articulate a research question or motivation for that question, consider the following broad questions:

1. What scholarly audience would I like to address?
2. What is my project an example of?
3. What resources or ideas do I want to engage with?
4. What do I hope to achieve by exploring this issue?
5. Do my research questions go beyond a simple “yes” or “no” answer?

Your answers to these questions need not appear in your assignment, but they may be helpful in organizing your thoughts and/or your approach to your topic.

**Assignment Product:** 1-2 word-processed pages (1.5 spaced with standard margins).

**Major Assignment #2**  
**Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

**Due: 5 pm, Monday, October 23, uploaded to bCourses**

**File Name: [Last Name]\_Assignment2\_[DateOfSubmission]**

**Document Format: MS Word, 1.5 spaced, left-aligned**

**Citation Format: Chicago** (see <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>)

***Please put your name on the assignment itself in the top left corner of the document***

**Assignment Objective:** To clearly state and motivate your research question, write the first draft of your literature review, and provide a theoretical or conceptual statement.

**Assignment Description:** Your assignment should include the following three sections, labelled according to the bold terms.

**(1) Research Proposal Introduction (up to 1 page)**

In no more than one page (less is fine), motivate and state your research question (and any sub-questions). Do not include the personal motivation from Assignment #1 – instead, use only the theoretical and/or policy motivation. See the Template for Undergraduate Honors Theses if you have questions on this. This will in most cases be a substantially tightened version of Assignment #1 (without the personal motivation).

**(2) Literature Review (5-10 pages)**

Your literature review should be at least five, but no more than ten, pages long. Please note that the actual structure of the review, *e.g.* any headings and subheadings, depends on the theories and works with which you are engaging and will differ from student to student.

You should begin by writing a short introduction to your literature review that clearly explains how it is organized. For example, if you will be drawing on three different literatures (or approaches, or arguments), identify those literatures and say something about how they relate to your research question. Also, if you are drawing on a part of a larger literature, make clear what you are reviewing (*e.g.* the literature on the intersection of law and organizations rather than all literature on law and/or organizations).

Write the first draft of the literature review, with clearly labelled subsections that correspond to the different literatures or arguments or approaches that you identified in the introduction to the literature review.



### **(3) Theoretical or Conceptual Statement (1–3 pages)**

Drawing on your literature review, explain (a) how your project will elaborate and contribute to the existing literature, and (b) what theories and/or concepts you are drawing from the literature to help you to do so. If you are developing a new approach, explain how it is new or different. If you are answering a novel question in the literature, identify that question and explain how you will approach it (perhaps elaborating your sub-questions), drawing on any concepts from the literature that inform your logic of inquiry. If you are filling a gap in the literature or providing a test of competing arguments, explain how your research will do that. Depending on the nature of your project, you may want to develop specific hypotheses that are drawn from or build on the literature (but this is not necessary). In writing your theoretical or conceptual statement, you are encouraged to draw across bodies of literature and academic disciplines where appropriate to your topical interests and research questions.

#### **Helpful Tips:**

Examples of various literature reviews are available in the sample theses on bCourses (under the LS Honors Theses module). As you write your literature review, think about answering the following questions. However, these questions are just meant to guide you. You should not organize your literature review according to these questions. Instead, follow the organization outlined above.

1. What concepts or theories are you working with that illuminate your topical interests and the questions you have derived to date?
2. What are the main literatures relevant to your project?
3. What are the key/seminal works within those literatures?
4. What are the general arguments or hypotheses that are suggested by the literature?
5. How do you think your project will contribute to the existing body of knowledge that you have uncovered to date?
6. What theoretical, topical, or conceptual areas do you see yourself exploring further in the literature as your project matures?

Remember, a literature review is not an annotated bibliography. Rather it shows that you are familiar with the theoretical and empirical work that has already been done on your topic, that you can summarize it in a concise and integrated manner, and that you can clearly locate your contribution.

**Assignment Product: 6 - 12 word-processed pages.** *You must include a works cited page in Chicago format as detailed above.*

**Major Assignment #3**  
**Statement of Anticipated Research Methods**

**Due: 5 pm, Monday, November 13, uploaded to bCourses**

**File Name: [Last Name]\_Assignment3\_[DateOfSubmission]**

**Document Format: MS Word, 1.5 spaced, left-aligned**

**Citation Format: Chicago (see <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>)**

***Please put your name on the assignment itself in the top left corner of the document***

**Assignment Objective:** To draft your methodology section.

**Assignment Description:**

- 1) (From Assignments 1 and 2): At the front of your developing proposal, include your revised research question and motivation, and literature review. This part should be about 10-12 pages.
  
- 2) Describe the methodology you plan to use. Follow the directions below – except that, if you are doing a substantially humanistic or theoretical project with an empirical component, this section will cover only the empirical component. You would then, in addition, follow the instructions in part C. The entire methodology section should be about 3-6 pages.
  - a) Research strategy: Describe your general research strategy or strategies, such as interviews, observation, participant observation, experiment, survey, case study, historical archival research, content analysis, secondary analysis. Explain why this strategy is the most appropriate for your research question.
  
  - b) Sample: Describe your sampling strategy (including case or site selection if applicable).
  
  - c) Variables and operationalization (or key concepts): What are your key variables and/or concepts, and how will you operationalize them so they can be observed and/or measured? Where you are interested in a particular variable, you should specify how you will measure it and what values it would have. For example, for gender, you might assign the values male, female, or nonbinary based on appearance or you might ask your respondents to identify their gender. For race, you might assign race based on appearance or you might ask respondents to identify their race. In a survey, you might use a set of categories, which you should specify. For some qualitative projects, you may let your subjects define the concepts. For example, if you are conducting interviews to learn how people understand citizenship, then you would state that the definition of citizenship will be given by your subjects.

- d) Method of Analysis: Briefly describe your anticipated method(s) of data analysis (e.g., statistical, qualitative, historical). If your method of analysis is qualitative, state whether you plan to use qualitative coding software or code manually. If your method is statistical, provide details on whether you will use descriptive and/or multivariate analysis. If you know what program you would use, state that. If your method is historical, discuss your plan for analyzing your source material.
- e) Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your proposed method(s).
- f) If you plan to conduct a survey or interviews, include a preliminary outline of the topics you would cover or types of questions you would ask as an appendix.

### **Helpful Tips:**

See the slides and readings for Classes 3, 7, 8, and 9. You may also draw on the Schutt textbook, other classes you have taken, review of the methods section of a completed honors thesis, and discuss your methods with either of us or with other faculty or GSIs.

### **For substantially theoretical or humanistic projects:**

If your project is primarily humanistic and/or theoretical, your methodology will differ in key ways from the social-scientific methodology outlined in part B above, but it is still important to articulate the sources with which you will engage as well as how your project will build to an anticipated and well-supported conclusion. If you are unsure whether your project is humanistic or theoretical, be sure to consult us before proceeding.

- 1) Identify any theoretical writings, legal or political texts, cultural artifacts, or other sources you plan to close-read or otherwise analyze. Explain why these writings, texts, artifacts, etc. give rise to your research question and how you intend to interrogate these sources in order to answer the very questions they raise. In doing so, identify and contextualize the specific passages, dilemmas, problems, or concerns within these materials that will anchor your project – keep in mind that, in conducting theoretically-informed socio-legal research, it is often recommended that you bring your materials into sustained and rigorous conversation with real-world issues, examples, or problems in order to analyze illuminate the theoretical or humanistic conundrums.
- 2) After having identified your source materials, explain what kind of humanistic or theoretical analysis you will engage in and how you intend to go about it. For example:
  - a. If you are focusing on an *historical or genealogical* inquiry, you should identify the archives that will serve as the foundation of your inquiry. Give your reader an account of *why* and *how* you've chosen to focus on this particular archive, and what this selection means in terms of advancing your overall argument.

- b. If you are conducting a *normatively-informed theoretical analysis*, you should identify how your chosen authors or texts are central to advancing an argument related to a moral, social, or civil good, right, or just. This may mean that you will need to align yourself with a philosophical school of thought (such as utilitarian, libertarian, egalitarian, or radical egalitarian) in order to highlight just how you intend to support your conception of what is good, right, or just.
  - c. If you are conducting a *critically-oriented theoretical analysis*, you should identify the institution, law, or socio-legal norm that will serve as your object of critique. In order to carry out this mandate, you may need to align yourself with a mode of thought or body of scholarship (for example, like Foucauldian analyses of power, Marxist skepticism of “rights,” Kantian immanence, or Hegelian deconstructionism) that allows you to tease out why your institution, law, or norm should be an object of critique.
- 3) Lastly, if applicable, identify any other modes of analysis or research that will be helpful to your research. If you anticipate combining your humanistic or theoretical analysis with another research method, state which one you intend to pursue and why it add more depth to your project.

### **Helpful Tips:**

See the PowerPoints and readings for Classes 2 and 10 in particular, as well as the more specialized lecture on your particular methodology. You may also draw on the Schutt textbook, other classes you have taken, review of the methods section of a completed honors thesis, and discuss your methods with either of us or with other faculty or GSIs.

**Assignment Product:** Your anticipated research design section should be 3-6 word-processed pages. With your introduction, literature review, and theoretical statement, your assignment should be total of 9-20 pages. You must also include a works cited page in Chicago format as detailed above (this does not count for the 9-20 pages).

**Major Assignment #4  
Final Research Proposal with Abstract**

**Due: 5 PM, Friday December 15, uploaded to bCourses**

**File Name: [Last Name]\_PreliminaryProposal\_[DateOfSubmission]**

**Document Format: MS Word, 1.5 spaced, left-aligned, submit as attachment**

**Citation Format: Chicago (see <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>)**

***Please put your name on the assignment itself in the top left corner of the document***

**Assignment Objective:** To write a final Research Proposal.

**Assignment Description:** Your assignment is to revise your Preliminary Research Proposal and write a Final Research Proposal, which must incorporate the items listed below. You should write no less than 10 and no more than 20 pages (1.5 spaced with standard margins). **Include the name of your advisor on the title page of your Final Research Proposal (as indicated below).**

**Elements of Preliminary Research Proposal:**

- I. Title Page: Thesis Title/Your Name/Name of Advisor/Date
- II. Abstract
- III. Introduction (Topic, Research Question and Sub-Questions)
- IV. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework
- V. Research Methods
- VI. Preliminary Research & Writing Timeline
- VII. Anticipated Findings
- VIII. Conclusion
- IX. Works Cited

**Assignment Product:** 15-20 word-processed 1.5 spaced pages including all parts. *You must include a works cited page in Chicago format as detailed above.*

**Please spell-check and proofread all assignments carefully!**