

How to Approach, Research, and Ultimately Write a Theory Thesis

Dr. Bonnie Talbert

Friday, March 25th 2-4pm, William James Hall 303

This workshop will provide a brief overview of the methodological issues involved in a theory-based thesis, that is, a project which mainly deals with a philosophical and/or theoretical problem, or primarily interrogates ideas, concepts, and arguments by a specific author or more. Topics include 1) important questions a theory thesis should address, 2) some common pitfalls to avoid, and 3) research tips that maximize efficiency and save time.

Participant Observation: Practical Issues

Dr. Kevin Caffrey

Tuesday March 29th, 6-8pm, William James Hall 303

What is ethnographic fieldwork? How can students get the most out of this methodology during summer research? In this workshop, we will first define ethnographic fieldwork and then focus on some of the operational and theoretical issues associated with conducting such research. We will discuss questions such as how to set up a field-site, considerations of safety and location, as well as how to prepare to engage a different cultural context. In addition to abstractions like "objectivity," we will think about forms of documentation and the role social categories (preconceived and otherwise) can play in this endeavor and also attend to the key issue of field notes. This workshop will be based on the research students are planning to conduct. Everyone should come to this session with a 5 minute introduction of their project, should be able to generally describe their field site (even though this may be a moving target), and come prepared with a list of at least ten questions (which will be handed in at the beginning of the workshop).

Historical Methods

Dr. Daragh Grant

Thursday, March 31st 7-9pm, William James Hall 303

This workshop will introduce students to the challenges of working with archival materials or texts drawn from different cultural and historical settings. Students will be introduced to the basics of the historical method, and will be encouraged to think about how a careful attention to questions of temporality, periodization, and conceptual specificity can shape and reveal new avenues in their research, whether they are pursuing a project in intellectual, cultural, or social history. In addition to these questions of historical method, we will discuss the basics of archival research. Students will also conduct an exercise in historical analysis by reading a short primary source document. This will form the basis of a discussion of how one might begin to tease reliable insights out of documents encountered in an archive. Students will be provided with a bibliography of readings on historical methodology.

An Introduction to Spatial Analysis, Mapping, and Community Data Resources

Dr. Matthew Kaliner (Sociology)

Thursday, April 7th 7-9pm, William James Hall 303

This workshop will introduce you to basic spatial analysis and mapping strategies to help you identify cases to study, discover patterns in your research, contextualize your findings, and present your work in visually compelling ways. We will start with *Social Explorer*, *World Map*, and the Census's *American Fact Finder*, demonstrating how to find the demographic profile of a community, its segregation level, or its patterns of change over time. You will learn how to create maps within these programs for inclusion in your thesis or

tutorial paper, and how to find geographical datasets for further analysis. We will conclude by considering how spatial analysis can complement an ethnographic or historical project.

Conducting Qualitative Interviews**Dr. Nicole Newendorp****Friday, April 8th 10:00-noon, William James Hall 305 OR****Monday April 25th 4-6pm, William James Hall 305**

In this workshop, I will introduce students to the process of conducting qualitative interviews. We will tackle some basic considerations in planning an interview-based methodology for your thesis research, including choosing an interview format, contacting interviewees, and discussing the pros and cons of recording interviews. Particular attention will be paid to ethical considerations in collecting data from people of different cultural and class backgrounds, along with how your status as a Harvard student and researcher may influence your relationships with interviewees and the quality of the data that you collect.

Quantitative Methods Workshop**Melissa Sands (Government)****Thursday, April 14th noon-1:30pm, CGIS K401**

Quantitative research requires bringing data to bear on a question of interest. How do you gather data? How do you organize it? How do you analyze it? Come to this workshop to see an overview of how to tackle these goals. This workshop is designed to acquaint Harvard undergraduates with the basics of quantitative research in the social sciences, with a focus on standard regression models. All prospective thesis writers are welcome to attend. Please note that the point of this event is not to teach statistics to students, but to help those with some background determine when and how to apply statistical methods to their research question.

Content Analysis: How to Collect and Analyze Media and Other Qualitative Sources of Data**Dr. Alison Jones****Friday, April 15th 3:30-5:30pm, William James Hall 305**

This workshop will introduce students to some of the multitude of ways that researchers make use of media (including newspapers, television, and websites) as sources of data. Topics covered will include: what sorts of questions can you ask and answer using media sources? How can you collect or access existing collections of qualitative data to answer your research question? What are some ways of analyzing qualitative data (including quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis, as well as techniques of visual representation)? Students should come prepared to discuss their research interests.

Survey Research for Honors Thesis Writers**Dr. Chase Harrison (Government)****Tuesday, April 19th 7-9pm, CGIS K262**

Survey research is a popular method many students use to collect data for honors theses. This workshop, sponsored by the Harvard Program on Survey Research, is targeted toward undergraduates considering designing an original survey as part of their thesis research, and may also be useful for any student planning on collecting field data. The workshop provides an overview of the survey process, with a focus on practical applications that can be implemented in thesis research. Topics include selecting an appropriate mode for data collection, designing and selecting a sample, and designing a survey questionnaire.