

Human Dimensions of Environmental Change: Theory, Research and Writing

16:378:502

Wednesdays, 9:15–12:15
Cook Office Building (COB) 226

Instructor	Department	Contact*	Office Hours
Dr. Ethan Schoolman	Human Ecology	ethan.schoolman@rutgers.edu	Mondays 10-2 and by appt. in Cook Office Bldg. (COB), Rm. 208

***Please put “TRW” in the subject line of all course-related emails!!!**

Course Description

This is a research practicum. The purpose of this course is to give you the opportunity, in a structured and supportive environment, to develop a compelling and realistic proposal to conduct research into the social dimensions of environmental change. In the first half of class, we’ll work through several stages of project evolution, from clarifying a motivating question, to connecting your proposed work to important ideas in your field, to designing and implementing an actual study using one or more research methods, to writing it all up. Instead of a big final paper, short weekly assignments will keep you moving along this path. And we’re all in it together: hailing from diverse disciplines (not to mention, I presume, social backgrounds), our differences will be an important resource—a well of things we haven’t all heard already that will make each project richer and more interesting

How to use the Syllabus and Class Schedule

The Syllabus and Class Schedule are both in the “Syllabus” folder on Sakai. The Syllabus (what you’re reading now) gives a description of the course and important policies and expectations. The Class Schedule gives the topic, readings and assignment for each week.

Using the class schedule, you should come to each class having read the readings, and having completed the assignment, to the right of each date. For instance, for Class 2, you should come to class having read the Becker, Booth and Verba readings, and having posted your essay about a research question.

Assignments and Grading

Assignment	Percent of Final Grade
Weekly Essays	50

Project Proposal for Workshopping	20
Post-Workshop Response Paper	20
Class Participation (including your turn as a workshop discussant)	10

Possible Course Grades (set by Rutgers): A, B+, B, C+, C, D, F

Weekly Essays. Every week until the project workshops begin, an essay is due that will push you to discuss and develop some aspect of a planned or hoped-for research project. These essays are designed to build on each other, so it is important that you complete each one. The topic for each week’s essay is given in the Class Schedule spreadsheet (also in the “Syllabus” folder on Sakai). Each essay should be 1-2 pages, single-spaced (12 point font, 1-inch margins). Essays must be posted on Sakai by 8am on the Tuesday before class, so that I can read them before we meet. (You are also encouraged but not required to read as many of your classmates’ essays as you can.) Each class will begin with us going around the table, where each of you will give a 5-minute (or so) talk on your essay for that week. Questions and issues that emerge from the essays that you write will form the basis for our discussion each week.

Project Proposal for Workshopping. After spring break, four class periods are given over to workshopping student project proposals. We will discuss the proposals of two students each class period: one in the first half of class, and one in the second. Your project proposal is due by 10pm on the Friday before class, so that your discussant (see below) can prepare a brief commentary on it. I will post a handout with more specific directions (length, things to include, etc.) for the project proposal later this semester. But it won’t need to be long—probably 2-3 pages, single-spaced.

Post-Workshop Response Paper. A paper responding to the feedback you received during your workshop will be due two weeks after your workshop. Again, I will post more specific directions for format, content, etc., later this semester, but it will be relatively short.

Class Participation. This is a small class where we will all be helping each other to do better work. Therefore, it is important that everyone actively participate in discussions during class. I am sympathetic towards the fact that people learn in different ways, and I understand that some people will talk in class more than others. However, everyone should make an effort to verbally participate at least once a week. In addition, everyone will serve as the “discussant” for the workshopping of one other student’s paper.

Readings

Readings for this class are either posted on Sakai or are part of an assigned book for this course. There are four books of which we read all or substantial parts, so it would make sense to buy them. I’m sensitive to the fact that books can be expensive, so I’ve investigated the prices of each book new and used. The used prices seem generally pretty reasonable; you can order these books used through Amazon, Powells.com, half.com, etc. If you can’t or don’t want to buy any

of these books (and it really is up to you), they are all available at the Rutgers Library or through inter-library loan. The four books are:

1. Howard Becker, *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It* (\$12 new; \$5–\$10 used)
2. Norman Bradburn, et al., *Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design* ((\$35 new; \$10–\$15 used)
3. Robert Weiss, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interviews* (\$18 new; \$5–\$10 used)
4. Kari Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (\$25 new; \$10–\$15 used)

To get the online readings, log onto Sakai at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/>. Find course handouts, readings, and other materials under “Resources.”

Course Policies

Academic Integrity. This is a graduate course, so ‘nuff said.

Late Papers. Every effort should be made to complete Weekly Essays on time, so that you can fully participate in class. If you are unable to meet a deadline, contact me as soon as possible.

Disabilities. Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. Please visit this webpage if you have not registered already: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the ODS Registration form: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

**Finally... please consider TURNING OFF YOUR PHONE
during class. You won't believe the difference it makes...
for you and for everyone around you.**

Class	Date	Unit	Topic	Materials	Assignments (due on the day indicated on each row)
1	Jan. 18	Overview	What is this course about?	Syllabus	
2	Jan. 25	Theory: Asking your question	Framing your question: What do you want to know?	Becker, "Tricks" and "Imagery" in <i>Tricks of the Trade</i> ; Kimeldorf, "Drafting a research proposal"; Booth, "From topics to questions" in <i>The Craft of Research</i> ; Verba, "Writing a fellowship proposal or statement of purpose"	Write about a research question that is important to a project you would like to work on. Using concepts from the readings, consider: What is the BIG topic or puzzle that interests you... and how can this big topic be addressed through a manageable research project? Why is the question underlying your proposed project interesting and important <u>to you</u> ? Why should <u>other people</u> in your field find it interesting and important?
3	Feb. 1		What's your foundation? Finding literature(s) to be in dialogue with	Schoolman, "before and after" article manuscripts, comments from reviewers, and response to reviewers	Think about the research question you introduced last week. Write about three distinct literatures you could possibly draw on in your work related to this question. Things to discuss: What are the key concepts or ideas that emerge from each literature? How will these concepts and ideas help to frame or motivate your question, guide your hypotheses, help you to choose a setting for your study, or shape your research in other ways?
4	Feb. 8	Research: Answering your question	Designing your study	Becker, "Sampling," "Concepts," and "Logic" in <i>Tricks of the Trade</i> ; Norgaard, <i>Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life</i> ; McCright and Dunlap, "Cool dudes: The denial of climate change among conservative white males"	Norgaard, McCright and Dunlap show how it's possible to explore one broad topic in very different ways, with each study contributing a part of a bigger picture. What are three different studies that you can imagine being motivated by your research question? What would be the advantages of each study? What would be the disadvantages? How would each possible study allow you to address your research question in different but complementary ways?
5	Feb. 15		Put a method to your madness: Ethnography and interviews	Weiss, pp. 1-119 in <i>Learning from Strangers</i> ; Norgaard, <i>Living in Denial</i> (review); Martin 2003, "Giving birth like a girl"; Martin 2009, "Normalizing heterosexuality"	Imagine your research first as an ethnography, and second as an interview-based study: What would it look like in each case? When you imagine an ethnography, write specifically about what the setting for your study might be, what your day-to-day activities might look like, and what you would learn. When you write about an interview-based study, write specifically about who you would want to interview, and what questions you might ask (refer to Weiss's book for excellent guidance here).

6	Feb. 22		Put a method to your madness: Surveys and analysis of quantitative data	Bradburn et al., pp. 3-12, 20-150 in <i>Asking Questions</i> ; Clement et al., "The environmental consequences of rural and urban population change"; Yale Project on Climate Change, pp. 1-12, 75-132 (skim) in "Global Warming's Six Americas 2009"	Imagine your research first as a survey-based study, and second as taking advantage of existing quantitative data: What would it look like in each case? When you imagine a survey-based study, write specifically about what the population for your survey might be, and compose at least 5 actual survey questions (complete with possible responses) for this population. When you imagine using existing quantitative data, suggest at least 2 actual datasets that you would like to use, and why (you may need to do some online research for this).
7	Mar. 1		Being an ethical researcher	Avery, "Down and out in Atlantic City"; Goffman, "On the run"; Lewis-Kraus, "The trials of Alice Goffman"; Bradburn et al., pp. 12-19 in <i>Asking Questions</i> ; Weiss, pp. 121-150 in <i>Learning from Strangers</i>	Given the studies that you are actually likely to put into action... What potential ethical problems can you foresee for your research? How will you demonstrate respect for your subjects? How will you meet your ethical obligations while still gathering data that is exciting and surprising?
8	Mar. 8	Writing: Telling other people what you know	How do you want to write?	Johnston and Szabo, "Reflexivity and the Whole Foods Market consumer"; Mariola, "The local-industrial complex?"; Bell, excerpt from <i>Childerley: Nature and Morality in an English Country Village</i>	Consider the writing in each of these readings, as well as (if you want) other empirical studies that we've already read for this class. What "works"? What doesn't? Given both your own gifts and the expectations of your field, what kind of writing style do you aspire to, and why?
	Mar. 15		SPRING BREAK		
9	Mar. 22	Workshopping your work	Two students workshop their projects	Read the project proposals posted by the two students who are workshopping their work today	If you are presenting today: Post your project proposal on Sakai by 10pm on Friday March 17
10	Mar. 29		Two students workshop their projects	Read the project proposals posted by the two students who are workshopping their work today	If you are presenting today: Post your project proposal on Sakai by 10pm on Friday, March 24
11	Apr. 5		Two students workshop their projects	Read the project proposals posted by the two students who are workshopping their work today	If you are presenting today: Post your project proposal on Sakai by 10pm on Friday, March 31
12	Apr. 12		Two students workshop their projects	Read the project proposals posted by the two students who are workshopping their work today	If you are presenting today: Post your project proposal on Sakai by 10pm on Friday, April 7
13	Apr. 19	Wrapping up	Taking your research public	Readings TBD	Assignment TBD
14	Apr. 26		Reflections	<i>No readings</i>	