Course Description

The purpose of this professional development seminar is two-fold: first, to acquaint incoming sociology graduate students with the department’s graduate program (e.g., policies, expectations) and second, to familiarize students, more broadly, with the norms of the discipline.

Course Materials


Supplemental materials are posted on myCourses.

Course Organization and Requirements

**Class format:** Seminar format (13 one hour sessions, held on Tuesdays during the Fall and Winter terms, for exact dates see ‘Course Schedule’ below). Seven seminars will be held in the fall term and six in the winter semester.

**Course requirements:**

- Course Attendance/Participation = 75%
- ‘Talk’ Attendance = 25% *(Students are required to attend the Sociology Department Speaker Series talks and one non-departmental talk (e.g., Social Statistics and Population Dynamics Seminars, Social Studies of Medicine Seminars)*

  - NOTE: Students are required submit a one-page summary of the non-departmental talk

**General Policies**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).

*In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.*

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

Course Schedule
Seminar #1: WELCOME
September 8

Seminar #2: Priorities and Program Timeline: What Should You Be Focusing On and When?
September 15

- What courses should you take and when?
- What do certain courses (e.g., reading and research, bibliographic methods) involve?
- What should you be doing during the summer?
- When can you expect to finish your program?
- When should you begin the job search?

Required Rojas Reading: Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8

Seminar #3: Applying for External Funding
September 22
Guest Speakers: Dr Noha Gerges (McGill MITACS Representative) and Daniel Sailovsky (PhD student)

- What are you eligible for?
- How many times can you apply?
- When are the deadlines?
- How should you prepare your application?
- When, from whom and on what should you solicit feedback?

Required Rojas Reading: Chapter 3

Seminar #4: Assistantships: Research and Teaching
October 6
Guest Speakers: Prof. Sarah Brauner-Otto and Maike Isaac (PhD Candidate)

- What can you expect from an assistantship?
- What’s the point of an assistantship?
- How do you balance your need for money and completing your degree?
- What are your contractual obligations?

Required Rojas Reading: Chapter 21

Seminar #5: Working Smarter not Harder: Tools for Efficiency
October 20
Guest Speaker: Prof. Jan Doering

- How do you manage all the ‘tasks’ entailed in academic life?
- How can various software tools aid you in being efficient? (e.g., bibliographic software)
- How can you organize, accessibly, all of the notes, data, etc... you generate?

Seminar #6: Finding a Supervisor, Forming a Committee, Finding a ‘Second Reader’, Etc...
November 3
Guest Speaker: Professor Zoua Vang and Golshan Golriz (PhD Candidate)

- How do you choose a supervisor?
- What’s the role of your supervisor?
- What’s the role of committee members, a ‘second reader’ etc...?
- How do you negotiate expectations?


**Seminar #7: Balancing Academia and the Rest of Life**
November 17
*Guest Speaker: Prof. Jennifer Elrick and Prof. Peter McMahan*

- How do you cope with academic obligations and everything else?
- How do you set limits?
- How do you avoid burnout?
- What can you do when faced with personal or family crisis?

**Required Rojas Reading:** Chapter 11, 22 and 23

**Seminar #8: Presenting Your Work**
January 12
*Guest Speakers: Ian Van Heren (PhD Candidate)*

- How are conferences and workshops useful?
- How do you chose a conference venue for your work?
- How do you fund your conference attendance/presentation?

**Required Rojas Reading:** Chapter 29

**Seminars #9 and #10: Tips and Tricks to Academic Writing and Publish, Publish, Publish**
January 26 and February 9
*Guest Speakers: Prof. Poulami Roychowdhury (January 26) and Prof. Barry Eidlin (February 9)*

- How do you structure your writing days?
- When should you seek feedback on written work?
- How do you co-author a manuscript, in practical terms?
- How can you revise a research paper (for a class) into a publishable piece of scholarship?
- Should you send out your manuscript and if so, where?
- What are predatory presses?
- How is writing book reviews valuable?
- What is the average review time?
- How do you respond to reviewers?
- How do you deal with rejection?
- How do you get a book contract?
- Can more than one press/journal review your manuscript?
- What if English is not your first language?

**Required Rojas Reading:** Chapters 17, 18, 26, 27 and 28

**Seminar #11: Area Exams**
February 23
*Guest Speaker: Prof. Thomas Soehl*

- What are they?
- What’s the purpose of them?
- What ‘areas’ are available in which to take an exam?
- How should you prepare for an area exam?
- What happens if you fail an area exam?

**Required Rojas Reading:** Chapter 9
Seminar #12: Doing a Dissertation
March 9
Guest Speaker: Prof. Shelley Clark and Dr. Mehri Ghazanjani (recent PhD graduate, currently attending McGill Law School)

- Why do a dissertation?
- Should you write a monograph or an ‘article-based’ dissertation?
- What does a dissertation proposal involve?
- How should you go about preparing it?
- What does the doctoral defense involve?

Required Rojas Reading: Chapters 14, 15 and 16

Seminar #13: Job Prospects
TBA
Guest Speaker: TBA

- What different opportunities are there for you in academia (e.g., liberal arts college vs. research university)?
- What opportunities are there for you outside of academia?
- What are Canadian sociologists doing?
- How do you network?
- How can/should you use social media to promote yourself?

Required Rojas Reading: Chapters 30, 31, 32, 34, 38, 39, 40 and 41
Recommended Reading: Jason Brennan’s (2020) Good Work If You Can Get It: How To Succeed in Academia (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press)
Other Useful Resources

At McGill

1. GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES (GPS) http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students
2. POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS’ SOCIETY (PGSS) an association of all graduate students and postdoctoral fellows at McGill... We are here to support you throughout your academic work at McGill and to serve as a resource if you ever need help dealing with the University or life in Montreal.” https://pgss.mcgill.ca/en
3. SKILLSETS “a centrally-managed program that is jointly hosted by Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and Teaching and Learning Services. We develop and promote interdisciplinary professional development offerings to all Graduate Students and Post-Doctoral Fellows.” http://www.mcgill.ca/skillsets/
4. CAREER AND PLACEMENT SERVICES (CaPS) http://www.mcgill.ca/caps/

PhD blogs

1. THE DUTCH PHD COACH http://www.thedutchphdcoach.com/blog/
2. DR. SUSTAINABLE http://www.drsustainable.com/
3. GET A LIFE, PHD http://getalifephd.blogspot.nl/p/about-me.html
4. GRADHACKER http://www.gradhacker.org/
5. PHD2PUBLISHED http://www.phd2published.com/
6. THE THESIS WHISPER http://thesiswhisperer.com/

Higher Education News

1. UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS (for Canada) http://www.universityaffairs.ca/default.aspx
2. CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION http://chronicle.com/section/Home/5

Academic Job Listings

1. UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS (for Canada) http://www.universityaffairs.ca/default.aspx
2. AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION http://www.asanet.org/employment/employment.cfm

Other Professional Materials

1. THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGIST (journal) “The American Sociologist publishes papers, comments, and other writings on topics of professional and disciplinary concern to sociologists. The contents examine intellectual, practical, and ethical issues affecting the work, careers, and perspectives of sociologists.” http://link.springer.com/journal/12108