

Fall 2021  
Wednesdays 4:30-7:10pm  
East 134  
Office Hours: Mon 4:30-5:30pm, Wed 1-2pm, by appt.

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**SOCI 860: Sociology's Historical Imagination:  
Comparative Historical Sociology  
Syllabus**

Sociologists have always used their historical imagination to reconstruct the past and answer sociological questions. What is capitalism and when did it begin? Why is it now neoliberal and global? How are slavery systems the same and different across time? Why do revolutions happen and how do they actually change societies? How do different religions shape economies? These are just a few of the possible questions explored in historical and comparative sociology. In this class, we start with an exploration of the classic texts in the field. Then we plunge into hands-on historical methods: archival, oral history, census data, and newspaper and content analysis. We will practice these methods, including visiting several archives. Along the way, we will discuss excellent examples of these methods, surveys of developments in the field, and intriguing issues brought up by this field.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Discuss major terms, themes, and debates in comparative-historical sociology.
- Distinguish between various methods in the field.
- Recognize and critically analyze methods used in comparative-historical sociological texts.
- Conduct hands-on research with archival, newspaper, oral history, and census methods.

**Course schedule and readings**

**Week 1 / Wed., Aug. 25 / Introduction**

- Lachmann, Richard. 2013. "The Sense of a Beginning." In *What is Historical Sociology?*, pp. 1-15.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1984. "Sociology's Historical Imagination." In *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, pp. 1-21.
- Adams, Julia, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff. 2003. "Social Theory, Modernity, and the Three Waves of Historical Sociology." Working Paper #206, Russell Sage Foundation.
- "Can Comparative Historical Sociology Save the World?," 2015 ASA Conference Report, *Trajectories: Newsletter of the ASA Comparative and Historical Sociology Section* 27(1)(2015): 1-10.
- Paper #1 (written in class)

**Week 2 / Wed., Sept. 1 / The Classics**

- Polanyi, Karl. [1944] 2001. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Paper #2

**Week 3 / Wed., Sept. 8 / The Classics**

- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Paper #3

**Week 4 / Wed., Sept. 15 / The Classics**

- Patterson, Orlando. 1982. *Slavery and Social Death*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Paper #4

**Week 5 / Wed., Sept. 22 / Archival Methods**

- Clapson, Mark. 2002. "Suburban paradox? Planners' intentions and residents' preferences in two new towns of the 1960s: Reston, Virginia and Milton Keynes, England." *Planning Perspectives* 17(2):145-162.
- *Archive visit*: Class meets in Mason's Special Collections and Archives.
- Paper #5

**Week 6 / Wed., Sept. 29 / Archival Methods**

- Hartman, Saidiya. 2019. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Paper #6

**Week 7 / Wed., October 6 / Archival Methods**

- No class. You visit one of the following:

Catholic University Archives: <http://archives.lib.cua.edu/manulist.cfm>

GWU Special Collections: <http://library.gwu.edu/scrc/collections>

Library of Congress, Manuscript Reading Room: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/f-aids/mssfa.html>

National Archives (either in DC or in College Park): <http://www.archives.gov/research/>

**Week 8 / Wed., October 13 / Archival Methods**

- No class. You visit one of the following:

Catholic University Archives: <http://archives.lib.cua.edu/manulist.cfm>

GWU Special Collections: <http://library.gwu.edu/scrc/collections>

Library of Congress, Manuscript Reading Room: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/f-aids/mssfa.html>

National Archives (either in DC or in College Park): <http://www.archives.gov/research/>

**Week 9 / Wed., October 20 / Archival Methods**

- Presentation on archival findings.
- Archival Assignment due.

**Week 10 / Wed., October 27 / Newspaper Methods**

- Almeida, Paul. 2014. *Mobilizing Democracy: Globalization and Citizen Protest*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

**Week 11 / Wed., Nov. 3 / Oral History Methods**

- Riley, Karen L. 2001. *Schools behind Barbed Wire: The Untold Story of Wartime Internment and the Children of Arrested Enemy Aliens*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Newspaper assignment due.

**Week 12 / Wed., Nov. 10 / Census Data Methods**

- Brady, David. 2009. *Rich Democracies, Poor People: How Politics Explains Poverty*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Oral History assignment due.

**Week 13 / Wed., Nov. 17 / Methods Generally**

- Lange, Matthew. 2013. *Comparative-Historical Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Census assignment due.

**Thanksgiving break: Nov. 24-28.**

**Week 14 / Wed., Dec. 1 / Globalization**

- Arrighi, Giovanni. 2000. "Globalization Meets Historical Sociology." Pp. 117-33 in Janet Abu-Lughod, ed., *Sociology for the Twenty-First Century. Continuities and Cutting Edges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bockman, Johanna. 2015. "Socialist Globalization against Capitalist Neocolonialism: The Economic Ideas behind the New International Economic Order." *Humanity* 6(1): 109-128.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1988. "A Comment on Epistemology: What is Africa?" *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 22(2): 331-333.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1991. "Does India Exist?" Pp. 130-4 in *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms*. New York: Polity Press.

Paper #7

**Wed., Dec. 9 at 7:15pm:** Final grant proposal due through BB.

**Course Requirements**

Class participation	10%
Short weekly papers (7)	10%
Archival assignment	15%
Newspaper assignment	15%
Oral history assignment	15%
Census assignment	15%
Grant proposal	20%

To receive a passing grade, all components must be completed.

**Grading scale**

A	95	over 93
A-	92	90-92
B+	88	87-89

B	85	83-86
B-	82	80-82
C+	78	77-79
C	75	73-76
C-	72	70-72
D	65	60-69
F	0	0-59

*Class participation:* Participation includes attendance, being on time, bringing the reading, asking questions, and, especially, participating in discussion. The weekly readings will be used extensively during class discussion.

*Short weekly papers:* This is a 2-page, double-spaced paper on the readings each week. You can write more than two pages if you wish. Please include:

- 1) What is the research question of the reading? What is/are the main argument(s)? Choose a passage (or two or more) that illuminates at least one of these arguments.
- 2) What method(s) does the author use? Where was the research conducted? When? How long? How do these methods help to answer to answer the research question? Do the methods work for the research? Why or why not?
- 3) What do you find most interesting or surprising about the reading?
- 4) Discuss or list one or two questions you have about the reading.

The paper must be turned in by email (jbockman@gmu.edu) noon on Wednesday. You can drop two weekly papers from your grade: 5 out of 7 papers will go towards your grade.

*Archival assignment, Newspaper assignment, Oral history assignment, Census assignment*

In each of these five-page double-spaced assignments, you will report on your practice of each of these methods. I will provide details about these assignments in class. Please submit through BB.

*Grant Proposal*

Each student will submit through BB on Wed., Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:15pm:

- A three-page grant proposal (single-spaced with additional, one-page bibliography) and
- An SSRC Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship application.

<http://webarchive.ssrc.org/pdfs/SampleApplicationPDF.pdf>

You will propose to use at least one historical method to study your dissertation or thesis project. Your papers should advance your own intellectual project (your thesis or dissertation). I will meet with each of you individually during the semester to discuss your work and proposal. This proposal is the format of a conventional grant proposal. Tips: <https://www.irex.org/news/10-tips-writing-successful-international-research-fellowship-proposal>

The proposal must have the following sections (no section headers except Methods and Work Plan, and Bibliography):

- Name, Title
- Introduction (introduce your topic, state your proposed topic, research question, methods)
- Literature Review (discuss the major texts in your field)
- Methods and Work Plan (discuss *in detail* the methods you will use, as well as a schedule when this proposed research will take place)

- Conclusion (summarize your proposed topic, research question, methods)
- Bibliography (This is beyond the three pages. Use ASA style here and throughout)

#### *MA Student Requirements:*

MA students have the same required components and percentages as above, but with two alterations: Short weekly papers (4 out of 7 recorded), Archival assignment and one other assignment (oral history, newspaper, or Census).

#### *Late Policy*

For each day that any written work is late that grade will be reduced by a step (e.g., an A paper will become an A- paper one day after the due date, a B+ paper two days after the due date, etc).

#### **Required Texts**

- All texts listed are required texts.
- Always bring all the readings for the day assigned.
- Do not get bogged down in the details of the reading. We are reading for argument, methods, and big themes. In class, we will look at specific details that are relevant to the discussion.

**Academic Integrity:** The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

**Disability Accommodations:** Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

#### **Other useful campus resources:**

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), 703.993.2380, <https://caps.gmu.edu>  
 University Libraries “Ask a Librarian,” <https://library.gmu.edu/ask>  
 Writing Center: Robinson Hall B213, 703.993.1200, <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu>