Research Methods/Applied Sociology Area Examination

Guidelines

April 2016

Committee Composition

The Research Methods/Applied Sociology Area Committee will consist of all faculty members who teach graduate courses in research methods, statistics, and/or applied sociology (Susan Carlson, Paul Ciccantell, Whitney DeCamp, Chien-juh Gu, David Hartmann, Elena Lisovskaya, Angie Moe, Tim Ready, Jesse Smith, and Zoann Snyder).

Area Examination Committee Composition

Each student electing to take an examination in the area will select a committee chair and two additional members from among the methods area committee faculty listed above. The student, in consultation with their exam committee chair, may request a faculty member who is not part of the area committee faculty but does have research or teaching experience central to the student’s specialization area. Committee members should be selected based on the student's interests in the area and relevant course work. Students are encouraged to select their examination committee during their first year in the doctoral program.

Required Courses

In addition to the required core research methods and statistics courses (SOC 6060, 6070, 6200, 6210, and one elective), each student will, in consultation with his/her examination committee members, select a minimum of three additional research methods, statistics, and/or applied sociology courses that must be taken before sitting for the area examination. Two of these three courses must be formal methods courses offered either inside or outside the department, while the third may be either a formal methods course or an independent readings course.

Reading List

In consultation with the exam committee, each student will develop and obtain approval of a reading list that includes comprehensive coverage of the epistemology of social research, core research methods, and topics to be addressed within each method as specified below by the Research Methods and Applied Sociology Committee. The reading list will also incorporate literature relevant to the student's specialization in the area.

I. General Issues of the Epistemology of the Social Research

II. Core methods of social research

Applied Methods (General Works)
Experimental designs
Ethnography
Field work
Focus groups
Comparative methods (historical and cross-national)
Interviewing
Survey Research
Nonreactive methods (e.g., secondary data analysis and content analysis of written and/or visual texts)
[Other, more specialized methods may be added at the committee discretion]

III. Topics to be covered with each method AND appropriate to a particular method*

Analytical techniques:

- Statistical Methods / Quantitative Analysis
  - Descriptive statistics: uni-, bi-, and multi-variate techniques of statistical analysis; frequency distributions; correlation; factor analysis; and multiple regression. [More advanced techniques will be included at the discretion of a particular committee].
  - Inferential statistics: the notion of statistical significance and means of its evaluation.

- Qualitative Methods of data analysis:
  - Coding, classification, reflexivity, triangulation, etc.

Research designs (deductive/inductive; longitudinal/cross-sectional)

- Probability sampling (students are expected to demonstrate understanding of specific techniques and the basic of probability theory)
- Non-Probability sampling techniques

Tests of validity and reliability

Ethics in social and behavioral research

These are all basics for all students to know.

- Each particular committee will decide if and which additional topics should be included (or not).
- Each particular committee will prescribe and approve the list of readings for these (and additional if any) topics.
Area Examination Format

There are two options. The choice between the two options will be determined by the committee chair in conjunction with the candidate.

Option A

The student will be given five days to complete the written portion of the area examination. Students will be expected to keep their answers to a 20 page maximum per question of double-spaced text with one inch margins. An oral examination will be scheduled within three weeks of completion of the written portion of the examination. The oral examination may cover content of the written examination, as well as other material from the core and the student's specialty reading lists.

Option B

The student will be given 14 days to complete the written portion of the area examination. Students will be expected to keep their answers to a 14 page maximum per question of double-spaced text with one inch margins. An oral examination will be scheduled within three weeks of completion of the written portion of the examination. The oral examination may cover content of the written examination, as well as other material from the core and the student's specialty reading lists.