

SYLLABUS FOR:

Introduction to research program in sociology & social work: *from research idea via the draft for the research plan to the research proposal*¹

Course instructors: Prof. Sandra Torres (course leader) & Dr. Anna Olaison

Uppsala University, Dept. of Sociology

Fall Term 2020 & Spring Term 2021: Period 1-4

Duration: September 2020 - May-June, 2021

Credits: 7.5 ECTS

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Course description:

The course consists of two interconnected parts intended to complement each other. The first part focuses on *the craft of research* and offers insights into the different approaches one can take when tackling the numerous decisions that researchers have to make when they turn their research into a scholarly piece of work. The second part of the course focuses on *the everyday skills that academics need* in order to manage the different 'jobs' that academics do (i.e. research, teaching, administration, faculty-collegium related tasks etc.). This part introduces newly admitted doctoral students such as yourselves to what academic life can be like and most importantly, to the specific setting that is Swedish academia.

Course Objectives:

The Higher Education Ordinance (Högskoleförordningen SFS 2006: 1053) states the objectives that research programs in Sweden must achieve. Thus, you are all expected to familiarize yourselves with all of the objectives listed in this ordinance. This particular course will focus on the following objectives:

Knowledge and understanding

- demonstrate broad knowledge in and a systematic understanding of the field of research, together with deep and up-to-date specialist knowledge in a defined part of the field of research

Skills and abilities

- demonstrate an ability to engage in scholarly analysis and synthesis and in independent, critical examination and assessment of new and complex phenomena, issues and situations; demonstrate an ability to identify and formulate issues, critically, independently and creatively, and proceeding with scientific precision, and to plan and, using appropriate methods, conduct research and other advanced tasks within specified time limits, and to scrutinize and evaluate such work;
- demonstrate an ability to identify their need of further knowledge; and

Judgement and approach

¹ This course is not open to applicants from outside the Department of Sociology.

- demonstrate deeper insight into the potential and limitations of scholarship, its role in society and people's responsibility for how it is used.

Course design:

Because of covid-19, we expect that meeting physically may not be possible. Thus, you need to become acquainted with the ZOOM program, which is the program that our university uses for online-teaching, seminars and meetings. Becoming acquainted with the various 'ZOOM-specific skills' you will need in order to manage ZOOM is something we expect you to do BEFORE the course begins (there is an array of ZOOM-tutorials in our university's homepage which can be reached once you are logged into it as an employee...in addition, we also recommend the YouTube Tutorials on ZOOM found through a great work-management service called Simpletivity. Please note also, however, that although we expect the bulk of the course to be done via ZOOM, we will discuss this in more detail once we meet since some of you may want to use ZOOM while at work, which is why we have booked a physical room as well, which has the equipment necessary if some of us end up wanting to carry on some of our course seminars/ discussions in a hybrid fashion (i.e. joining up via ZOOM from both home, and from our offices).

In terms of how the course is designed it is important to note that it stretches over two terms, and has varying degrees of intensity. It consists of two parts. The first part focuses on *the craft of research*, while the second part brings attention to the array of *skills one needs to manage everyday life as an academic*. It is this combination of what we refer to as dissertation-preparatory-work, and the 'socialization' discussions that also occur during the course that contribute to making this course a bit unique.

The first part requires both reading and preparation for the *seminars* that will be held primarily during the fall. During these seminars, you will all discuss the fortes and weaknesses of different dissertations in your respective disciplines. In addition, this part requires a considerable amount of reading and writing for your own dissertation since you will be *crafting* the first draft of your research plan (to be presented in December 2020), and your actual research proposal (in May/ June of 2021). Both of these 'documents' will be presented to senior members of our department at seminars.

It is worth noting that we write *craft* a research proposal, as opposed to write a research proposal, because the course is designed to assist you in the *process* of formulating a research idea, making informed-decisions about what your research should focus on and why, and designing the plans you need to embark on your respective projects. This is why the course is entitled as it is (see the allusion to moving from the research idea, to the draft of a research plan and finally to the research proposal).

Thus, the first part of this course has been designed to assist you in making the numerous informed decisions that you will have to make as far as your dissertation work is concerned. This entails, among others, deciding the kind of dissertation that you will work on (i.e. a monograph or a compilation of articles), how you plan to approach your research, and the pros and cons of these decisions. This is why most of the fall term is dedicated to dissecting other people's dissertations, and why we often refer to the first part of this course as the most reading-, preparation-, discussion- and writing- intensive part out of the two parts that the course consists of. Most of the seminars that we will have during the fall will depart, in other words, from some of the reference literature, and from the six PhD dissertations that will be 'dissected' during the course of this first term (1 dissertation per course participant). Thus, something else that we would like you to note is that we purposefully write *dissect*, as opposed to discuss, because these seminars are meant to critically assess whether the dissertations you chose to focus on are good enough testaments of a scholarly voice. In addition, we want to assess whether these dissertations give us, in fact, effective enough

insight into the author's readership (for more insight into what this means see the reference book by Booth et al. (2008) and specifically the chapter on readers and writers).

The dissertations we will read, and dissect together, will be decided when we first meet. This means that the vast majority of the reading we do in this course is reading that you yourselves have picked and collectively decided on. Thus, in order for this course's literature list to be completed, you need to bring with you to the very first meeting in September, at least two PhD dissertations in either Sociology or Social Work (written in English and defended within a Swedish university; one monograph and one compilation of articles). These are your individual suggestions to our literature list. Librarians at our university can help you find out how you can go about finding Swedish dissertations.

When we meet for the first time, we will decide which dissertations will end up making it into our reading list and which ones will not. The decision will be based on the balance we need to strike in order for the course to work optimally [which in this case is a balance between dissertation type (monograph vs. articles) and research approach (qualitative vs. quantitative)]. Worth noting is that **ALL suggestions need to be in English** since we have students enrolled in the program that have not yet mastered the Swedish language.

The second part of the course – which focuses on the everyday skills that academics use and need – requires some reading but above all it requires that you actively engage in the kind of skills-assessment process that everyday life as an academic constantly requires. This entails asking questions such as: Where I am at skills-wise? Where do I need to be in four years?, and What can I do to get there? This part of the course will require, in other words, active participation in the *lectures and discussion forums* that are scheduled. This means that the second part of the course is reading- and discussion- intensive but requires very little preparation in the true sense of the word and no writing.

Assessment forms:

- **Formative Assignments:**
 - one presentation of a dissertation at a seminar (each student or student-pair is responsible for presenting the dissertation they have chosen for inclusion into the course's reading list at a seminar)
 - discussant role for seminars that will be open to senior faculty members in our department (i.e. the ones in which you are expected to present your research idea, the draft of the research plan and research proposal)
 - active participation at all seminars
 - contribution to the agenda for the January 11th discussion (which entails e-mailing to all course participants the passages you want to discuss on Tuesday January 7th)
- **Summative assessments:**
 - presentation of own research idea, plan and proposal at senior faculty attended seminars
- **Attendance:**
 - Mandatory for all scheduled meetings (lectures, seminars, discussion forums and workshops). In other words, you need to let me know in advance if you need to miss a class.
 - Extra writing assignments will be required if seminars are missed.

Deadlines for written assignments:

- Research idea: one page to be submitted by October 26th (To be discussed during the seminar scheduled for November 2nd)
 - The one page should only answer the following question: what is the research problem I am interested on; why am I personally interested in this problem and who do I envision my future readers to be? (no references needed)
- Research draft: 4,000-5,000 words to be submitted by December 7th (To be discussed on the one day seminar Dec. 14th - this is almost a whole day seminar including a joint lunch)
 - This draft should include some of the customary sections a piece of scholarly work usually include (i.e. Introduction, Literature Review, Theory and Methods as well as a timeline and references)
- Research proposal: 8,000-10,000 words to be submitted by (actual date to be decided) and discussed at the end of Spring 2021 (actual date to be decided)

Course reading (in the order in which the reading is assigned) A FEW MORE ARTICLES/ CHAPTERS WILL BE ADDED TO THIS LIST BEFORE AUGUST 2020):

- Biebier, J. P. & Worley, L. K. (2006). Conceptualizing the academic life: graduate students' perspectives. *Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 77, no. 6, p. 1009-1035
- McAlpine, L. (2012). Identity trajectories: doctoral journeys from past to present to future. *Australian Universities Review*, vol. 54, no. 1, p. 38-46.
- Thorne, B. & Hochschild, A. R. (1997). Feeling at home at work: life in academic departments. *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 20, no. 4, p. 517-520
- Weidman, J. C. & Stein, E. L. (2003). Socialization of doctoral students to academic norms. *Research in Higher Education*, vol. 44, no. 6, p. 641-656
- Khan, S. R. (2019). Habits, canvases and conversations: how I think about publishing. *Sociologica*, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 21- 27. [This article belongs to a Special Issue so there are others in this series that could also be read]
- Booth, W. C; Colomb, G. C; Williams, J. M.; Bizup J. & Fitzgerald, W. T. (2016). *The Craft of Research*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press [Part I: 'Research. Researchers and Readers' and Part II 'Asking Questions, Finding Answers']
- 6 dissertations in either sociology or social work written in English and defended in a Swedish university
- Back, L. (2016). *Academic Diary or Why Higher Education Still Matters*. London: Goldsmiths Press.

Reference literature (in Swedish; to be read by those who can and to be discussed so that everyone can get an idea about the specifics of the Swedish context):

- Alvensson, M. (2003). Avhandling: metatenta eller kunskapsbidrag? I L. Strannegård (red). *Avhandlingen: om att formas till forskare*. Lund: Studentlitteratur (sammanlagt 15 sidor)
- Kärreman, D. (2003) Avhandlingsprojektet som identitetsarbete. I L. Strannegård (red). *Avhandlingen: om att formas till forskare*. Lund: Studentlitteratur (sammanlagt 18 sidor)
- Appel, M. & Bergenheim, Å (2005). *Reflekterande forskarhandledning: om samarbete mellan handledare och doktorand*. Lund: Studentlitteratur [Kap. 1 'I historiens backspegel'; Kap. 2 'Vad är forskarutbildning?' och Kap. 3 'Livet i akademien' inom ramen för bokens del 1; Kap. 1 'Vad är forskarhandledning?' och Kap 2 'Relationen' för bokens del 2 och Kap. 4 'Doktorandens olika stadier' i bokens del 3]

- Skogmyr, I. (2007). *Doktorandpraktikant*. Lund: Studentlitteratur [Kap. 5 'Hur man utvecklas']
- Wetterström, J. (2003). Tankearbetets lärling. I L. Strannegård (red). *Avhandlingen: om att formas till forskare*. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Course schedule, type of meeting and syllabus:

Monday, September 7th 10:00-12:00 (lecture; 2-0022)

Short introductory lecture to the course, its aims and its design as well as discussion to decide which PhD dissertations will become course literature (based on your own suggestions). Thus, you are all expected to bring two dissertations with you to our first meeting. Both of them have to be in English; one has to be based on a quantitative study and the other in a qualitative one and/ or one based on a monograph and one based on a compilation of articles. Only dissertations in either sociology or social work can be chosen.

Monday, September 14th 13:00-16:00 (lecture & discussion; 2-1025)

Lecture about academic life as a graduate student and the peculiarities that surround the role of PhD students within Swedish institutions. In this context, doctoral students are namely students and colleagues at the same time. They are, as such, in an in-between category. This has all kinds of ramifications that doctoral students within this context need to understand. Students are required to do the reading that is in English below. The lecture will cover the Swedish literature, which is not accessible to all participants due to the language barrier. Worth noting, is that this lecture is expected to be interactive since students are expected to ventilate their questions. You are, in other words, expected to have read everything below (even if those of you who do not read Swedish yet are, of course, not expected to have read the bits in Swedish).

- Biebier, J. P. & Worley, L. K. (2006). Conceptualizing the academic life: graduate students' perspectives. *Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 77, no. 6, p. 1009-1035
- Bloch, C. (2002). Managing the emotions of competition and recognition in Academia. *The Sociological Review*, vol. 50, no. 2, p. 113-131.
- McAlpine, L. (2012). Identity trajectories: doctoral journeys from past to present to future. *Australian Universities Review*, vol. 54, no. 1, p. 38-46.
- Khan, S. R. (2019). Habits, canvases and conversations: how I think about publishing. *Sociologica*, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 21- 27.
- Reay, D; Crozier, G. & Clayton, J. (2009). 'Strangers in paradise'? Working-class students in elite universities. *Sociology*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1103-1121.
- Thorne, B. & Hochschild, A. R. (1997). Feeling at home at work: life in academic departments. *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 20, no. 4, p. 517-520
- Weidman, J. C. & Stein, E. L. (2003). Socialization of doctoral students to academic norms. *Research in Higher Education*, vol. 44, no. 6, p. 641-656

In addition, we recommend the following literature in Swedish:

- Alvensson, M. (2003). Avhandling: metatenta eller kunskapsbidrag? I L. Strannegård (red). *Avhandlingen: om att formas till forskare*. Lund: Studentlitteratur (sammanlagt 15 sidor)
- Kärreman, D. (2003) Avhandlingsprojektet som identitetsarbete. I L. Strannegård (red). *Avhandlingen: om att formas till forskare*. Lund: Studentlitteratur (sammanlagt 18 sidor)

- Appel, M. & Bergenheim, Å (2005). *Reflekterande forskarhandledning: om samarbete mellan handledare och doktorand*. Lund: Studentlitteratur [Kap. 1 'I historiens backspegel'; Kap. 2 'Vad är forskarutbildning?' och Kap. 3 'Livet i akademien' inom ramen för bokens del 1; Kap. 1 'Vad är forskarhandledning?' och Kap 2 'Relationen' för bokens del 2 och Kap. 4 'Doktorandens olika stadier' i bokens del 3]
- Skogmyr, I. (2007). *Doktorandpraktikant*. Lund: Studentlitteratur [Kap. 5 'Hur man utvecklas']
- Wetterström, J. (2003). Tankearbetets lärling. I L. Strannegård (red). *Avhandlingen: om att formas till forskare*. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Monday September 21st 13:15-12:00 (lecture & discussion forum; 2-1026 (Segerstedt))

This lecture will present the reading that will be used as point of departure when dissecting the dissertations you each have picked:

- Booth, W. C; Colomb, G. C; Williams, J. M.; Bizup J. & Fitzgerald, W. T. (2016). *The Craft of Research*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press [Part I: 'Research. Researchers and Readers' and Part II 'Asking Questions, Finding Answers']

Monday October 5th 13:00-15:00 (seminar based on dissertation; 2-1026 (Segerstedt))

Seminar on dissertation chosen by Ph.D. Candidate **ADD NAME HERE & BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR DISSERTATION CHOSEN.**

Monday October 12th 13:00-15:00 (seminar based on dissertation; 2-1026 (Segerstedt))

Seminar on dissertation chosen by Ph.D. Candidate **ADD NAME HERE & BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR DISSERTATION CHOSEN.**

Monday October 19th 13:00-15 (seminar based on dissertation; 3-2028)

Seminar on dissertation chosen by Ph.D. Candidate **ADD NAME HERE & BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR DISSERTATION CHOSEN.**

Monday November 2nd 13:00-16:00 (idea seminar; senior faculty members will be joining us this time; 22-0031)

This is the seminar when you will present your *dissertation idea* (see page 3) to an audience comprised of your classmates and a few senior members of faculty. The seminar will entail brief discussions of the research ideas that you are interested in in order to get you to think about your own work in relation to the kind of potential readerships that you could end up aiming for (see parts of book mentioned above).

After this idea seminar, you are all expected to begin your journey toward *crafting* the draft of your research plan and later on into your dissertation proposals. In order to do this, you should rely on Part III and IV of the book above.

Monday November 9th 13:00-15:00 (seminar based on dissertation; 2-1026 (Segerstedt))

Seminar on dissertation chosen by Ph.D. Candidate **ADD NAME HERE & BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR DISSERTATION CHOSEN.**

Monday November 16th 13:00-15:00 (seminar based on dissertation; 2-1026 (Segerstedt))

Seminar on dissertation chosen by Ph.D. Candidate **ADD NAME HERE & BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR DISSERTATION CHOSEN.**

Monday November 23rd 13:00-15:00 (seminar based on dissertation; 3-2028)

Seminar on dissertation chosen by Ph.D. Candidate **ADD NAME HERE & BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR DISSERTATION CHOSEN.**

Monday December 14th 10:00-16:00 (dissertation draft seminar open to faculty members; Blåsenhus 12:004)

This is when you will all present your *dissertation drafts* (see page 3) to an audience comprised of fellow students and senior members of faculty.

Monday January 11th 13:00-16:00 (discussion forum; 2-1026 (Segerstedt))

This discussion forum will focus on Les Black's diary. You are all expected to read the book prior to this discussion. By Tuesday January 7th at the latest you are expected to e-mail to everyone which passages (actual dates) you would like to discuss.

Monday January 18th 13:00-16:00 (lecture and discussion forum; 2-1026 (Segerstedt))

This lecture will focus on the skills (and approach) needed to manage everyday life as an academic. The lecture will present some of skills we all need to cope with everyday demands and will give tips on what you can do to develop these. As part of the lecture, you will get to do a survey often used for professors. This will be done in order to raise your awareness regarding the numerous everyday skills that academics need. The idea being that you will get a chance to reflect upon some of the skills you have and/or should acquire during the research program so that you have the best possible preparation for life after you have completed your PhD.

Monday February 15th 13:00-16:00 (discussion forum; 2-1026 (Segerstedt))

This discussion forum will focus on presenting the results of your own inquiries about academic life. Before this discussion forum you are expected to interview at least one doctoral student in the final two years of their journey, one post-doc and one senior member of staff. Using the readings from the course, as well as the discussions we have had along the way, you are expected to construct your own interview guide so that you ask each of them the same questions, but focus on the angles that interest you the most. You can, in other words, focus on the actual PhD journey, on the skills they think you need, on how to manage everyday life as an academic, on navigating the unspoken rules of the game so to speak and so on and so forth. The point is to discern what these colleagues' respective words of wisdom are, and to juxtapose that to what your fellow PhD Candidates find out in their respective interviews. Thus, the interviews should be conducted (and analyze) before this date. The discussion we will have on this day will aim to create a bricolage of wisdom for graduate school and/or life in academia.

March – May 2021 (individual work to be done in order to prepare the research proposal)

The remainder of the spring term is dedicated to individual work in order to revise research drafts and craft the *research proposal*. Just like the draft, these proposals will be discussed at a seminar with an audience comprised of fellow students and senior members of faculty.

As is the case in all seminars, one of you will be assigned the role of discussant for a draft but everybody is expected to actively contribute to the discussion. A supervisor will be assigned to you during the spring so you will have their supervision during the crafting process.

Sometime in late May/ early June (dissertation proposal seminar open to faculty members)

This is the seminar when you will present your *dissertation proposal* (see page 3) to an audience comprised of your classmates and a few senior members of faculty. The seminar will entail discussions of your research proposals and the various questions they raise.