

SOC 700 Plan of Study

a. Brief course description

I will use this course to begin work on my Master's thesis which focuses on the following research questions:

- How do the duration and number of individual spells of single motherhood differ for women with different levels of education?
- How many years, over their lifetime, do women with different levels of education spend as single mothers?
- Are there differences in timing (over the life course) of single motherhood spells?
- Are there differences in 1) how women enter and exit single motherhood and 2) rates of exit from single motherhood?

b. Learning goals / purpose

- Become familiar with what is already know about my research questions
 - Read existing literature in areas such as family and demography to determine what we already know about single motherhood and about duration of spells
 - Find articles in which educational attainment has been used to understand family formation
- Design my own research project
 - Read existing literature that may be helpful methodologically
 - Determine a suitable method
 - Find a data source

c. Course structure and learning resources to be used

This course will consist of independent reading and writing as well as regularly scheduled meetings with the Professor. Resources such as JSTOR, Sociological Abstracts, and referrals from the Professor and other students will be used to find key substantive and methodological articles. The websites of various data sources will be used to learn about potential data to be used in this project. Meetings with the Professor will be used to assess progress, discuss the literature and potential methods for answering my research questions, and address concerns and questions as they arise.

d. Meeting schedule

The Professor and I will meet twice a month on Wednesdays at noon. This schedule will begin 10/25/2011. Scheduled dates are: 10/5, 10/19, 11/2, 11/16, 11/30.

e. Expected outcome / product

The outcome of this course will be a proposal for the thesis. The proposal will include a literature review and well-developed research design. I intend for this proposal (with continued revisions) to become the "front end" of my Master's thesis. A first draft is due 11/16, and a final draft is due 12/9.

f. Method of evaluation

The Professor will provide written and oral feedback on both the first and final drafts of the proposal. At the end of the quarter, she will also assist in outlining next steps for thesis based on the progress made during this quarter.