

# MY410 Week 5 Seminar

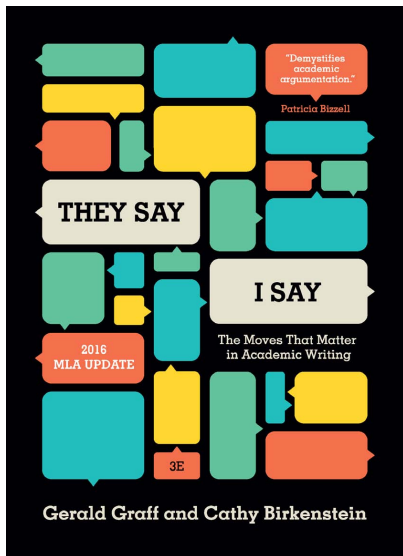
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# What we have done so far

- ▶ How to formulate research question(s).
- ▶ How theory and data (both quantitative and qualitative) speak to each other. For instance,
  - You can use your observations to *evaluate* a theory (i.e., generate empirical implications based on the theory and test them with your observations).
  - You can use your observations to *challenge* a theory.
  - You can use your observations to *develop* a theory.
- ▶ How to ensure rigor in research: Question-theory-empirics alignment and bias management (etc).

## Aims for this week

- ▶ Develop your ideas for your topic, literature and research question for your formative assignment (and eventually your summative assignments perhaps) through discussion and feedback from your peers.
- ▶ Develop your skills in articulating a good literature review and research question by providing feedback on your peers' plans.
- ▶ Develop your skills in identifying and articulating methodological critiques (identifying limitations) of different research designs.



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# The formative assignment

- ▶ Main task: Building a research question from a literature review.
- ▶ Format: 1 page (max 500 words), incorporating:
  - References for 3 related, **empirical** articles
  - 1 paragraph introducing the topic
  - 1 paragraph outlining and critiquing the research designs, setting the background for:
  - A research question
- ▶ Due: 4pm Thursday 4 November 2021 (MT week 6)
- ▶ Full instructions on Moodle (<https://moodle.lse.ac.uk/>)

## Feedback will be provided based on

- ▶ The scope of the topic – is it too broad, or just about right?
- ▶ The selection of articles – are they appropriate for the annotated bibliography?
- ▶ Your preliminary assessment/critique of the pieces and their research designs
- ▶ Your research question
- ▶ General style, prose

## From articles to question(s)

As you scope the literature, you may notice that a particular research design may have one or more of the following elements:

- ▶ Theoretical/empirical tensions or contradictions between the papers;
- ▶ Different or alternative theoretical perspectives;
- ▶ Different methodological approach (e.g., build on more inductive work to propose some hypothesis-testing deductive approach);
- ▶ Extension to new context (e.g., different region, time period);
- ▶ Something left unexplored (e.g., critical element not engaged with, need to consider other conditions);
- ▶ Something left untested;
- ▶ ... and more.

# Peer feedback activity

- ▶ Phase 1: Discuss your drafts in pairs
  - Exchange your written plans with your neighbor(s).
  - Read over your peers' plans, note questions/ constructive feedback.
  - Verbally explain your plan to your peer; peer asks questions and gives feedback.
  - Switch!
- ▶ Phase 2: Join groups
  - Briefly introduce your draft.
  - Discuss how the feedback changes your original plan.
  - Come up with a list of common issues and how to address them.
- ▶ Phase 3: Plenary discussion – discuss the topic, the research question, the most useful feedback, and any lingering uncertainties, etc.



# Things you should consider

- ▶ The topic
  - Is it clear what common topic is being addressed?
  - Is there a specific focus – or is the topic very broad or vaguely defined?
- ▶ Research design(s)
  - Are the research designs identified?
  - Are limitations of the approach appropriately identified?
  - Is there methodological diversity or not? (and what are the implications?)
- ▶ Research question(s)
  - Does the question identify a specific setting/case/location/group?
  - Does the question speak to a social science concern?
  - Is the question sufficiently clear to be feasible and tractable?

## Post-seminar notes: Requirements

- ▶ Your formative assignment will be a short essay of three paragraphs.
- ▶ Your formative assignment should not exceed 500 words. There is no required min.
- ▶ Your formative assignment should include a reference list; the list is not included in the 500-word limit.

## Post-seminar notes: Topic

- ▶ Justify your topic (using additional references if necessary).
- ▶ If your topic is too broad, you can narrow it down by specifying the contexts of interest (e.g., a particular region or time period) – your choice of the scope condition may depend on the gap in the literature, your interests, and whether the resources are available – or by defining the concept of your interest (e.g., gender justice or women empowerment).
- ▶ There is no golden rule, so do your best to explain yourself. Keep in mind that it is not a test.

## Post-seminar notes: Article selection

- ▶ For the formative assignment (as well as annotated bibliography), choose three empirical articles – they can employ a variety of research methods to collect and analyze data and use the data to speak to the theory in different ways. You can review studies that use similar or different methods.
- ▶ Do not use *literature review* (for the formative assignment and annotated bibliography), but you can include *systematic review* and/or meta-analysis as one of the three empirical articles. If you are not clear about the difference, review relevant MY410 materials or come to discuss with me.
- ▶ Use your topic/question to guide the search for articles – one thing you can do, for instance, is to consider how the particular political and socio-economic phenomena of your interest speak to one or more general social science questions (and use the general questions to search for additional references).

## Post-seminar notes: Reviewing the articles

- ▶ Discuss the limitations of each article so as to identify the gaps; ask yourself – "Given that this is what others have done, what question(s) can I pursue in my dissertation?"
- ▶ The discussion by no means tries to completely invalidate other scholars' contribution (unless you spot some serious flaws); you are just using their work to motivate your research questions by identifying some gaps that you'd like to fill in.

## Post-seminar notes: Proposing your research questions

- ▶ Be clear and concise and reasonable in terms of the scope (it is one of the possible ways to show the RQs are tractable at this moment).
- ▶ When it comes to the research proposal, then you need to use your research design to further justify the feasibility of your RQs.

## Additional references

- ▶ *They Say/I Say* by Cathy Birkenstein and Gerald Graff – consult it to learn more about literature view.
- ▶ *Annual Reviews* (<https://www.annualreviews.org/>) – consult it to learn more about
  - the current literature with respect to your topic/subject;
  - questions that remain unsolved with respect to your topic/subject;
  - examples of good literature reviews.