Senior Seminar (Soc 495)  
Spring 2018  
M,W,F 10:30-11:20  
Location: 102 Burnett Hall

Dr. Kimberly A. Tyler  
717 Oldfather Hall  
Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 11:30-12:30 or by appointment

Phone: (402) 472-6073  
Email: ktyler2@unl.edu  
kim@ktresearch.net

Note:
- You’re required to use Canvas for this course to view syllabus, assignments, readings, etc.
- **Lab** - all lab work will be in the Sociology computer lab – 7th floor Oldfather Hall

This senior seminar focuses on strengthening your analytic skills in using sociological research and writing to express your **sociological imagination**. Your development of a sociological imagination is an important tool; a framework for examining how social and historical forces affect the everyday lives of people. The goal of this course is to bring together your varied course backgrounds and other experiences (internships, jobs, travel, etc.) in discussions with other sociology majors. This senior seminar course is yours to create a capstone experience for your time here at UNL. The department designed this course to provide you with the opportunity to pull together your sociological learning: applying theory, illustrating concepts, formulating hypotheses, undertaking data analysis, drawing conclusions, and making arguments based on your research. This is an opportunity for you to address an issue of importance to you. Practically speaking, this seminar requires that you write a **research paper** from start to finish.

**COURSE GOALS.** To accomplish our goals, we will first revisit basic principles and sharpen your sense of sociological perspectives and the enterprise of doing social research. Other specific goals include:

1. To strengthen your ability to raise sociological questions and explore methodological strategies to answer them in the form of an **original research project**. This will also be done through the reading and discussion of assigned research articles and the broader sociological literature.

2. To promote your ability to think critically and creatively about sociological questions and to express them successfully in written and oral forms. Some of the theories we will focus on include: 1) the life course perspective 2) social exchange theory and 3) social learning theory but there are many other theories you can choose from as well.

3. To reinforce C. Wright Mills' call for a grasp of the enduring link between your personal experiences and larger socio-historical forces.

**Achievement-Centered Education (ACE) Student Learning Outcomes**
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln seeks to provide quality education to all of its students. To that end, it has designated certain classes as ACE certified. These classes provide and assess specific learning outcomes. As an ACE class, Sociology 495 Senior Seminar will facilitate **Learning Outcomes #10**: Using knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior. This class will:

- Provide opportunities to generate your own research question regarding a social issue. You will develop an in-depth understanding of the application of sociological theories and sociological methods through the analysis of social data.
- Generate a research paper that requires broad knowledge of sociological theory and topics, technical proficiency in conducting a short research project that involves data collection or the use of secondary
data, analysis and interpretation, and the synthesis and presentation of the project to other class members.

ACE learning outcomes in this class will be assessed by:
- The concept map, data collection or use of secondary data, and research project.
- Presentations and discussion of course readings and research project and peer feedback on paper conclusions.

Course Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussant/presentation of readings</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept map</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In class assignments</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper project</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Grading Scale:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98%-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95%-97%</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>91%-94%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>88%-90%</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>84%-87%</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>81%-83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78%-80%</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>74%-77%</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>71%-73%</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>65%-67%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;65%</td>
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*Final grades are not rounded up.

Late Assignments: Please note that 10% will be deducted off your grade each day your assignment is late (this includes weekends). I will not grade papers that are submitted 3 days after the due date (including weekends). This policy applies to all assignments.

Academic Integrity:
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has set education objectives that aim to maintain academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, submitting unoriginal work in whole or part, fabrication or falsification, abuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic dishonesty. Any student found guilty of committing an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade for the assignment and will be reported to the Chair of the Department of Sociology and to the University for a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

If you are unaware of what constitutes academic dishonesty, please see an academic advisor or become familiar with the University’s Academic Integrity Policy (See [http://stuafs.unl.edu/dos/code](http://stuafs.unl.edu/dos/code)).

Personal Identities:
Not all students go by their legal name or find that the set information in Canvas does not accurately portray who they are. Please send me an email and let me know what your preferred name is (if different from Canvas). You can call me Professor Tyler or Dr. Tyler. When sending me an email, please address me as such and identify yourself (i.e. provide full name) and the class section (e.g. sect. 1 or 2) or class time (e.g. 10:30 class).

Students with Disabilities:
It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide individualized accommodations to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet
Course requirements. Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) works with students to develop academic accommodations to meet their needs, including mental health disabilities such as depression and anxiety. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with SSD, which is located in 232 Canfield Administration (472-3787).

Recording
To create a classroom environment in which everyone may feel comfortable participating in discussions, it is expected that no audio or video recordings of class will be made without the prior knowledge and consent of the instructor. Students with disabilities for which reasonable accommodation would include making such recordings should work with the SSD office and the instructor to make arrangements.

WHAT IS A SEMINAR?
A seminar is a small group of students who take responsibility for learning or mastering some piece of material and for sharing their insights/critique/commentary/questions with other group members. Seminar members are both teaching and learning simultaneously. This means that each member is obligated not only to do the required readings, but to think carefully about them and be able to communicate one's ideas with others in a discussion session. Each student will be responsible for being a discussant leader for one article listed below that I have chosen and 2-3 more readings related to the student’s research project.

To lead a session means highlighting the main points of the articles and going beyond the reading to raise questions for group discussion. You are required to turn in your typed notes to me at the end of the class period for which you are a discussant leader. You will also be asked to send me pdf's of the articles related to your research project at least 3 full days prior to the day on which you are the discussant.

Participation/Attendance: It is expected that all students will have regular class attendance. Students who miss class will have difficulties fulfilling the requirements of this course. Class attendance is not limited to merely your presence, but an active and engaged presence (e.g. doing the readings, listening, and participating). Your grade for this portion of the course will be reflective of not only your class attendance but also the depth of your engagement and participation, your involvement in peer review, group work, etc. I will keep track of participation points for each class.

REQUIRED READINGS: (All readings can be found online)
**SUGGESTED READINGS:**


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**SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

Below is an outline for our progression through the material. Actual dates may change based on how rapidly we progress and unforeseeable circumstances. All readings and assignments should be completed before class on the day they are assigned. Any changes will be announced in class or through Canvas. Not knowing about syllabus changes due to class absence is not a legitimate excuse for failure to complete course requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>What is a Theory and why do we need them? Application of Theory</td>
<td>Readings: (1) The Promise of the Sociological Imagination (Mills 1959)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Developing a Research Question – Where to Begin?</td>
<td>Introduction to the Concept Map</td>
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<td>1/15</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Day – NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/17</td>
<td>Secondary Data for Project Use</td>
<td>Assignment: (1) Read through Methods and Codebook/Questions on the NASIS 2015</td>
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<td>(2) Bring to class list of potential questions from the NASIS codebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>Developing a Research Question Continued</td>
<td>Assignment: (1) Concept Map – briefly present your ideas to the class/peer group</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>Reviewing your Research Topic</td>
<td>Assignment: (1) Bring 3 articles related to your research topic. Be prepared to discuss these readings</td>
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<td>(2) Bring list of potential variables from NASIS you plan to use</td>
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<td>(3) Bring final draft of concept map to class – in depth discussion with peer group</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>Continuing with Reviewing your Research Topic</td>
<td>Assignment: (1) Continue with discussion of readings on your research topic</td>
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<td>(2) Bring rough draft of research question – peer review</td>
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<td>(3) <strong>Concept Map Due</strong> – bring hard copy to class</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>Lab Work - Getting into the Data (7th floor – Oldfather)</td>
<td>Assignment: (1) SPSS – account set up in lab – accessing the data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1/29

*What Method Will You Use?*
- Secondary Data Analysis / Qualitative Interviews / Content Analysis / Primary Data Collection?

**Readings:**
1. Schmitz (2016)
2. Howard et al. (2007)
3. Tyler et al. (2017)

**Assignment:** Think about which method will best address your research question and why

### 1/31

Continuing with *What Method Will You Use?*

**Assignment:**
1. Turn in final research question, method you plan to use, and why

### 2/2

Lab Work – work on NASIS (or other data)

### 2/5

Choosing your Theory

**Assignment:**
1. Search your articles for theories on your topic. Decide which theory is a good fit. See Theory book above under “Suggested Readings.”
2. Bring theory description and explain how theory relates to your research question

### 2/7

Continued Discussion of Theory

**Assignment:**
1. Make necessary changes to your theory.
2. Present research question and theory to class

### 2/9

Lab Work

### 2/12

Guest speaker: Meagan Savage - Career Services

### 2/14

Formulating Hypotheses

**Readings:**
2. Soule et al. (2015)

**Assignment:**
1. Bring 2-4 hypotheses to class; peer review. Hypotheses must “map on” to your RQ.
2. Proposal Part 1 Due – email instructor electronic copy

### 2/16

Lab Work

### 2/19

Continuing with Formulating Hypotheses

**Readings:**
2. Aosved et al. (2011)

**Assignment:**
1. Bring hypotheses to share with class
Institutional Review Board: Ethics and Permissions

Reading: (1) Review and Explore UNL’s Office of Research ---> Research Responsibility web pages

Assignment: (1) Summarize the role of research compliance services and the Institutional Review Board (bullet points are fine). Report to the class.

2/23 Part I papers returned. Review: Comments and Questions

Guest speaker: Morgan Beal - UNL Victim Advocate/Prevention Specialist

2/26 Consent Forms and Developing Survey / Interview Questions

Assignment: (1) Bring list of questions to be used for secondary analysis or data collection
(2) Peer review of questions and response categories

2/28 Continue with Consent Forms and Developing Survey / Interview Questions

Assignment: (1) Proposal Part 2 and Revised Part 1 Due - email instructor electronic copy

3/2 Writing Day – work on Part 3

3/5 Finalizing Forms and Instruments
Data Collection

Assignment: (1) Turn in final consent form (if applicable) and draft of questions

3/7 Guest speaker: Linda Major - Vice Chancellors Office - College Drinking

3/9 Writing your Introduction, Theory and Literature Review – Use of track changes – MS Word

3/12 Continue with Introduction, Theory and Literature Review

3/14 Assignment: (1) Proposal Part 3 Due (Intro., Theory, Lit. Review) – email to instructor
(2) Final version of survey/interview questions due

3/16 Lab Work

3/19-3/23 Spring Vacation – No Classes!!!

3/26 Writing up your Method and Data Analyses

3/28 Continue with Data Analyses

3/30 Lab Work

4/2 Lab Work
Research Paper Project (150 points total)

Students are required to complete a 13 - 15 page research paper with a **full draft due Friday, April 13th** prior to class time. You may choose the topic of your paper, but it must relate to sociology and inequality. Papers must be written in ASA format. All papers should include: an introduction, literature review, theory, methods, findings, limitations and conclusion section. The final revised paper (responding to my comments on your draft) is due **Monday, April 30th**.

**If you are completing an Honors Thesis under the supervision of a faculty member at UNL, see me during office hours before FEBRUARY 12 to discuss the relationship of that paper to this assignment.

You may choose from the following three options:

- **Option 1: Secondary Data Analysis. (Strongly Encouraged).** Use the NASIS (or other public data set approved by instructor) to statistically analyze your research question.
- **Option 2: Original Quantitative Survey Data.** Create a survey (either paper or electronic) (approved by instructor) and distribute it to at least 50 individuals to answer your research question. Students will use SPSS to analyze the findings from their surveys. **Some topics may be limited due to IRB restrictions. Instructor has final approval on topics so that students are able to complete assignment during current semester.**
Option 3: Qualitative Interviews/Media Analysis. Conduct at least 8-10 qualitative interviews on your topic, transcribe interviews and thematically analyze interviews. OR conduct a content analysis of TV shows or magazine articles (minimum of 20 shows, magazines, etc. must be analyzed).

Throughout the course, you will turn in sections of your papers (see Parts 1-5 below) and receive feedback. All students will email me their typed paper section (unless otherwise noted) on the assigned due date and receive feedback the following week (some restrictions may apply due to travel schedule, holidays, etc.). All papers must be turned in electronically before the beginning of class on their due date. Please email your paper directly to me (kim@ktresearch.net) unless otherwise noted.

Part 1 – Due Wednesday Feb. 14th (30 points)

The research question should be a clear and concise statement of what you plan to examine. Next, tell me what theory you plan to use, including a description (1-2 paragraphs) of the theory. In addition, explain how the theory will be useful to explain your research question (1 paragraph). Be sure to provide an appropriate citation for your theory. Also, include which option below you plan to use and why. Finally, provide 3 full citations (in ASA format) for 3 articles that you plan to use for your proposal. (These should be the ones you presented in class).

- **Option 1**: Briefly describe the secondary data source you will be using (e.g., NASIS2015) and what questions from that data source you will be analyzing.
- **Option 2**: Who will you survey, what questions you will ask, and will you use paper or e-survey?
- **Option 3**: Who will you conduct in depth interviews with or what media source will you examine and what questions will you ask?

Part 2 – Due Wednesday, February 28th (20 points)

Identify 6 peer-reviewed journal articles. At least 4 of the articles must be current (i.e. published 2010-2018).

For each article, provide a complete ASA citation, and a 3-5 sentence paragraph describing the main findings. Next, explain what this article contributes to your research topic (i.e., does it provide a discussion of theory, a source for survey/interview questions, empirical or background information on your topic, etc.). Be sure to do this for EACH of your six articles.

Based on your theory (Part I) and the articles you will be using for your paper, what are your hypotheses? Quantitative projects (option 1 and 2) must provide 2-4 hypotheses and qualitative projects may have multiple research questions (e.g., 2-4 questions) instead of hypotheses.

Part 3 – Due Wednesday, March 14th (20 points)

Complete a written narrative (not an outline) of the Introduction, Theory, and Literature Review sections of your paper. These components of your paper should include the following:

**Introduction:**

Ø Review your topic/why is it important to study?
Ø How does it relate to inequality?
Ø Historical perspective/social context of the issue (if relevant).
Ø Provide a clear statement of the purpose of your paper (i.e., your research statement/question).

**Theory Application:**

Ø Describe the theoretical perspective you plan to use.
Ø Apply the theoretical perspective to your topic.

**Review of the Literature:**

Ø Overview of past research on your topic (i.e. your 6 articles). What do we know?
Ø Review and SYNTHESIZE the sources that relate to your topic and explain where you see gaps.

**Reference page**

Ø Use proper ASA citation and reference guidelines. Please number your pages.

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**Part 4 – Due Friday, April 13th (40 points)**

Part 4 includes your Methods, Measures, and Results. Students are expected to make revisions on part 3 of the paper and turn in paper with Part 4 for this assignment. This also includes your references.

**Methods**

Ø Did you choose qualitative or quantitative analysis and why? Did you use an existing data source or collect original research? Explain what you did to collect your data. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of this method for answering your questions.
Ø Describe your sample (provide demographics, but maintain confidentiality).
Ø For options 1 and 2: What measures did you use? What were the descriptive statistics for these measures?
Ø For option 3: What questions did you ask?

**Results**

Ø For options 1 and 2: What are the major statistical findings for your paper? Associations or Correlations? Significance? Describe what analysis you did and why.
Ø For option 3: What are the major themes present in your interviews? Did any of the interviews provide contrasting or contradictory ideas to these findings?

**Reference page**

Ø Use proper ASA citation and reference guidelines.

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**Part 5 – Final Paper Due Monday, April 30th (40 points)**

The final paper must include all required sections of the paper and appropriate revisions. A section on Limitations and Conclusions is also part of your final paper.

**Conclusions**

Ø Summarize your findings. Were your hypotheses supported or rejected? Were your research questions fully answered?
Ø Relate your findings to your theory. What did you learn?
Ø Do your findings contradict or confirm the research in this area?
Ø What are the implications of your findings? For inequality and social policy?
Ø What are the limitations of your findings? What would you do differently the next time you conduct research?
Ø What is the goal for future research (i.e., what are the next steps)?

**Student Paper Presentations**

Ø Students will present their final research project to the class.
Ø Each student will have approximately 15-20 minutes to present and discuss their work.

**IMPORTANT Points to Remember:**

1. Please turn off cell phones before the start of class (i.e., no texting or checking phone during class).
2. Recording of class is not permitted (see syllabus p. 3 for exception).
3. If you are going to be late for a class or leave early, please let instructor know ahead of time.
4. Do not make a habit of coming to class late or leaving early. This is unacceptable as it causes disruption and hampers learning for everyone.
5. If you miss class, please obtain notes from a classmate and then see me if you have further questions.

**UNL Student Resources:**

UNL academic calendar: [http://registrar.unl.edu/2017-2018](http://registrar.unl.edu/2017-2018)
Writing Center: [http://www.unl.edu/writing/home](http://www.unl.edu/writing/home)
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): [http://health.unl.edu/caps/](http://health.unl.edu/caps/)
Student Involvement: [http://involved.unl.edu/](http://involved.unl.edu/)
Department of Sociology: [http://soc.unl.edu](http://soc.unl.edu)