This course provides hands-on training in how sociologists conduct research. It assumes no prior knowledge of the research process, and covers issues related to research design, data collection, and interpretive and causal analyses within the context of a large-scale collaborative research project. Each of you will operate as a member of a “research team,” with responsibility over a component of the broader project. This endeavor will require you to coordinate in various ways with other members of the class as we identify research questions, define the design and data necessary to answer those questions, gather and code that data, and begin the process of analysis. While the substantive focus of this research work will vary from semester to semester, our emphasis is motivated by questions and collaborations that link to ongoing social justice initiatives, and as such will focus on approaches to arraying, analyzing, and effectively communicating ideas related to our research topic and data. Throughout the semester, we will emphasize qualitative, comparative, and quantitative modes of analysis. For the latter, we will employ the (free and open-source) statistical software package R-Studio, again assuming no previous experience with this software or with statistical analysis generally. As an “applied” course, we will divide our time roughly equally among three tasks: 1) gaining substantive background on the particular topic that defines the semester’s research project; 2) engaging specific research design elements and data analysis techniques; 3) applying those design considerations to our particular research topic to produce findings of use to real-world social justice initiatives.

**Spring 2018 research project:** This particular semester, our work will follow from a longstanding research initiative that originated earlier this decade with the Mississippi Truth Project (MTP), a grassroots restorative justice effort seeking to address systematic historical inequities and highlight their relationship to contemporary social opportunities and arrangements. In particular, our efforts will center on tracing relationships between contemporary educational inequities and historical dynamics associated with public school desegregation trajectories, building outward from a focus on Mississippi to encompass other communities, including St. Louis.
Office Hours and contact details
David has scheduled office hours on Tuesdays from 11:30am-12:30pm and Thursdays from 1-2pm. If these times are not convenient for you, we are happy to make other arrangements – email is generally a good way to contact either of us, and our email addresses are listed at the top of this page. We encourage each of you to come to office hours to discuss questions, enthusiasms, or problems associated with the class, or any other issues that interest or concern you. We both will generally be available for quick questions immediately after class, and you can also leave messages or other materials in David’s mailbox in the department office in the Sociology suite, located on the second floor of Seigle Hall. Additionally, if you need to contact David at other times, his phone numbers are listed above.

Readings
We will use the following books in this course:

Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method, by Charles Ragin & Lisa Amoroso
After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation, by Charles Clotfelter
The Visual Display of Quantitative Information, by Edward Tufte (any edition)

Additionally, given the high cost of methods textbooks, we will provide PDF versions of selected chapters and excerpts from other books on our course Blackboard page. Other articles and data links can also be found there. R-Studio Help resources exist primarily in online forums; we will provide recommendations about those and related support materials as the semester proceeds.

Assignments and grading
• Data conceptualization and presentation exercises (mostly in-class) 5%
• Data coding tasks 10%
• 2 R-Studio exercises (15% each) 30%
  (Note that you can download an open-source version of R-Studio onto any computer for free via rstudio.com)
• Research project, part I: historical synthesis 15%
  (5 pages, focused on key themes associated with local school desegregation trajectories)
• Research project, part II: final integrative analysis paper 30%
  (10 page discussion of your research work, integrating your background study with the conceptualization and operationalization of your research measures and preliminary analysis of your data)
• Participation 10%
A note about assignments and participation: As your written work will contribute to our collective project, you can expect lots of collaborative support and encouragement throughout the semester – in this class, we are all mutually accountable for producing high-quality data and credible analyses, and we intend this work to be carried out in a spirit of support that should properly characterize a “research team.” Obviously, this team-based model requires that everyone take their role in the project seriously – we will always place a high value on your engagement and participation, both in class and with related outside work.

Accommodations
Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resources at 935-4153. Disability Resources is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for WU students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. We will accept Disability Resources VISA forms by email and in person. If you have already been approved for accommodations, we request that you provide a copy of your VISA within the first two weeks of the semester.

We are committed as well to offering academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu or 935-8761), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, located on the 4th floor of Seigle Hall. This office provides resources confidentially; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student, so long as doing so does not impair the ability to provide such measures.
Course Outline

Week 1 (16-18 January):
• Introductory business: overview of class structure
• Data and inquiry as a collective endeavor: collective class-based research examples
• The stakes of school desegregation in the U.S.
  - reading: Patricia Hill Collins, “What Does the Flag Mean to You? Education and Democratic Possibilities” (from Another Kind of Public Education)
• The state of school desegregation in the U.S.

Week 2 (23-25 January):
• Foundations of sociological research I: scope and goals
• Orienting to school desegregation data: representing experience through yearbooks and other archival traces

Week 3 (30 January-1 February):
• Foundations of sociological research II: process and ethics
• Brown and the roots of school desegregation in Mississippi
  - reading: Neil R. McMillen, Dark Journey, Ch. 3
  Charles C. Bolton, The Hardest Deal of All, Introduction

Week 4 (6-8 February):
• Theory and the principles of (causal) explanation
• Green, Alexander, and the long arc of school desegregation in Mississippi

Week 5 (13-15 February):
• Qualitative inquiry: experience and process
  -readings: Ragin & Amoroso, Ch. 5 (“Using Qualitative Methods to Study Commonalities”)
• Narrating and analyzing experiences of school desegregation
• Considering archival school data I: yearbooks, surveys, and official documents

Week 6 (20-22 February):
• The logic of comparison
  -reading: Ragin & Amoroso, Ch. 6 (“Using Comparative Methods to Study Diversity”)
• Foundations of school resegregation, in Mississippi and beyond
  -reading: Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All*, Chs. 7 (“We Do Not Want Our Children Going to School with Yours”) & 8 (“School Integration: A Pyrrhic Victory?”)
• Considering archival school data II: yearbooks, surveys, and official documents

Week 7 (27 February-1 March):
• Quantitative inquiry: patterns and process (revisited)
  -readings: Ragin & Amoroso, Ch. 7 (“Using Quantitative Methods to Study Covariation”)
• Considering archival school data III: yearbooks, surveys, and official documents

**Historical synthesis paper due**

Week 8 (6-8 March):
• Constructing variables and measures I
  Clotfelter, *After Brown*, Chs. 3-4
• Data coding workshop I
Week 9 (13-15 March): No class! (Spring break)

Week 10 (20-22 March):
- Field trip: desegregating schools in St. Louis
  - reading: “A Chronology: Integrating St. Louis Schools”
- Introduction to R-Studio

Week 11 (27-29 March):
- Presenting and representing data visually
  - readings: Tufte, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*
- R-Studio workshop: Tables and graphs

First quantitative exercise due

Week 12 (3-5 April):
- Populations and samples
  - reading: Babbie, Ch. 7 (“The Logic of Sampling”)
- Desegregating schools, inside and out
  - reading: Clotfelter, *After Brown*, Ch. 5 (“Inside Schools”)
    - Herbert Semmel, “Race and Education in St. Louis and St. Louis County, Missouri, Part 1” (1967)

Second quantitative exercise due

Week 13 (10-12 April):
- Constructing variables and measures II
  - reading: Babbie, Ch. 6 (“Indexes, Scales, and Typologies”)
    - Herbert Semmel, “Race and Education in St. Louis and St. Louis County, Missouri, Part 2”

Week 14 (17-19 April):
- Content analysis of qualitative historical data
  - reading: Babbie, Ch. 11 (“Unobtrusive Research”)
- Data coding and analysis workshop II

Week 15 (24-26 April):
- Data presentations: Mississippi and St. Louis
- Spillover and course wrap-up

Final integrative analysis paper due (tba)