



# NYU | WAGNER

## Doctoral Research Colloquium, Fall 2014

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### **Objectives:**

This course aims to help students: (a) engage with, constructively criticize, and learn from working papers and unpublished research; (b) get a “behind-the-scenes” peek on how research is conducted by those who are successfully conducting it; and (c) identify connections between apparently disparate fields, disciplines, or methodologies (and thus be ready to learn from scholars in “other” fields).

### **Meeting Times and Places:**

The colloquium meets on selected Thursdays from 12:30-2:00PM in the Rudin Conference Room (see schedule below). These meetings are followed by a debrief session from 2:00 to 3:00PM, attended by enrolled students and the speaker. The papers for each talk will be distributed as they become available. A NYU Classes website with additional readings related to the craft and art of research is available as well.

### **Schedule:**

**Sept 4<sup>th</sup> - Kick-off meeting.** We will go over the syllabus, set expectations, and get ready for a productive semester. Please read “That’s Interesting” by Murray Davis and “Die, Selfish Gene, Die”, by David Dobbs. I highly recommend you also read a book titled “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions”, by Thomas Kuhn, available on Amazon and other booksellers. This session meets from 12:00 to 1:00 at **Mulberry**.

**Sept 18<sup>th</sup> – Jinhua Zhao** – Edward H. and Joyce Linde Career Development Assistant Professor of Urban Planning at Department of Urban Studies and Planning (MIT). Professor Zhao’s research examines travel behavior and transportation policy, public transit management, and China’s urbanization and mobility. [*Exceptionally, this presentation will take place at the Sociology Department, 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Puck Building; **Debrief at Lafayette***]

**Sept 25<sup>th</sup> – Judd Kessler** – Assistant Professor of Business Economics and Public Policy at Wharton, University of Pennsylvania. In his research, Professor Kessler investigates the economic and psychological forces that motivate individuals to contribute to public goods inside and outside the workplace. He is currently a fellow at Russell Sage, where he is examining the impact of explicit and implicit advice on people’s decision making processes and their subsequent life outcomes. **Debrief at Mulberry.**

**Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> – Naomi Hausman** – Lecturer in Economics (tenure track) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Professor Hausman’s dissertation examined the effects of university innovation on the growth of the surrounding local economy. More generally, she analyzes why some cities grow while others stagnate or decline, what are the roles of skilled workers, innovators, and entrepreneurs in a city’s success, and what attracts or repels them. **Debrief at Mulberry.**

**Oct 16<sup>th</sup> – Double-header: Sarah Cordes** is a doctoral student at NYU Wagner, where she is studying how school finance reform affected parental investment in their children, how charter schools affect public school resources, and how residential mobility impacts student performance. **Emilyn Whitesell** is a doctoral student at NYU Wagner, and her current research focuses on how school accountability influences parent, teacher, and student perceptions of their schools, large-scale program evaluation, and the spillover effects of student mobility. **Debrief at Mulberry.**

**Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> – Diane Vaughan** – Professor of Sociology, Columbia University. Prof. Vaughan examines the "dark side" of organizations: mistake, misconduct, and disaster. Her book “The Challenger Launch Decision” was awarded numerous scholarly prizes and was nominated for the National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize. She is currently conducting an ethnography and interview-based study of air traffic control, to understand how controllers are trained to recognize early warning signs and anomalies as signals of potential danger and correct them, so that little mistakes do not turn into catastrophes. **Debrief at Mulberry.**

**Nov 13<sup>th</sup> - Jean Lee** – Associate Research Scientist/Post-doctoral Research Fellow with the Financial Access Initiative (FAI) at NYU-Wagner. Prior to joining FAI, she was a consultant at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., where she worked on issues concerning growth and labor markets in developing countries. She is currently studying the financial lives of poor U.S. and Bangladeshi households. **Debrief at Lafayette.**

**Nov 20<sup>th</sup> – Josh Gottlieb** – Assistant Professor at University of British Columbia. Professor Gottlieb is an economist interested in both health and public economics, and urban and real estate economics. His most recent paper, “Do Physicians' Financial Incentives Affect Treatment Patterns and Patient Health?”, was published in the American Economic Review. **Debrief at Mulberry.**

**Dec 4<sup>th</sup> – Wrap-up session.** We take stock of the topics discussed throughout the semester. Students should read at least one of the *substantive* readings on professional development posted under “The art and craft of a scholarly career”. Please come ready to present the main

points in your chosen reading and use them to reflect on the main lessons from the semester. This meeting takes place from 12:00 to 1:00 at Mulberry. It is brown bag (i.e. feel free to bring your own lunch).

### **Assignments:**

In addition to attending the presentation, students are required to perform the following tasks:

(a) Participation: students enrolled in this class are required to read the papers and engage with the speaker during and/or immediately after the presentation (i.e. Q&A). Naturally, I do not expect that every student will ask questions at every event. Rather, I expect to see engagement and participation for the class as a whole. Students are also required to read and discuss two of the readings posted on NYU Classes (see “wrap-up session” above). This item (“*Participation*”) will account for 20% of the final grade.

(b) Short memos: after each event, students are expected to write a short memo / outline (~two pages) with the main points discussed during the debriefing session. The memos are individual. They should not discuss the *substance* of the research but the insights on how research is actually done (e.g.: how to select a research question and gather data, the importance of methodology, how to write effectively, how to obtain funding, how to submit a manuscript for publication, how to referee a manuscript, which conferences to attend, etc).

Overall, you should face these meetings with speakers, and the writing of the memo, as an exercise in qualitative research. Your goal is to find out how to be a successful researcher. When the speaker provides an abstract idea, ask for examples. When you think a speaker is contradicting himself, herself a previous speaker, or the advice you received elsewhere, ask for clarification. Be gentle, but probe deeper. Your skill as an interviewer will show through a memo that goes beyond registering the words of the speaker. A good memo will identify the thought patterns behind the speech, the insights these thoughts provoke, the doubts that remain, and the questions you will pursue next.

Important, the writing of the memo is an opportunity to reflect on the conversation after it is done. The memo should not transcribe the words of the interviewee. It should quote the speaker whenever necessary, but as a stepping stone towards personal reflection and engagement with the topic under consideration.

In the past, I used to attend these sessions but students provided anonymous feedback asking to meet with the speakers by themselves. This means that the discussions are led by students, and it is the students’ responsibility to ensure that they remain interesting and engaging. Sometimes speakers will repeat advice you have already heard. Be a skillful interviewer and steer the conversation towards more productive terrain.

Depending on the circumstances, students could use their own papers, career ambitions, experiences and aspirations as fodder for discussion. It is OK to ask for advice, but do not forget that these are group sessions so the conversation should remain interesting for everyone in

attendance. Students who want to discuss individual matters with any given speaker should apply for a one-to-one slot.

These memos are due on the Wednesday following the event. The colloquium is composed of five events. I expect each student will write at least four memos<sup>1</sup>. This item will account for 50% of the grade.

(c) Referee report: students are required to submit a mock referee report for one of the papers presented during the semester. The report is due on the Wednesday following the event. You can choose any paper to analyze. Alternatively, you can suggest a different unpublished paper to analyze. Please talk to me if you want to pursue this option. It is your responsibility to ensure you submit one referee report by the end of the semester. This report will account for 30% of the grade.

When writing the report, you should pretend the paper was submitted to the hypothetical “Wagner Journal of Public Service Research”. I am the chief editor, and the chair of your committee is the managing editor. The journal covers all the topics that we cover at Wagner. Similar to the school itself, it is *“constructed to enhance connections, to emphasize that there is always something to learn from another discipline or field, method or person”* (from the Dean’s Message).

A typical report is composed of a brief cover letter and the report itself. I have posted a number of pieces on the NYU Classes with instructions on how to write a good referee reports. In particular, see the file titled “the editors speak”.

In the meantime, the following excerpt paraphrases the American Journal of Evaluation’s instructions to reviewers; these instructions should help set the “tone” for the report.

Your review will be most helpful if you:

- Provide specific comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the paper;
- Base your comments on the quality of the paper and its potential contribution to the field, rather than on conformity to your own preferred approach or theoretical framework; and
- Give comments that would be helpful to the author; ad hominem attacks are not appropriate. While holding the work to high standards, try to make your comments thoughtful and focused on how this work might be improved.

Some students have found the book, Girden, Ellen R. (2001) Evaluating Research Articles helpful in learning how to prepare such critiques. You should also ask your advisor(s) for examples of actual reports (good and bad ones).

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<sup>1</sup> If a student writes more than five memos, I’ll take the four highest grades into account

Finally, you may want to run your text through the “Writer’s Diet” test, which provides a simplified diagnosis of your writing style, to make sure the language is concrete, simple & direct: <http://writersdiet.com/WT.php>

**Format and submission:**

All assignments should be written on Times New Roman size 12, doubled-spaced lines (not 1.5), one inch margins all around. Please submit them as .pdf or .doc and include your name, mailbox (if available), date, and other identifying data in the document.

As needed, include citations in the text and a bibliography at the end of the document. Please use the following format for citations: if you are citing an idea or a concept, include (author’s last name year) immediately after the passage, once per paragraph. If you are transcribing a passage, include the page number. For instance:

“...this type of engagement has been called responsive (Ayres and Braithwaite 1992, Braithwaite 2005), flexible (Bardach and Kagan 1982), tit-for-tat (Scholz 1984), creative (May and Burby 1998), and adaptive (Hawkins 1984).”

Use footnotes instead of endnotes.

To **submit your assignments**, go to: <http://www.dropitto.me/salocoslovsky> so you can upload the file directly to my computer. You will need a password, which I will distribute in class.

**Important**, please remember to include your mailbox number in the paper and use the following convention to name your files: DocSem [your lastname] [assignment]

For instance: DocSem Alvarez 1<sup>st</sup> critique.doc