

# Independent Work in Sociology

An Overview of the JP and Senior Thesis

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## Independent Work in Sociology: An Introduction

Princeton takes its independent research requirements very seriously, and undergraduates at Princeton perform authentic, scholarly research that, at its best, contributes to the larger scholarly conversations taking place within various academic disciplines in the academy. In sociology in particular, independent research means a couple of distinct things. First and foremost, sociological research must be informed by a scholarly literature. Sociologists seek to better understand society and build theories that help us to make sense of and understand our social worlds. Independent research, whether a JP or senior thesis, must treat seriously the established sociological literature on a given topic and make clear how the student's research contributes to the larger literature in the field.

Second, sociological research at the undergraduate level will normally involve the analysis of empirical data.<sup>1</sup> While some students analyze existing statistical datasets, other students will conduct their own surveys, while others will use interviews or field observations to gather their data. Other sources of data might include texts, images, or archival data sources such as newspapers, legal proceedings, or organizational records. Whether using quantitative or qualitative methods, the analysis of this empirical data represents the most important element of the JP or thesis. Rather than summarizing existing studies or reporting on the findings of others, students doing independent research in sociology seek to contribute to this larger literature by analyzing data themselves. The collection or location of appropriate data, and the original analysis and discussion of results are what make this work distinct from much of the writing you may have done in other classes.

Independent research in sociology asks students to contribute to a larger field of sociological knowledge and will make students familiar with the methods of careful, systematic data collection and analysis practiced within the discipline. Strong independent work in sociology will have substantial elements of originality in its conception of its subject, in the evidence and reasoning it brings to bear on that subject, and/or in the analytical techniques it employs. The best JPs and senior theses in sociology conduct research that would interest and inform even specialists in the student's field of study.

Although this introduction covers the main requirements for independent work in sociology, the sociology department also provides students with a comprehensive guide to writing both the JP and the senior thesis. This handbook, *Writing Sociology*, is available through the department and used in conjunction with the junior methods course SOC 300.

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<sup>1</sup> Rarely, a student will write a senior thesis that focuses exclusively on sociological theory. If you wish to pursue this option, you should discuss it with your adviser as soon as possible to determine if this is an acceptable course of action.

## Planning Your Work

For juniors, your JP will likely be the longest piece of writing you have ever undertaken; for seniors, your thesis will almost certainly be the biggest academic project you have ever worked on independently. These projects require careful planning and strategic work throughout; it goes without saying that these are not projects that can be conceived in the days or even weeks leading up to the final deadline for your written work. You will need to plan your work carefully throughout the fall and spring semesters so that your final paper meets the requirements of independent work for the Princeton sociology department. Fortunately, the department also has a series of deadlines, coupled with a formal advising system, that will help you to stay on track with your independent research.

## Advising

Although your JP or thesis represents your own independent research, you will be working on your research under the supervision of a faculty member assigned by the department. For JPs, you will be assigned a faculty adviser near the end of the fall semester. Thesis advisers are typically assigned by the department early in the fall term. Faculty supervision will vary based on a number of factors: the nature of your project, your adviser's own personality and working style, and the relationship that you develop with your adviser in the course of your research. Some faculty members may be very directive in setting up a meeting schedule with you from the start, while others will be comfortable with a more hands-off, intermittent schedule of meeting and advising. There is no one "right" way to have a productive relationship with your adviser; however, there are number of things you can do to get this relationship started on the right foot.

Most importantly, you should talk early on with your adviser about how he or she prefers to work with undergraduate students on their independent work. Soon after you are assigned an adviser, you should send an email to him or her introducing yourself and requesting an initial meeting to discuss your research ideas. It's okay if you don't yet know your exact topic and questions, and you shouldn't let this uncertainty keep you from making early contact with your adviser. It's entirely appropriate that the course of your thesis research might be shaped in key ways by your early meetings and conversations with your adviser. You can use an early meeting with your adviser both to feel out the kind of working relationship that will be most productive for both of you, and get a good start on your research.

For this first meeting, you don't need to have your thesis plans set in stone – your adviser's job is to help direct your work in a way that leads you toward a strong original contribution to your field of study. However, you should go into the meeting prepared to talk about your interests, and at least the general topic that you are thinking about exploring in your research. If you've thought about the kind of methods you want to use – quantitative analysis of existing data, ethnography, an original survey, etc. –

you can discuss this as well. Come prepared to take notes, ask questions, and make a good first impression by being prepared and engaged. In addition, you should ask the following during that initial meeting:

- How often should we meet?
- In your experience, what makes for a productive relationship with an advisee?
- Can I give you drafts of my work in advance of the official department deadlines?
- How far ahead should we schedule our meetings?

Before you leave the meeting, you should plan for when you will next be in touch, and discuss the work that you will do prior to that meeting. If your adviser mentions books or articles you might find useful to read, or other faculty you might consult on your topic, you should do these things promptly.

Throughout the research process, it is important to stay in touch with your adviser. If you find you are stuck in your independent work, or worried about your progress in your research, you can seek out help from various sources on campus, but you shouldn't avoid your adviser! While it's true you don't want to have a series of aimless conversations with the professor assigned to supervise your research, you should seek out his or her input throughout the research process, and go to the meetings prepared to ask pointed questions and take careful notes on the feedback your professor offers you. With a good relationship with your adviser, the process of independent research can be one of the most rewarding endeavors you undertake at Princeton.

## Establishing a Timeline

For juniors, your independent work will begin to take shape in the *SOC 300: Claims and Evidence* methods course that you are required to take in the fall semester of your junior year. In this course you will receive significant feedback on your research project idea(s), work with your professors, preceptors, and other students to refine and sharpen your research question(s), and fine tune your proposed data collection strategy. Around Thanksgiving of the fall semester, you will be matched with the faculty adviser for your JP, who will be introduced to your project via the research project proposal that you write towards the end of the fall term. The SOC 300 methods course typically requires that you also conduct a small pilot study in the fall semester, which will give you an idea of how you will need to revise and expand your data collection efforts going forward in the JP research. Ideally, you will conclude SOC 300 – in which the course professor and preceptors are your central guides – and move on to a closer working relationship with your JP adviser for the remainder of the year. You can think of SOC 300 as a kind of boot camp that prepares you for this new partnership: when you conclude SOC 300 you should have a clear sense of your methodology and research design, which will ultimately make your working relationship with your JP adviser more fruitful and productive for both of you. In the spring semester, your faculty adviser will direct and advise your research and writing, typically reading a draft of your JP about a month before the final due date.

For senior thesis writers, the supportive structure that accompanied your work in SOC 300 may feel like a distant memory as you move into the uncharted waters of conducting independent research outside of the bounds of a formal course. However, you need not feel alone. The sociology department has a senior thesis writers' group that meets throughout both the fall and spring semesters to bring together seniors working on independent research. Typically led by a graduate student in sociology, this group meets regularly to discuss your progress, read drafts, and troubleshoot issues that arise in the course of your independent work.

In addition, the department has a set of firm deadlines that are designed to keep your work on track. There is no hard and fast rule for planning your work, but many students find it helpful to meet with their adviser when they are brainstorming about a portion of the thesis, but have not yet started writing. Leaving ample room between this meeting and the due date allows you plenty of time to address any suggestions or concerns articulated by your adviser. Therefore, it is advisable to use these dates as a way of planning your meetings with your adviser as well as your own writing schedule.

For instance, you might decide that it would be useful to consult with your adviser before submitting the prospectus for your senior thesis to confirm that you are both on the same page about how your work is taking shape. You can use this goal to begin working back from key deadlines to plan your work. To illustrate: If your senior thesis prospectus is due on November 21<sup>st</sup>, you might plan to meet with your adviser sometime around November 7<sup>th</sup>, and then begin drafting your prospectus in the following week, incorporating the feedback you receive from him or her. This would leave you an additional week to revise your prospectus before the departmental due date of November 21<sup>st</sup>.

## Important Dates

**Departmental Deadlines for Junior Papers** (See also the *Sociology Undergraduate Handbook*, from which these guidelines are excerpted):

**Friday, October 28: Funding Application.** If you anticipate needing funds to cover research costs you may apply to the department after first applying to university-wide funding sources (see Section 6 of the *Sociology Undergraduate Handbook*). Resources are quite limited, and grants do not typically exceed \$200.

**January, Date TBA: SOC 300 final assignments** should be submitted to your preceptor.

**Monday, March 27: First Draft.** Submit an electronic copy of the full first draft of your JP to Cindy Gibson, who will forward this to your adviser for comments. You should receive written comments on this draft from your adviser. Hard copies will not be accepted.

**Friday, April 14: Final Revision.** Submit two hard copies and one electronic copy of the final paper to Cindy Gibson (cindy@princeton.edu).

Be sure to include and sign the pledge. Independent work should be submitted to Cindy Gibson in Room 106 Wallace Hall no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, April 14, 2017. **Separate penalties apply for failing to meet this deadline.**

**Departmental Deadlines for Senior Theses** (See also the *Sociology Undergraduate Handbook*, from which these guidelines are excerpted):

**Friday, October 28: Funding Application.** If you anticipate needing funds to cover research costs you may apply to the Department after first applying to University-wide funding sources (see Section 6 of the *Sociology Undergraduate Handbook*). Resources are quite limited, and grants do not typically exceed \$200.

**Monday, November 21: Prospectus.** Submit an electronic version of the following to Cindy Gibson: a 5-page prospectus including an outline, bibliography, summary of your sociological research question and its significance, and your hypotheses. This progress report should also include a preliminary title for your independent work. Hard copies will not be accepted.

**Friday, February 10: First Two Chapters and Progress Report.** Submit an electronic copy of your first two chapters and a two-page report on data analysis to Cindy Gibson. Hard copies will not be accepted.

**Monday, March 27: First Draft.** Submit an electronic copy of the full first draft of your independent work to Cindy Gibson, who will forward this to your adviser for comments. You should receive written comments on this draft. Hard copies will not be accepted.

**Friday, April 14: Final Revision.** Submit one bound copy, one unbound copy and one electronic copy to Cindy Gibson (cindy@princeton.edu). See Section 4.31 for more information.

Be sure to include and sign the pledge. Independent work should be submitted to Cindy Gibson in Room 106 Wallace Hall no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, April 14, 2017. **Separate penalties apply for failing to meet this deadline.**

## The Research Process<sup>2</sup>

Like professional sociologists, students conducting independent research ask questions about social inequality, the nature and functions of social groups and organizations, large-scale changes in collective and national identities, and the subtle habits and cues that shape people's interactions with one another – and this only scratches the surface! Questions in sociology often take some of the following forms:

- **Questions about the meaning of certain activities, practices, or experiences for particular social groups.** (E.g. How do parents respond when learning that their child has been diagnosed with Sickle-Cell Anemia? What does it mean to be included in a larger group of people afflicted with a disease? How does identification with a particular illness change the experience of illness and treatment for families managing the disease?)
- **Questions about the ways that identification with larger social categories – race, ethnicity, religion, political identification, gender – affect aspects of social life.** (What's the relationship between being religiously conservative and politically conservative? Are evangelicals more likely to vote Republican? How do ideas about masculinity influence shop floor culture for workers in the auto industry?)
- **Questions about the influence of particular variables on other variables or outcomes, including questions that compare groups and track trends across a broader scale.** (What difference does income level have on a mother's likelihood of receiving prenatal care during pregnancy? Are mothers who receive prenatal care less likely to drink during pregnancy than those who don't? How might these relationships vary by age? Do clinics located in poor and non-poor neighborhoods offer different forms of prenatal care to women?)

The challenge for many student sociologists, then, is settling on a topic and finding a research question that is of an appropriate scope for analysis in an independent research project. Whether writing a JP or a senior thesis, the question should be complex enough to warrant serious treatment in a lengthy paper, but focused enough that you can do a thorough job with your analysis.

In working towards a more focused research question, you would want to do some reading around this issue, focusing on sociological articles and books (in other words "the literature"), taking notes about what other scholars consider unanswered questions or places where published studies and findings do not agree. This will help to refine your research question significantly.

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<sup>2</sup> This section describes key elements of the research and writing process in sociology. For more in-depth guidance on planning your project, choosing methods, navigating the IRB process, recording and organizing your research, and drafting and revising your paper, see the comprehensive *Writing Sociology* guide, available in the department and used as a handbook during SOC 300.

You would also want to think about some potential data sources that would answer these questions. For instance, if your main question of interest is about women's pay in professional workplace situations, you would probably want to look at a quantitative dataset that you would analyze using statistical methods, such as the U.S. Census or the Current Population Study (CPS), two publicly available datasets. If you're more interested in the reasons why people do things, or what people have to say about their own experiences (such as why well educated, professional women choose to leave the labor market in order to stay home with young children), then you could gather your own data for your JP or thesis by interviewing people in the form of a qualitative sample. Although this strategy may sound daunting, it's not as hard as it sounds. In this particular example, you might find that you could interview a sample of women who are involved in local Princeton mother's groups.

In either scenario, your research questions will be developed through a process of brainstorming, consulting the literature, and generating ideas in consultation with an identifiable data source. What you are looking for, in essence, are holes in existing research: what do we still need to know about the topic that interests you, and how could you help to answer them in your independent research?

After settling on a research question, the research process in sociology moves to the selection or collection of appropriate empirical data for study. Data in the social sciences is divided into two broad categories: *qualitative* and *quantitative* data. Put simply, qualitative research collects data measured primarily in words, while quantitative research measures data as numerical values. If you will be using *qualitative* methods in your JP or thesis, you will most likely need to collect your own data – be it through observation, interviewing a relevant sample, or analyzing text materials through the methods of content analysis. Depending on the nature of your research, you may need to file an application with the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval of research using human subjects.

The methods used by sociologists to analyze *quantitative* data generally involve statistical analyses, through the use of computer software such as STATA or SPSS. If you want to use statistical methods in your independent research, you need to have some training in these methods. Juniors should plan to take SOC 301 during the fall semester, concurrent with SOC 300. Seniors can also take SOC 400 in the fall of the senior year, and other courses may be available through the WWS as well. You will also need to find a dataset suitable for analyzing your research question. Although this may sound difficult, you will find that there are numerous datasets made available to you at Princeton, and many more that are available in the public domain. Depending on your interest, faculty at Princeton may also have access to data collected through their own research that you may receive permission to use for your independent work.

While all of these methods are available to you as you conduct original research, the methods you ultimately use in your independent work will depend on three things: the research question you select, your own individual preferences, and the constraints of time and resources. Your advisor will help you determine the correct methods for investigating your research question, and guide you in executing them effectively.

## The Finished Product: Format and Structure

Students often ask about the difference between a JP and a senior thesis. The main difference concerns the length and scope of each project, along with the depth of data collection and analysis associated with each form of independent research. For instance, a student who is interested in studying megachurches (very large religious congregations) might carry out a JP research project that would review relevant literature on contemporary religious organizations, and interview 12 or 15 members of a nearby megachurch about their motivations for participating in this kind of religious organization. Comparatively, a senior thesis that explored this same topic might situate the analysis in both the sociology of religion *and* the sociology of organizations literatures, comparing two megachurches through 12-15 interviews at each congregation, as well as field observations collected over a period of a few months. In the case of the JP, the student would be able to draw conclusions primarily about the range of motivations that lead individuals to join megachurches, and contribute primarily to the literature in the study of religion. For a senior thesis, the project might be contributing to the scholarly literature in both religion and organizations through a more comparative study, and would involve collecting more data over a longer period of time.

While there is no formal length requirement for the JP or the senior thesis, past experience suggests that a typical JP is around 10,000 words (or 35-40 pages including references), while a senior thesis is typically about twice that long – 20,000 words or 75-100 pages. Of course, a paper might be shorter than this but still a strong piece of work, and the reverse is true as well: a lengthy, but rambling and unfocused senior thesis might exceed well over 100 pages and still represent a weak piece of scholarship. For this reason, you should use length as a proxy for the strength and focus of your argument: a paper that is significantly shorter than these guidelines may well have an argument that is not sufficiently complex or developed, and a paper that is substantially longer may contain an argument that is poorly-organized, tangential, or otherwise lacking in concentration.

In terms of the final form of the JP and the thesis, the length and structure of the papers vary, but **both** should include **all** of elements discussed in this handbook, in some format. In other words, a JP is a long paper that includes all of the following pieces, while a Senior Thesis includes all of these, but within a structure divided up by chapters:

- Your **research question**
- A statement of why your **research question is important**
- A **literature review** of relevant social scientific literature
- Description of the **data** you have selected for analysis
- A discussion of the **methods** used for the data analysis
- **Analysis of results**
- **Discussion** of the significance of the analysis, including general **conclusions**

- A **Bibliography** of works cited

Of course, these are the pieces of a typical sociological research article, of the sort that you have likely read in sociology classes. How these pieces get communicated in written work will vary, particularly between a JP and a thesis, but a good piece of independent work will include careful attention to all of these elements.

## The Junior Paper

The Junior Paper is typically one long paper (rather than a document containing separate chapters) that begins with a separate title page that contains the following information:

Student's Name

Title

Adviser's Name

Abstract (150 words)

The body of the JP might well move through all of the required elements via separate subheadings such as: Introduction, Literature Review, Data and Methods, Results/Analysis, Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliography. You should discuss the structure of your paper with your adviser, but working toward some version of this outline may be helpful for imagining the final JP, especially in the early stages of drafting your paper.

## The Senior Thesis

The senior thesis also makes use of these elements of research, although the format looks slightly different because a senior thesis is typically divided into distinct **chapters**. Again, no one formula need be used in all cases, but the following is an example of how students might typically structure the writing of the senior thesis:

### *I. Front Matter*

The beginning of the final copy of your thesis should include the following elements:

- A Title Page:

Title

Student's Name

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Department of Sociology  
Princeton University

Year of graduation

- A Table of Contents (including page numbers)
- Acknowledgements (who do you wish to thank for their help in this research? Now is your chance to name names!)

## *II. Introductory Chapter(s)*

The first chapter(s) of the thesis should communicate the following things noted below. Note that some students will do all of the following in one, longer introductory chapter while others will choose to communicate these elements in 2 or 3 shorter chapters. Either approach is acceptable; discuss your proposed plan of writing with your faculty adviser:

- A general overview of the research project, including the research question, its importance, and a brief description of the project's larger findings and implications
- A review of relevant literature
- Discussion of data to be analyzed, how it was collected, and the method(s) or analysis used.

## *III. Empirical Chapter(s)*

These chapters are the true "guts" of your thesis – they are where you analyze the data you've selected for your project, and we call them "Empirical Chapters" for this reason. Here you are not discussing the research conducted by others, but analyzing your own data to make a larger claim or argument. Most senior theses will have two empirical chapters, although some students will have only one while others will have three or more. Again, the approach you take should match your goals for your research, and should be discussed with your faculty adviser.

However, most students will find that it is difficult to discuss all of your findings in one empirical chapter, so students will divide their empirical analysis into separate chapters either:

- Thematically (for instance, focused around the analysis of different themes in interview data)
- Methodologically (perhaps you used statistical data for one part of your thesis, and content analysis for another body of data), or
- Theoretically (answering one set of research questions in one case, and another set of questions in a separate chapter)

#### *IV. Discussion and Conclusion*

The final portion of your thesis will attempt to summarize what your research means for the discipline of sociology. What are the most important findings to take out of your research? How do they respond to the literature that you discussed in the initial literature review? What larger conclusions are suggested by your findings? What is left unanswered, for future researchers to tease out and explore?

How much of this you save for the last chapter is variable. Some thesis writers will answer some of the above questions at the end of each empirical data analysis chapter; others will wait to address these “what does it all mean?” kind of questions in the last chapter of the thesis. In either case, your last chapter is your final opportunity to tell your reader why your thesis was worth reading, and remind us why your research was important!

#### *V. End Matter*

Here is where you’ll include the following elements:

- Bibliography
- Appendices (Including an Appendix is strictly optional. However, if you choose to include a Appendix this is where you would insert materials relevant to your research design or collection that didn’t make it into the text, for instance: survey questions, interview guide questions, or tables with quantitative results that a reader might be interested in, but weren’t germane enough to your analysis to be discussed in your text. You might also want to include in the Appendix additional background information on your research methods or theoretical issues raised by your research that a particularly interested reader might want to know about.)

## Grading Criteria

Although your JP or senior thesis will be advised by one faculty member, all JPs and senior theses will be read by another member of the faculty, called a “second reader.” (Seniors also have an oral defense of their thesis, which comprises a separate grade on their transcript, distinct from the grade for the written paper). The faculty readers will read your final paper, and in the case of the senior thesis provide written comments, as well as help determine your final grade. Below are the sociology department’s grading standards for independent work:

- A.** Normally independent work in the A range should present an argument or propose an answer to a well-defined and significant question or set of questions, and it should indicate with care and accuracy the import of its subject for the understanding of sociology. Such independent work will have substantial elements of originality in its conception of its subject, in the evidence and reasoning it brings to bear on that subject, in the analytical techniques it employs, or in all of these; even a specialist in its field of study will find that it contributes to his/her understanding. Independent work in the A range must be grounded in systematic research appropriate to its scope and objectives. Such research will almost always involve attention to the important works on the subject and may require the consultation of original documents, compilation of statistical data, or interviewing. To merit an A, independent work should be well written, that is, it should develop its subject in an orderly way and present its ideas clearly and crisply. Poor grammar and style and more than occasional misspellings have no place in independent work receiving an A.

The mark of A+ should be reserved for independent work that satisfies all of these criteria in high degree. The mark of A- should be given independent work which shows originality but does not meet in a fully satisfactory way one or two other of the requirements of independent work in the A range.

- B.** Independent work in the B range is a less outstanding treatment of a significant subject. A specialist in its field of study should find it informative, though it will yield few insights of interest to a specialist. A well done case study which yields some, if few, lessons of general import, or a good critical review of a significant body of thought that does not carry one much beyond previous work on the subject, would merit a grade in this range. Like the A independent work, that in the B range should be grounded in a substantial amount of research appropriate to its objectives, but the latter will fail to do all that is required for systematic coverage or will ignore important sources. Independent work in the B range should be clearly written and logically organized.

A B+ is an appropriate grade for a sensibly conceived, well-executed, well-written project that

shows little originality. A B- is appropriate for well-conceived projects that have some significant flaw in execution or a number of less important shortcomings.

- C.** Independent work in the C range is a competent but not distinguished treatment of a significant subject. A non-specialist should find it informative. It will show evidence of substantial, though not wholly adequate research, and may be flawed in one or two additional ways as well: the logic of an important argument may be faulty, the significance of findings may be explored inadequately, or the writing may be mediocre (though it must generally be clear in its expression of ideas). An informative case study that goes little beyond a narration of events, or a review of some body of literature that gets things right but does little more, should be given a grade in the C range.

C+'s should be given to the most informative of independent work in the C range, C-'s to those that meet the basic requirements of the category but have several serious flaws.

- D.** To merit the grade of D, independent work must treat a non-trivial subject in sociology and must show evidence that its writer has some substantial knowledge about, and understanding of, that subject. Beyond that little can be said in praise of independent work in the D range.
- F.** Independent work that does not meet the minimal requirements for the grade of D should be given an F.

## Resources

Princeton University contains a myriad of resources designed to help you with your independent research. The final section of this handbook details some of the departments, people, and additional reading you might find helpful as you work on your JP and senior thesis. In addition to the resources noted here, the department also offers a Senior Thesis Writing Group, and students may benefit from the assistance and guidance offered by the McGraw Center, ORIA, and the IRB.

### University Resources and Departments

#### The Writing Center

[writing.princeton.edu/center](http://writing.princeton.edu/center)

Located in Whitman College, The Writing Center offers student writers free one-on-one conferences with experienced fellow writers trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. The Writing Center is one of Princeton's most popular academic resources, holding over 3,000 appointments each year. Juniors and seniors working on independent research may also arrange extended appointments with a Writing Center Fellow in sociology or neighboring discipline. To get started, visit the Writing Center's website at [www.princeton.edu/writing/appt](http://www.princeton.edu/writing/appt). Writing Center Fellows also hold drop-in hours Sunday through Thursday evenings during the semester. Enter through South Baker Hall.

#### Academic Support at Princeton (ASAP)

<http://www.princeton.edu/main/academics/support/>

Academic Support Services at Princeton is an online portal to the many academic support services available to Princeton undergraduates. Through you can access subject tutoring, study halls, writing conferences, workshops on academic skills, library assistance, and more.

#### Data and Statistical Services (DSS)

<http://dss.princeton.edu>

DSS maintains a sizable repository of data files available to you for analysis, with the added bonus of consultants who are available to meet with you during the data lab's drop in hours to give you specific advice about data, analysis, and statistical modeling appropriate for your research question. You may also email DSS for assistance at [data@princeton.edu](mailto:data@princeton.edu). Find out about drop in hours at the data lab (located in the Social Science Reference Center on the A floor of Firestone) by visiting <http://dss.princeton.edu/dsslab/>. Keep in mind that the lab can get very busy between February and

April as juniors and seniors hunker down on their JPs and Senior Theses, so making contact early on is recommended!

### Useful People and Contacts

It goes without saying that some of the most important people for your research include (particularly for juniors) the professor leading SOC 300, its preceptors, and (for both JP and senior thesis writers) the department adviser who is assigned to mentor your research. However, many other people throughout the university community are here to help as well.

In particular, the library employs reference librarians in particular subject areas who are particularly knowledgeable about the larger literatures in their subject area, and in many cases (such as Economics and Finance) have extended familiarity with data collections that might be useful to you in your JP analysis. To connect with any of these specialists, simply email them *from your Princeton email account!* Your independent research may take you into literatures that overlap with a neighboring discipline – such as African-American Studies, Psychology, or Religion. The librarians in those subject areas will be a great resource for your research. Use them!