

Sociology 311: Introduction to Social Research
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Spring 2016, Sections 03 and 04

Instructor: F. Dilara Demir (dilara.demir@rutgers.edu)
Teaching Assistant: Adrian Good (adrian.good@rutgers.edu)
Course Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:20pm until 4:40pm
Course Location: Lucy Stone Hall B269, Livingston Campus
Recitations: Tuesdays or Thursdays from 5:15pm until 6:10pm
Recitation Locations: For Tuesdays (Section 3), Tillett Hall 251, Livingston Campus
For Thursdays (Section 4), Tillett Hall 103C, Livingston Campus
Office Hours: For the instructor, Thursdays 1:00-1:45 pm (in office) or right after class
For the TA, Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 pm (in office) or right after class
Offices: For the instructor; Room 019, Davison Hall, Douglass Campus
For the TA; Room 013, Davison Hall, Douglass Campus

Course Description

This introductory course in social research methods offers an overview of how sociologists investigate the social world critically and self-reflexively. It provides the basic tools needed to conduct social research while also developing the skills necessary to critically evaluate the research of others. We will begin with a discussion of the fundamental concepts and issues involved in social science research, and move on to consider a variety of approaches to social research.

This course, which assumes no background in research methods, aims to:

- (1) enhance your ability to ask questions for understanding a social phenomenon,
- (2) introduce you to the basic elements of research design;
- (3) demonstrate the relevance of sociological research methods to your everyday lives,
- (4) think critically and self-reflexively about what you study
- (5) comprehend and critically evaluate the research of others;
- (6) enhance your understanding of your position and personal background affecting your research
- (7) familiarize you with the problems and limitations of methods for different research questions

Required Readings

Selections from Chambliss, Daniel F. and Russell K. Schutt. 2010. Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. (TBA)

Selections from Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2012. Basic of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (TBA)

Selections from Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. Sidewalk. Farrar, Straus and Giroux Books. (TBA)

All chapters, articles, and selections will be posted on Sakai under the Resources tab. You are not required to buy any of these books.

Handouts and Announcements

I will post important announcements and lecture outlines, if any, on the course Sakai site. *It is required that you check the web site regularly to ensure that you don't miss important updates or supplementary class material.* These additional materials will help you follow and understand the major points of each lecture.

Course Requirements

Midterm Exam 30%

Final Group Project 30%

In-Class assignments 10%

Homework assignments 20%

Attendance and Participation 10%

Exam: There will be one midterm exam that covers material from the lectures, readings, and group/individual projects. The midterm exam contributes 30% to your final grade; final project counts for 30% of your final grade.

Final Group Project: The final group project will be a research design proposal for a research question your group would like to research. The research proposal will be a 7-10 pages (double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman) long paper with a small literature review and explanation of why your research design is appropriate to answer your question and the strengths and drawbacks of your methods to answer your research question. We will do many in-class and homework assignments to help you to design this research proposal step by step. The final paper which is a research proposal is 20 percent of your grade. You will also be required to present your research proposal to the class as a group. Your presentation as a group will be 10 percent of your grade. Part of your grade will be given by your group members as well confidentially.

In-Class assignments: Since this course is an intense hands-on course, we will frequently do assignments during the class period. All of these will be graded on a credit / no-credit basis.

Homework assignments: There will be several homework assignments over the semester, all graded on 0-10 point scale.

Attendance and class participation: Attendance and class participation are important, as different components of your grade depend on group interaction. Getting engaged in this material really does enhance learning. **WHEN MISSING CLASS IS UNAVOIDABLE, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIND OUT WHAT MATERIAL WAS COVERED AND WHAT ANNOUNCEMENTS WERE MADE.** Missing class is never an acceptable excuse for missing deadlines or not completing coursework. Your instructor and your teaching assistant will give you a participation grade due to contributing to the discussions in course and in recitations. **IF YOU MISS MORE THAN THREE CLASSES, FOR EACH CLASS YOU MISS, YOU WILL LOSE 2 POINTS FROM YOUR ATTENDANCE.** Cell phone is prohibited during the class periods. **IF YOU USE YOUR PHONE DURING THE CLASS EXCEPT EMERGENCY, IT WILL BE COUNTED AS AN ABSENCE.**

Extra credit homework: Choose one of the exemplary articles and present it in classroom. OR Find an article from a journal with a specific methodology and write a summary and analysis of the paper focused on its methodology. (Not more than 600 words)

Grading

Rutgers University uses a lettered grading system. Your final grade will be assigned in accordance with this system, shown below. You must complete all assignments and exams to get a grade; otherwise you will receive an F.

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Point Range</i>
A	90-100%
B+	87-89
B	80-86
C+	77-79
C	70-76
D	60-69
F	<60

Please note that we will not give out grades over the phone or via email. Grades for exams will be posted on the course Sakai site; homework assignments and projects will be returned in class, in Sakai or to mailboxes.

Makeup Exams and Timely Completion of Projects

Make-up exams are unfair to other students in the class, so I can only allow them under extraordinary circumstances. If you have a problem with a scheduled exam, **the instructor must be notified at least 24 hours prior to the exam, and you must receive my written permission (e-mail or letter) that a makeup exam is allowed.** If you have an emergency that arises the day of the exam, you should notify me as soon as you possibly can; provided you have documentation, a makeup exam can be scheduled. If you fail to get my written permission that a makeup exam is allowed within a week of the originally scheduled exam date, you will receive a failing grade for the test. Any makeup exams will be administered during the final exam period and may contain both essay and oral components.

Please note that there is no way to improve your grade on an examination once it has been completed; the only extra-credit assignments are to present the articles in class, 10-15 minutes presentations, including the summary of the argument, the methods and its details. Since there is not enough articles for everyone, it is first-come-first-served basis. So please email me as soon as possible which article you would like to present after the start of the term. Plan to do well on the required material. If you have a problem with the assignment, make an appointment to see the instructor or the TA BEFORE the work is due or ask questions during the class period.

Classroom Atmosphere

The Department of Sociology encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Thus, behavior that distracts students and faculty is not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, and other behaviors specified by individual instructors. **Courteous and lawful expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, more than welcome.**

If a student engages in disruptive behavior, the instructor, following the University Code of Student

Conduct, may direct the student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. Instructors may specify other consequences in their syllabi. Serious verbal assaults, harassment, or defamation of the instructor or other students can lead to university disciplinary proceedings. The University Code of Student Conduct is at <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/judaff/ucsc.shtml>.

Examination Rules

1. You cannot enter the exam 20 minutes or more after the exam has begun.
2. Bring your Rutgers ID card and leave it on your desk during the exam. You may not be allowed to take the exam if you do not have your valid ID card.
3. No calculators, rulers or other aids can be used. Only pencils, pens, erasers, pencil sharpeners, a watch, and your Rutgers ID card should be on your desk. You are best off not bringing anything else to the exam. If you do, put it in a bag under your seat.

Words to the Wise

1. If you are having problems, please seek out help early. Come in prepared, having gone over the lectures, text, homework assignments, and problems in the text. Please keep appointments that you make to see us. If your plans change and you can't make the appointment, please notify us as soon as possible (before the meeting).
2. If you have missed any classes, make sure you get the missed notes from classmates. In cases like this, it usually pays to get the notes from at least two of your classmates. Please don't ask us to give you a condensed version of lectures you have missed.
3. Please note that the readings are not substitutes for the lectures nor are the lectures a substitute for the readings. Not all the material in the lectures appears in the readings, nor is all the material in the readings covered in the lectures. You are responsible for the material in the texts and in the lectures. We make every effort to have class attendance a necessary (though not sufficient) factor in performing well on examinations.
4. Make it a habit to read a national newspaper daily. A good exercise is to pick up the newspaper and apply concepts we've learned to pertinent news stories.
5. Come to class prepared! Do not wait until after I have lectured on something to read the assigned material.
6. It's best to let us know when you plan to attend office hours.

University Policy on Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. I will not tolerate cheating of any kind in my courses, and I will report the incident directly to the appropriate college officer if I believe the university's policy on academic integrity has been violated. Cheating, plagiarism in written work, receiving and providing unauthorized assistance, and sabotaging the work of others are among the behaviors that constitute violations of the Policy On Academic Integrity. You are expected to be familiar with this policy. If you have questions about specific assignments, be sure to check with me. For more details, please see the following website:

<http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>

Statement on Diversity

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Tentative Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1

What is Research? Why Research?

Tuesday, January 19

Overview of course syllabus
Discussions on social research

Thursday, January 21

What is social research? What is the problem?

Readings:

Neuman Ch1. (pp. 1-8)

Chambliss & Schutt (C&S) Ch 1. (pp.1-7)

Week 2

Tuesday, January 26

Readings:

Durkheim: Sociology and Social Facts

Mills: Sociological Imagination

Collins: Learning from the Outsider Within

Thursday, January 28

The purpose and process of social research

Readings:

C&S Ch. 1 (pp. 8-20) & Ch. 2 (pp.21-31)

Week 3:

Tuesday, Feb 2

Theory and social research

Readings:

Neuman Ch. 2 (pp.25-51)

Trochim, William M.K. Positivism & Post-Positivism

(<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/positvsm.php>)

In-class assignment: Finding an interesting research question

Thursday, Feb 4

An introduction to visual methodologies

Readings:

Harper, D. Visual Sociology, Expanding Sociological Vision

Contexts Photo essay: “Looking for a way home”

Homework assignment: Photo essay (information will be given in class)

Week 4:

Ethics in Social Research

Tuesday, Feb 9

Reading:

Neuman Ch. 3 (pp.52-69)

Focus on an example: Milgram's *Obedience Study*

Thursday, Feb 11

Readings:

Maligned Study on Gay Unions is Shaking Trust, New York

Times, May 25, 2015

Wade, The Truth about Gender and Math, Sociological Images

Deadline for Homework assignment: Submit photo essays under Blogposts in Sakai on Feb 11th until class time.

Week 5: *Literature Review*

Tuesday, Feb 16 Reviewing the scholarly literature and planning a study

Reading:
Neuman Ch. 4 (pp.73-88)

Thursday, Feb 18 A workshop on searching journal articles relevant to our research and how to use library.

Reminder: Start your literature review for your final project and make progress.

Week 6

Tuesday, Feb 23 Unit of analysis, variables, and cases

Reading:
Neuman Ch. 4 (pp. 88-111)
In-class assignment: Finding Unit of analysis, levels of measurement

Thursday, Feb 25 Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement

Reading:
Neuman Ch 5 (pp.112-132)

Reminder for final project: Try to elaborate on your concepts and think about operationalization.

Week 7

Tuesday, March 1 Midterm review

Thursday, March 3 Midterm exam

Week 8 *Focus on Quantitative Methods: Survey Research*

Recitations are in computer labs.

Tuesday, March 8 Sampling
Reading:
Neuman Ch. 6 (pp.146-170)

Thursday, March 10 Survey Research

Reading:
C&S Ch.7 (pp.163-188)

Basics of statistics: Looking into General Social Survey
In-class assignment: Looking through GSS together.
Homework assignment: General Social Survey descriptive tables

Reminder for final project : Choose your method and think of your research design and its possible advantages and drawbacks.

Week 9

Spring Break: March 12-March 20, 2016

Week 10

Tuesday, March 22

Examples of survey research

ARTICLES:

Elliot & Pais (2006) "Race, class, and Hurricane Katrina: Social differences in human responses to disaster" *Social Science Research* 35, pp. 295- 321.

DiMaggio, Paul, (1996) "Are art-museum visitors different from other people? The relationship between attendance and social and political attitudes in the United States", *Poetics* 24, pp.161-80.

Thursday, March 24

Reading:

Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Social Research by C. Hughes

Deadline for Homework assignment: Submit photo essays under Blogposts in Sakai on March 24th until class time.

Week 11

Focus on Qualitative Methods

Tuesday, March 29

Field research and focus group research

Reading:

Neuman Ch. 11 (pp.290-320)

Thursday, March 31

Field research and focus group research

Reading:

Neuman Ch. 11 (pp.290-320)

Homework assignment: Article review on your final projects(details to be announced in class)

Week 12

Tuesday, April 5

Examples of field research

ARTICLES:

Goffman, Alice (2009), "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto", *American Sociological Review*, 74, pp.339-357

Pierce, Jennifer (2003), "Racing for Innocence": Whiteness, Corporate Culture, and the Backlash Against Affirmative Action", *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol.26 No.1, pp. 53-70

Duneier, Mitchell, *Sidewalk*, Appendix on Methods.

Presentations for extra credit

Thursday, April 7

Content analysis

Reading:

<http://sociology.about.com/od/Research/a/Content-Analysis.htm>

In-class assignment (details to be announced in class)

Week 13

Tuesday, April 12

Comparative-historical methods

Readings:

Ragin, Constructing Social Research, Chapter 5

Steinmetz, George. 2005. "Return to Empire: The New U.S. Imperialism in Comparative Historical Perspective" *Sociological Theory* 23:4, 339-367.

Thursday, April 14

Experimental methods

Readings:

Design: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/desexper.php>

Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108:937-75.

Week 14

Tuesday, April 19

Mixed methods

Reading:

Small, Mario. 2011. "How to conduct a mixed methods research" *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:57-86.

Thursday, April 21

Presentations of final projects

Week 15

Tuesday, April 26

Presentations of final projects continue

Thursday, April 28

Review-evaluation/Last day of the class

Deadline for submitting final paper is on May 5th, 2016. Submit under Assignments in Sakai.

Choosing data sets:

➤ SURVEY DATA

- General Social Survey (GSS). You will use the GSS to do various assignments for this course, and (if you so choose) for your final paper. The [GSS data and codebook](#) are available online. These are cross-sectional samples of the U.S. population from 1972 to 2010 (the data are available yearly in the early years, every other year later on). You'll probably want to focus on one year (e.g., 2010), but feel free to use multiple years as you move into your final project. Talk with us if you have a dataset you'd prefer to use other than the GSS. For example, there are other online datasets you can choose, such as the ones listed immediately below, or you may have access to your own data.
- World Values Survey. This online database focuses on political and sociocultural change across countries. It has four waves, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005 (a 2010 survey is forthcoming). Excellent for those interested in comparative analysis.

- <http://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm>. This site includes several surveys, in the same easy-to-use format as the GSS: American National Election Study, IPUMS (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series), American Community Survey 2006-08 (Census Microdata for US), as well as a few others

➤ HISTORICAL DATA:

- Rutgers Special Collections and University Archives
<http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/scua.shtml>
- National Library of Congress online manuscripts <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>
- Penn's online archives
<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/flash.cfm?CFID=2022796&CFTOKEN=14695275>
- New York Public Library online images:
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/>
- Jack Lynch's (RU English professor) page on 18th century history
<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/18th/history.html>
- Resources listed by ASA comparative-historical section
<http://www2.asanet.org/sectionchs/research.html#databases>

Research, Thinking, and Writing: [articles available on Sakai]

Alford, Robert T. 1998. *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract"

American Sociological Association, "Publishing Option: An Author's Guide to Journals, May 20, 2009.

Becker, Howard S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clarke, Lee. "Notes on Proposing" and "On Writing and Criticism"

Germano, William. 2005. "Passive is Spoken Here." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2005.

Jasper, James. "Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers"

Miller, Jane E. 2005. *The Chicago Guide to Writing About Multivariate Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Peters, Mark. "Like a Bowl in a China Shop." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 9, 2006.

Rockquemore, Kerry Ann. 2010. "Writing IS Thinking." *Inside Higher Education*, July 19. [<http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/summer/summer6>, retrieved July 21, 2010]

Rosenfield, Sarah. "Some Things to Think About While Reading Papers"

Stein, Arlene. 2009. "Discipline and Publish: Public Sociology in an Age of Professionalization." Pp. 156-71 in *Bureaucratic Culture and Escalating Problems: Advancing the Sociological Imagination* (edited by David Knottnerus and Bernard Phillips). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Strunk, William Jr., and E.B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*. Fourth Edition. New York: Allyn & Bacon.

And, for some humor: "How to Write Good"

More examples of good methods, from Scatterplot:

<http://scatter.wordpress.com/2011/08/28/a-beautiful-method/>