

Introduction to Social Research

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Instructor: Heather Batson

Email: hbatson@sociology.rutgers.edu (you can expect an answer within 24-48 hours)

Office hours: By appointment before or after class or by appointment using gchat

Time: 6:00-9:45 PM

Dates: Wednesday September 2 – Wednesday December 16

Location: Mercer County Community College

This course is approved as satisfying the Cognitive Skills and Processes: Quantitative and Formal Reasoning element of the Rutgers SAS Core Curriculum.

Course description:

This course deals with the logic and methods used in the research process in social science. We will address key concepts and techniques crucial to posing social science questions and working toward reaching answers to these questions. These include: different types of research designs, the various ways to gather data, measurement, sampling, data analysis and interpretation, and ethical concerns. We will also focus on the fit between methods and questions, academic and real world applications for the techniques, and how to evaluate social research that you see in the media (or possibly even your workplace).

Books and Readings:

There is one REQUIRED book: *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage* (2005/6), by Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas. ISBN 0-520-24113-4.

This is NOT available from the university bookstore. You MUST order it yourself from an online bookseller. You can buy any version of the book (used, new, hardcover, paperback) and you have plenty of time, since we won't read this until November. It is also available at many libraries.

All other required readings will be on the Sakai site.

Sakai Site:

All of the required readings (other than the chapters from *Promises I Can Keep*) can be found under the lecture date. You should read these readings BEFORE the class where we go over the material. In addition, the in-class assignments are available in the "Assignments" tab. If you miss class (and ONLY if you miss class), you can print out the assignment, complete it, and turn a hard copy in to me so that you can get credit for it. If you are here for class, I will hand out the hard copies of all assignments to you in class.

Make sure that you check your Rutgers email frequently for announcements about the class.

Course Requirements:

Midterm Exam 30%

Final Exam 30%

Assignments 30%

Participation 10%

Exams (60% total: 30% midterm/30% final):

Exams for this class will consist of short answer questions and short problems. Both the midterm and the final will include material from the readings and the lectures. The exams are NOT cumulative, but many key ideas will carry over from the beginning of the class to the second half.

All students must take the exams when they are scheduled. Make-up exams are only available with a Dean's Note verifying your reason for missing the exam, and my advance approval; make-up exams may be in long essay format.

Traffic is not an excuse for missing or coming late to an exam. There's always traffic in New Jersey; please plan accordingly.

Assignments (30%):

This course requires several assignments, due dates TBA in class (and mostly at the end of class).

Assignments are graded as follows: either an assignment is acceptable work that demonstrates your understanding and competence or it does not: if you turn in an inadequate assignment, you must revise and resubmit to receive credit. There will be time during recitations to work on most assignments, and most will be due at the end of that class period. You must complete ALL assignments acceptably to get the full 30% assignment grade.

With one exception (the survey project) which is due in the final class period, assignments may be handed in late without penalty, within the following guidelines: all assignments pre-midterm must be completed before the midterm class period, and the remaining assignments are due before the final survey project is due. This policy is offered as an accommodation to those who miss class because of illness or other legitimate reasons. I do NOT recommend that that you turn in assignments late unless you must. Doing so will likely impact your performance on the exams.

If the survey project report is turned in late, I will deduct points from your total assignments point allocation of 30 points for each day that I did not receive it. "Late" begins after I have taken attendance on the day the survey project is due. Do not wait until the last minute to get your project components together or print out your report. Though I recognize that University computing lab printer problems (along with a host of other problems that may prevent you from handing your project in on time) may not be your fault, you are nevertheless responsible for planning ahead and handing work in on time. The final exam date is the last possible time to hand in the final assignment.

Participation (10%):

Participation means:

1. Contributing to discussions (either full class or small group) and speaking in class in response to my questions during lectures, AND
2. Working on assignments during recitations.

The participation grade includes both pieces, and if you do not participate in the lectures, you will not get points for this part of the participation grade. You do not need to speak in EVERY class to get a perfect participation grade; however you do need to speak often and offer thoughtful comments.

Policies

If you find any of these policies unacceptable, you should not take this course.

Attendance:

Missing more than 2 classes will result in an F in the course. I do not excuse absences, with the exception of those for religious holidays (see policy below). This means that you are free to miss up to 2 classes over the course of the term, without penalty. It also means that an absence **for any reason** counts as an absence, regardless of any documentation you may have. **But because you only have 2 absences, save them for emergencies, as a third absence for any reason means automatic failure.** Persistent lateness will also reduce your grade.

Please do not use the University Absence Reporting System to report your absences. You do not need to let me know if you are going to miss class, within the 2 absences you're permitted, but if you wish to do so, please send me an email so that I can respond.

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 final grade;** otherwise you will receive an F.

Grade Point Range

A 90-100%

B+ 87-89

B 80-86

C+ 77-79

C 70-76

D 60-69

F < 60

Exam and Final Grades:

There will be **no extra credit** offered in this course. You have many opportunities to obtain points by doing the regular assignments and exams in this course. I do not curve, negotiate, or change exam or final grades. Again, there will be no extra credit offered in this course. I do not curve, change, or negotiate exam or final grades. Make sure you understand what this policy means before you decide to stay in this class, especially if you are a senior who intends to graduate at the end of this term.

Further, I am happy to accommodate many different types of circumstances and emergencies, but only if they are brought to my attention **as they occur**. I do not accommodate problems or emergencies after exams have been taken or final grades have been submitted. Note also that “problem,” “emergency,” and “circumstances” are at my definition and discretion. Also see the information under “Timeliness,” below.

No end-of-term drama, please.

Finally, please note that the University does not allow instructors to lower final grades. Thus, a grade of D CAN NOT be lowered to a grade of F upon student request.

Disability Accommodation:

Individuals with disabilities will be accommodated. Please present your documentation at the beginning of the course. I will only accommodate disability-related needs for those who have documentation through the Office of Disability Services. You can find additional information here:

<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>. Please note that I am not always able to accommodate requests for additional time or a reduced distraction environment for exams. If this turns out to be the case, students with documentation entitling them to these accommodations must write their exams at the Office of Disability Services in New Brunswick or Camden (depending on student affiliation).

Religious Holidays:

All absences for religious holidays will be excused. As the University no longer offers a comprehensive list of religious holidays, you must email me with the date and reason for absence in advance in order to receive accommodation.

Timeliness:

All course requirements must be completed by the end of the course. Should exceptional circumstances (by my determination) arise, all course requirements must be completed within one month of the final exam. I do not consider any circumstances to be exceptional, regardless of their nature, if they occurred during the course of the term, but you do not bring them to my attention until the end of the term, or after final grades have been submitted.

If you are having a problem that interferes with your ability to complete your work in this class, **please let me know right away**. This includes problems that you anticipate may interfere with your ability to complete the course requirements. I cannot make exceptions after the fact.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is using another person’s words and ideas as though they were your own. This includes both published work and other students’ work. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense which can result in your expulsion from the University. You are responsible for knowing the standards of academic integrity as set forth by the University. You can find the most current version here:

http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

Phone Use in Class:

Texting in class will reduce your participation grade (even if you participate actively), and upon multiple offenses, decrease it to zero. If you imagine that I cannot see you texting, please come to the front of the room to have a look. Every class will have at least one, break. Please limit texting to this time.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please read the assigned material **before class** so you are prepared to participate. The course schedule is subject to change if necessary (and will at least be updated with one article for ethics week). When this happens, you will be notified via email.

Wednesday September 2: Introduction and Course Overview

Read: This syllabus, in its entirety.

Wednesday September 9: The Research Circle, Variables, and Hypotheses

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 2: The Process and Problems of Social Research

Stephens, "Chapter 1" (pp. 1-19) from Hypotheses & Evidence

Babbie, "A Variable Language" (pp. 14-19)

Wednesday September 16: Causality

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 6: Causation and Experimental Design part 1 (pp. 103-107)

Stephens, "Cause & Effect" (pp. 168-187) from Hypotheses & Evidence

Wednesday September 23: Experiments

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 6: Causation and Experimental Design (pp. 107-127)

Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record"

Babbie, "The Classical Experiment" (pp. 222-234)

Wednesday September 30: Reliability and Validity

Read: Pager and Quillian, "Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus What They Do"

Babbie, "Criteria of Measurement Quality" (pp. 143-148)

Wednesday October 7 Sampling + Midterm Exam Review

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 5: Sampling

Wednesday October 14: MIDTERM EXAM (6-8 PM)

Wednesday October 21: Ethics

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 3: Ethics in Research

Additional reading TBD

Wednesday October 28: Conceptualization and Operationalization

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 4: Conceptualization and Measurement

Fowler, "How Unclear Terms Affect Survey Data"

Read about The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (AddHealth) online at

<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth> ("About Add Health" and "Study Design" sections)

Wednesday November 4: Survey Research

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 7: Survey Research

Bearman, Moody, and Stovel, "Chains of Affection: The Structure of Adolescent Romantic and Sexual Networks"

Wednesday November 11: Quantitative Data Analysis

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 8: Elementary Quantitative Data Analysis

Wednesday November 18: Qualitative Methods

Read: Chambliss and Schutt, Chap 9: Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating, Listening
Edin and Kefalas, from Promises I Can Keep:
"Introduction"
"One: 'Before We Had a Baby...'"
"Four: What Marriage Means"

Wednesday November 25 NO CLASS (Friday classes meet today.)

Happy Thanksgiving!

Wednesday December 2 Data Analysis for Survey Project (Don't miss this class!)

Wednesday December 9 Description and Causation + Exam Review

SURVEY PROJECT DUE (or at final exam)

Read: Edin and Kefalas, from Promises I Can Keep:

"Five: Labor of Love"

"Six: How Motherhood Changed My Life"

"Conclusion: Making Sense of Single Motherhood"

Wednesday December 16 FINAL EXAM, 6-9pm (Last class to hand in survey project.)

Final grades will be submitted via Rutgers's electronic grade submission system within 48 hours of the final exam. Please do not email me for your final grade.