

SOCIOLOGY 311
Introduction to Social Research

Fall 2017

Instructor: Professor Julie Phillips
Class Meeting: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:20 to 4:40 pm, LSH B115 Livingston
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:00-2:00 pm or right after class on Tuesday/Thursday
Office: Office 039, Davison Hall, Douglass
Telephone: (848) 932-1824
E-mail Address: jphillips@sociology.rutgers.edu (Best way to reach me)
Web Page URL: <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/>

Teaching Assistant: Alex Panait
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-2 pm or by appointment
Office: Livingston Student Center
E-mail Address: ap1303@sociology.rutgers.edu

Course Description

This introductory course in social research methods offers an overview of how sociologists study the social world. 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, including qualitative research methods, surveys and experimental research design. Students will learn these methods through firsthand experience with data collection and hypothesis testing. The course assumes no background in research methods or statistics.

Course Goals and Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- (1) define and explain the basic elements of research design.
- (2) critically evaluate the research of others.
- (3) understand what it means to be a sociologist.
- (4) identify and understand the problems and limitations of studying the social world.
- (5) understand the relevance of sociological research methods to your everyday lives.

Required Readings

Chambliss, Daniel F. and Russell K. Schutt. 2015. Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation. Edition 5. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

A small collection of articles assigned in the course can be found on the Sakai website, under the Resources tab.

The textbook is available for purchase from Rutgers University Bookstore.

Handouts and Announcements

I will post important announcements and lecture outlines on the course web site listed above. *It is important 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.

Requirements and Grading

Data collection exercises: Sociological research methods are best learned through active involvement with the course material. With this in mind, students will conduct several hands-on group research projects. Recitation periods are set aside to work on these research projects. Therefore, **attendance in recitation is mandatory**; without participating in recitations, you will not be able to successfully complete required coursework. Full instructions for the research projects will be posted on the course website. **DATA COLLECTION EXERCISES MUST BE SUBMITTED AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON THE DUE DATE TO RECEIVE FULL CREDIT.** The content analysis exercise and

observation exercise contribute 10 percent to your final grade and the survey exercise contributes another 20 percent to your final grade. **Note: Each individual group member must hand in his/her own copy of any group work.**

Exams: There will be two exams that cover material from the lectures, readings, discussion sections, and group projects. The first exam contributes 25% to your final grade; the second exam counts for 30% of your final grade.

Homework: There will be several homework assignments over the semester. The homework assignments are listed at the end of the syllabus. All are graded on a credit / no-credit basis; **NO LATE HOMEWORKS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** Missing class is not a valid excuse for late homework. If you have completed the homework assignment but have an emergency and cannot come to class, you will receive credit for the homework assignment if it is emailed to me by the beginning of class. You must complete **THREE** of the **SIX** homework assignments. Together, these three homework assignments contribute five percent to your final grade. These assignments must be typed (you generally should be able to complete them in no more than 1 page) and given to the teaching assistant in class on the due date. Please be sure to write your name and discussion section on all assignments. The homework assignments will be returned in recitation period one week after the due date; please hold onto the assignments until the end of the semester.

In-class exercises: I will frequently ask you to apply the concepts we are discussing in a lecture with a short exercise or set of questions. These exercises are graded on a credit/no credit basis and constitute 10% of your final grade.

I will not take attendance in this class, but class and discussion section participation are vital to your success in the course. Keep in mind that students who actively participate in class discussions tend to perform better on assignments and exams. Getting engaged in this material really does enhance learning. When missing class or discussion section 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.

To review, your total course grade will be calculated as follows:

Exam 1 -- 25%

Exam 2 -- 30%

Observation exercise -- 5%

Content analysis exercise -- 5%

Survey exercise -- 20%

In-class exercises -- 10%

Homework -- 5%

Please note that I will not give out grades over the phone or via email. Grades for exams will be posted on the course website; homework assignments and projects will be returned in recitations. For your final grade, please find out your grades through official channels.

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, **I 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 valid 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 ex poste your grade on an examination; no extra-credit assignments are given out. Plan to do well on the required material. If you have a problem with the assignment, make an appointment to see me **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,

permitted.

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>.

Texting: Texting is disruptive and disrespectful of the process of education. If you have an emergency that requires you to text, please go out into the hall to do so. Otherwise, I ask that you do not text during the 80 minute class period. If I see you texting during class, I will ask you to leave for the day. If you cannot abide by these restrictions, please find another course to take.

Examination Rules

1. You cannot enter the exam 20 minutes or more after the exam has begun.
2. Exams will consist of multiple choice type questions. Be sure you bring a #2 pencil and eraser to the exams.
3. 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.
4. 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.

A Word 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 me. If your plans change and you can't make the appointment, please notify me 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 me 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. I 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. Do not wait until after I have lectured on something to read the material work. Come to class prepared!
6. If possible, please email me to make and/or confirm an appointment (even if you come during 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

September 5	Overview of course
PART I	Introduction to social research and the scientific method
September 7	The nature of scientific knowledge <i>Film Clip: Bowling for Columbine (10-213)</i> Reading: C&S Ch. 1 (pp.1-7) ARTICLE: "How to Spot Fake News". The Annenberg Public Policy Center. November 18, 2016. http://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/ (*) Homework # 1 is due at the beginning of class.
September 12	The purpose and process of social research Reading: C&S Ch. 1 (pp. 7-16) & Ch. 2 (pp.21-28)
September 14	Measurement I: Conceptualization, operationalization and levels Reading: C&S Ch. 4 (pp. 65-80) ARTICLE: Doob, A. and A. Gross. 1968. "Status of Frustrator as an Inhibitor of Horn-Honking Responses." <i>Journal of Social Psychology</i> 76: 213-218. (*) Homework # 2 is due at the beginning of class.
September 19	Measurement II: Validity and reliability Reading: C&S Ch. 4 (pp. 80-85) ARTICLE: Rubin, Z. 1970. "Measurement of Romantic Love" <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> 16: 265-273. (*) Homework # 3 is due at the beginning of class.
September 21	The nature of causality and elaboration model Reading: C&S Ch. 6 (pp. 111-115) ARTICLE: Babbie "Elaboration Model" ARTICLE: Waite, L. J. "Does Marriage Matter?" <i>Demography</i> 32(4):483-507. (*) Homework # 4 is due at the beginning of class
September 26	Research Designs Reading: C&S Ch. 2 (pp. 28-37)
September 28	Review for Exam I Come prepared with questions
October 3	Exam I NO RECITATION
PART II	Approaches to research
October 5	Overview to qualitative methods / Field research Reading: C&S Ch. 9 (pp. 199-223); C&S Ch. 10 is optional ARTICLE: The Trials of Alice Goffman, <i>New York Times</i> , January 2016 <i>Short Film: Deadheads: An American Subculture (10-501)</i> (*) Observation exercise due at the beginning of class NO RECITATION
October 10	Content analysis in practice <i>In-class exercise: Begin in class and complete in recitation</i>
October 12	Sampling Reading: C&S Ch. 5 (pp. 91-107)
October 17	Overview of survey research Reading: C&S Ch. 7 (pp. 139-140 & pp. 147-160) (*) Content analysis exercise due at the beginning of class

October 19	Survey research I (Instrumentation) Reading: C&S Ch. 7 (pp. 141-144)
October 24	Career Services: Options for Sociology Majors
October 26	Statistics in social research: An introduction Reading: C&S Ch. 8 (pp. 167-195)
October 31	Statistics, continued ARTICLE: Inferential Statistics (*) Questionnaires due at beginning of class Each student hands in his/her own copy of the questionnaire
November 2	Elementary analysis of questionnaire data Reading: Review C&S Ch. 8 (pp. 167-195) ARTICLE: Example SPSS output
November 7	Experiments I Reading: C&S Ch. 6 (pp. 116-134) <i>Film: Obedience (1746)</i>
November 9	Experiments II ARTICLE: Tracey, P. and J. Fox. 1989. "A Field Experiment on Insurance Fraud in Auto Body Repair." <i>Criminology</i> 27: 589-603. (*) Homework # 5 is due at the beginning of class.
November 14	Experiments III ARTICLE: Ford, T. 1997. "Effects of Stereotypical Portrayals of African Americans on Person Perception." <i>Social Psychology Quarterly</i> 60:266-278.
November 16	Review for Exam II Come prepared with questions.
November 21	CLASS CANCELLED – HAPPY THANKSGIVING! THURSDAY RECITATION WILL BE HELD
November 28	EXAM II RECITATION WILL BE HELD
PART III	Important considerations in research
November 30	Reporting research findings and table construction Reading: Skim C&S Ch. 13 & Appendix A <i>Film: Do Scientists Cheat? (2-1346)</i>
December 5	The ethics and politics of social research Reading: Review C&S Ch. 3 is optional ARTICLE: Humphreys, Laud. 1970. <i>Tearoom Trade</i> . Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company. (pp. 1-44; 104-130). ARTICLE: Maligned Study on Gay Unions is Shaking Trust, <i>New York Times</i> , May 25, 2015 (*) Homework # 6 is due at the beginning of class.
December 7	*** Mini-seminar to discuss findings from survey research projects *** (*) Survey projects due at the beginning of class today NO RECITATION
December 12	*** Mini-seminar to discuss findings from survey research projects *** NO RECITATION

Homework Assignments:

Homework #1 (Due 9/7/17): Media warm-up. Find an example in the media (newspaper, magazine, television, etc.) of a claim based on some kind of empirical evidence. (1) Identify both the claim and the evidence used to support it. (2) Do you find this evidence convincing? Briefly explain your position. (Please also attach your source or a brief description of your source if this is not possible.)

Homework #2 (Due 9/14/17): Measurement I. (1) Identify the major independent variable and dependent variables in the Doob and Gross article. How was each measured? (2) State the major theoretical hypothesis of the article. (3) Was this research a convincing test of their hypothesis? Why or why not?

Homework #3 (Due 9/19/17): Measurement II. (1) What is the relation between the concept of validity discussed in your text and what Rubin is doing? (2) List three findings in his article that support Rubin's claim that his measure of "love" is valid. (3) Comment very briefly on your feelings about this approach to measuring love.

Homework #4 (Due 9/21/17): Causality. (1) What basic argument does Waite make about marriage? (2) Based on the evidence in her article, are you convinced that the associations between marriage and the outcomes she discusses are causal? Why or why not?

CHOOSE EITHER #5a OR #5b FOR HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #5. YOU ARE NOT EXPECTED TO TURN IN A SUMMARY OF THEM BOTH (ALTHOUGH YOU ARE EXPECTED TO READ BOTH ARTICLES).

Homework #5a (Due 11/9/17): Experiments I. (1) Briefly identify the key manipulated independent variable(s) and measured dependent variable(s) from the Tracey and Fox study. (2) What conclusions about the relationship between insurance coverage and repair estimates did these researchers draw? (3) Briefly comment both on the internal validity and external validity of this experiment.

OR

Homework #5b (Due 11/9/17): Experiments II. (1) Briefly identify the key manipulated independent variable(s) and measured dependent variable(s) from the Ford study. (2) What conclusions did Ford draw from his research? (3) Briefly comment on the internal validity and external validity of this experiment.

Homework #6 (Due 12/5/17): Ethics. (1) Discuss the methods of observation used by Humphreys. Would you classify Humphreys' approach as participant or non-participant observation? (2) What methods in addition to observation did he use in this article? (3) Was the research Humphreys conducted ethical or not ethical? Briefly explain your position.