

REVISED February 27, 2007

# SOC 5031 RESEARCH METHODS Spring 2007

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Tuesdays 3:00 – 5:50; Ketchum 33

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This course provides an introduction to basic methods of social science research. Major topics include the logic of social inquiry, causality, and conceptualization; sampling theory; data collection and measurement; and research design. The primary objectives of the course are: 1) to help students be informed consumers of contemporary sociological research, and 2) to enable students to initiate and execute worthwhile research projects of their own.

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### **Required Texts and Readings:**

1. Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research (11<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2007.
2. Kalton, Graham. *Introduction to Survey Sampling*. Sage Publications, 1983.
3. Spector, Paul E. *Summated Rating Scale Construction: An Introduction*. Sage Publications, 1992.
4. Selected Readings noted with "\*". Available at <http://www.colorado.edu/ibs/pb/thornberry/classes.html>

Also, you may want to look at the Sage Publications list. Sage offers a series of excellent and inexpensive introductions to various aspects of research methods, both quantitative and qualitative. We will be using some of their publications, but I want to bring them to your attention as a resource for the future. You can browse their website at: [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com)

Finally, you should familiarize yourself with the websites: [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) and <http://muse.jhu.edu/> and with the online journals available through the CU library website.

*Journal Storage* on the web is a project funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation that is doing just what it says – storing journals so they can be accessed from the web. They do not compete with current sales, so they have the *American Journal of Sociology* for the years 1895-2001, the *American Sociological Review* 1936-2004, and the *Annual Review of Sociology* 1975-2001 (later issues are available online through the library). You can search the journals very easily, read papers, print out

copies, or download papers to your computer. BUT you can only gain access through CU, so you can't get to it through aol, for example. MUSE is a Johns Hopkins University project to bring scholarly journals online.

NOTE: if you want to print or download a paper, use JSTOR's Print or Download commands, not the browser's print command. I find that the PDF economy versions are fine – and they take a much shorter time to download.

***The Sociology Department reading list*** for the Ph.D. comprehensive exam in methods is available from the department. It contains a series of questions that may help guide your study of various aspects of research methods and it contains a (too?) detailed list of readings (some I consider out of date).

The ***methods exams*** for the past few years can also be found at

<http://sobek.colorado.edu/SOC/Graduate/resources.html#Handbooks>

**COURSE GRADE:**

The grade received in this seminar is part of the Sociology Department Preliminary Examination. It is based primarily on a term paper that each student will prepare.

**A. Term Paper( 80% of Grade):** The term paper is to be a research proposal on a topic of your choice. The proposal can be a hypothetical study that you may never perform, or it can be an investigation that you plan to conduct in the future. It cannot be work that you have already performed, e.g., your senior thesis or M.A. thesis, nor can it be a secondary analysis of existing data. The proposal should cover all segments of the research process, even though the proposed data collection and analysis will not actually be performed.

The proposal will be built incrementally. As each major segment of the course is completed, the section of the proposal that deals with that topic will be submitted and graded. As each additional section is added, the previous section(s) should be revised based on the instructor's comments and additional methodological issues raised by the new section. This process will be discussed in class.

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS:**

**1. January 23** **No Grade**

Please submit a brief paragraph on three possible research topics.

**2. February 13:** **Introduction** **15%**

In no more than five double-spaced pages, please clearly identify the research topic you will work on for the remainder of the semester. The introduction should state the topic and the theoretical and practical importance of studying it.

Also, identify and review the major studies that have examined this issue in the past. What are their methodological strengths and weaknesses? State the major hypotheses that your study will test. Identify the major independent and dependent variables and the unit of analysis.

**3. March 6:** **Sampling Design;  
Revised Introduction** **15%**

Please begin this assignment with a revision of your introduction, the hypotheses and independent and dependent variables. Revision should be modified based on my comments and to ensure consistency with your sampling design.

Then, in no more than five double-spaced pages, indicate clearly the type of sampling design you will use and your rationale for selecting this type of sample. Focus your discussion on sample selection, not sample estimation. In your discussion, clearly indicate the population to which your hypothesis applies and how you will select a probability sample from it. Pay particular attention to practical issues, such as sample size, the sampling frame or list, and slippage between the population and the elements on the frame. Provide a justification for the decisions you make.



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<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENTS</u>
Jan. 16	Logic of the Research Process	Babbie, pages 3-29; 107-119; 488-511	
Jan. 23	Theory Construction 1	Babbie, pages 30-59 *Bryman *Charmaz	Topics
Jan. 30	Theory Construction 2	*Cook & Campbell Babbie, pages 86-101; 421-439	
Feb. 6	Sampling 1: Simple Random Sample	Babbie, pages 179-217 Kalton, pages 5-19	
Feb. 13	Sampling 2: Stratified Sample Cluster Sample	Kalton, pages 19-38	Introduction; Hypotheses
Feb. 20	Sampling 3: Sample Size Non-Probability Samples	Kalton, pages 56-69; 82-94 *Smith	
Feb. 27	Experimental Designs	Babbie, pages 220-241 Babbie, pages 356-362	
<b>Mar. 6</b>	<b>Survey Design 1</b>	<b>Babbie, pages 101-107</b>	<b>Sampling Plan</b>
<b>Mar. 13</b>	<b>Survey Design 2</b>	<b>*Menard</b>	
<b>Mar. 20</b>	<b>Qualitative Research</b>	<b>Babbie, pages 285-317</b> <b>*Waskul &amp; Lust</b>	
Mar. 27	NO CLASS	-----	
Apr. 3	Measurement	Babbie, pages 120-143; 242-279 *Schaeffer & Presser *Orcher	Research Design

Apr. 10	Scaling	Babbie, pages 152-177 Spector, pages 1-45	
Apr. 17	Reliability & Validity	Babbie, pages 143-151 Spector, pages 46-69	
Apr. 24	Ethics in Research	Babbie, pages 60-82 *Interlandi	Measurement
May 1	Summary		
May 7	-----		Complete Proposal

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**Academic Honesty**

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>.

**Classroom Behavior**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity, and respect, to guide classroom discussion, and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions.

**Religious Observances**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. If there is a conflict of this nature, please discuss it with me prior to the date.

**Students with Disability**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, or [www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices](http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices).

**Sexual Harassment**

The University of Colorado Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to all students, staff, and faculty. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual attention. It can involve intimidation, threats, coercion, or promises, or create an environment that is hostile or offensive. Harassment may occur between members of the same or opposite gender and between any combination of members in the campus community: students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Harassment can occur anywhere on campus, including the classroom, the workplace, or a residence hall. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment (OSH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information

about the OSH and the campus resources available to assist individuals who believe they have been sexually harassed can be obtained at: <http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment>.