

SOCY 3201: Sociological Research Methods, Spring 2016

Tuesdays and Thursdays 5-6:15 pm in Humanities 250

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Sociological research relies on collecting and analyzing different types of data to investigate social phenomena. These methodological tools vary widely depending on the research questions a sociologist seeks to answer. This course will teach you to investigate the world through a sociological lens and give you experience designing studies and using many of the fundamental tools of sociological research. The purpose of this course is to build an understanding of sociological research methods and quantitative and qualitative data analysis and to apply this understanding to real-world research questions. You will build a strong set of skills that may serve you well in your future workplace, including research design, critical thinking about data, construction and administration of qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments, data management, and applied statistical and textual analysis.

In this course, you will sharpen your research design and analytical skills by combining lectures with hands-on sociological research and data analysis. The course is divided into two main units. In the first unit you will learn about social science research methods and research design considerations. Then in the largest unit of the course, you will narrow your focus from research in general to four methodological tools in particular, learning how to design studies to give you the best possible data and analyze that data. You will collect original sociological data and write a short paper for each of these methods.

This class is intense and involves a lot of active learning. You will work in the computer lab and join a group to design studies and collect and analyze data. When you work on the papers you write as an individual, and you will be part of a group that will provide constructive feedback.

Please note that it is essential that you have taken a basic statistics course before enrolling in this class. We will teach you some basic statistical analysis, and we will assume that you have studied these statistics (though we will briefly refresh your memory).

Course Contacts:

Name _____

Email/phone _____

Name _____

Email/phone _____

Course Materials:

Readings: There are two primary textbooks, both available at the bookstore.

(1) Making Sense of the Social World, 4th edition, by Daniel F. Chambliss and Russell K. Schutt. ISBN: 1452217718.

(2) The Practice of Research: How Social Scientists Answer Their Questions, by Shamus Khan and Dana Fisher. Additional readings will be posted on the course website.

USB flash drive or online storage: Each student will need their own USB flash drive, external hard drive, or an online storage option like Dropbox or Google Drive, to store their data and analysis files. Students are responsible for maintaining the integrity and safety of their own data, and should therefore bring their flash drive to each lab meeting or have online data storage available. Students will also be using their Google Drive account through CU. This account has been set up for you and can be accessed using your CU email and Identikey password.

Clickers: We also require that you register an iClicker (<http://www.iclicker.com>) number online for use in class. Online registration of your clicker is done through the iClicker database with instructions at <http://myCUInfo.colorado.edu>. You may borrow an iClicker from someone else, but you will not be able to share an iClicker with another student in this class. If you do not already own an iClicker and cannot borrow one from a friend who does not have a class at the same time, they are available for purchase at the CU Bookstore.

Software: In the survey unit, we will be using two types of software. The first is Qualtrics, an online survey design and administration package. This is free to CU affiliates at <http://qualtrics.colorado.edu>. The second is a statistical software program called SPSS. It is available in many computer labs across the campus (for a complete list of labs with SPSS, go to <http://webdata.colorado.edu/labs/softwaresearch/>, enter SPSS in the "software name" box and search). If you like, you may also purchase a short-term license for SPSS and put it on your own computer; contact OIT for details.

Grading: Your final grade will be based on the following course requirements. Percentage grades will be converted to letter grades using the following criteria: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (88-89), B (83-87), B- (80-82), C+ (78-79), C (73-77), C- (70-72), D+ (68-69), D (63-67), D- (60-62), and F (0-59).

The course grade will be based on the following calculation:

20%	Research methods unit exam
20%	Final exam
50%	4 research projects (content analysis, observation, survey, interview)
10%	In-class activities, attendance, and participation in class and online

Course Requirements:

Exams

You will take an exam after the initial unit on sociological research methods. The exam will be mixed format including multiple choice and short answer. The final exam will cover all course material and will focus both on what you have learned about specific methods and how that links to the broader research methods material from the first unit.

Method-specific research projects

You will work individually and/or with a group (depending on the method) to collect a small amount of sociological data using a different method for each of the four projects: surveys, in-depth interviews, field observations, and content analysis. You or your group will work on study design, data collection, data analysis, and a write-up of findings. You will have some time in class to work on group aspects of the projects, and otherwise you may use tools such as Google Drive and Google Hangouts to collaborate.

Human subjects tutorial

Because you will be conducting sociological research, you will need to pass a short online tutorial on conducting research with human subjects that is required by the university. Students who have completed this tutorial in the past three years do not need to retake it and can simply submit a printout of their certificate of completion.

Team activities, attendance, in-class and online participation, and adherence to classroom policies

During the course of the semester you will be asked to do work as part of a group. We will ask for input from your classmates regarding your participation in these activities. We will take note of your attendance in class and verbal participation in large-group and small-group discussions throughout the semester. Your responses to clicker questions in class will be graded as response/no response and will provide us with additional information about your attendance in lectures. Although we will not grade you only on your overall attendance, students with spotty attendance or participation will receive low grades in this part of the class. Your online participation in viewing other students' instructional videos and answering weekly, ungraded study quiz questions is another aspect of this grade. Finally, we will assess whether you adequately adhere to the course policies that are designed to maintain an orderly and safe learning environment.

Please be aware that some course requirements or assigned readings may change during the semester. However, we do not expect the overall workload to increase if changes are made.

Grading Philosophy: Below is the standard for the level of assessment of written assignments and overall evaluation for course grades. These standards may be higher than those you may have encountered previously. The distribution of final grades will meet the standards for fair and rigorous evaluation.

Letter Grade	Percentage Grade	Description
A	90-100	<i>Exceptional:</i> Exceeds all required elements of the assignment, and the quality of the work is considerably higher than what was required. The quality of the work is considerably above the class average and impressive to the evaluator.
B	80-89	<i>Good:</i> Meets all required elements of the assignment, and the quality of the work is better than what is required.
C	70-79	<i>Average:</i> Meets all required elements of an assignment, not more, not less. Quality of assignment is satisfactory for college level work.
D	60-69	<i>Below average:</i> Does not meet all the required elements of the assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is considerably lower than satisfactory.
F	59 and below	<i>Failing:</i> Few of the requirements of the assignment are met and/or the quality of the assignment is well below basic standards of writing, comprehension, and/or ability to follow instructions.

Course Policies:

Course Policies and Environment:

- **When you email me please use Socy 3201 as your subject header.** We delete or don't respond to emails that do not have this as the subject heading. We check emails once a day during weekdays before 5pm.
- Important announcements will be sent out over email to the addresses listed on the class roster. You are required to check this email account regularly over the course of the semester.
- You are responsible for material and announcements presented during classroom time. We will not repeat material during office hours if you miss a class. It is your responsibility to get missed notes and updates from fellow students-NOT the instructor or TA. If a due date or other administrative changes are announced, that will supersede the "tentative schedule" found in this syllabus. **You are responsible for all information communicated in class, whether or not you are in attendance.**
- Please do not arrive late or leave early or begin to pack up prior to the end of lecture or discussion. This inhibits other students' ability to hear and understand the material.
- We expect that you will attend regularly and participate in in-class activities. This course is very experiential – if you miss class you will be hampered in completing the assignments, and it is very likely that your grade will suffer.
- Please turn off cell phone ringers, and avoid engaging in side talking, reading, sleeping, texting, or surfing while in class. This is disrespectful of other students and the instructors and disruptive to the learning community. If we notice you doing any of these things the possible

reactions range from polite requests to cease to light public ridicule to being asked to leave the room.

- Because they can distract you and other students, we strongly discourage the use of laptop or tablet computers in the classroom (except for the computer labs we will do together). Studies have consistently shown that students who use computers in the classroom receive lower grades than those who take notes by hand. Students who must use a computer during lecture are required to sit in the back or on the sides of the classroom to avoid distracting their peers.
- Please do the assigned readings for the week before the first class meeting of the week. This makes class more enjoyable for everyone and more useful for you. The readings are on what may be new material or ideas and so require time and focused attention for deep comprehension and retention. While we may not cover each reading in class you are responsible for the content. If something is unclear in the reading or you are unsure how it relates to that week's topic, it is your responsibility to bring that question up in class if you want it discussed in more detail.
- No early or late exams will be given. If you know you will be unable to take an exam on the day scheduled for any reason (religious, university event, or any other reason), please let us know as soon as possible to arrange for the essay makeup or other alternative. If you miss an exam, you have 24 hours to inform your instructor and then you will be given a take-home essay exam that typically takes 8-10 hours to complete. If you do not inform your instructor within 24 hours of missing an exam you will be given a zero for that score. It is in your best interest to be at scheduled exams. Please check the syllabus now to determine if there are any conflicts you need to discuss with me.
- Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the due date. Emailed assignments are not accepted. Late assignments are not accepted. That is the official policy. Please plan your life accordingly. I have been known to make exceptions to this policy for out of the ordinary circumstances (more sympathetic in advance), but only with point penalties.
- If you have any schedule conflicts with the final exam, please let your instructor know as soon as possible. If you have time conflicts with other tests, due dates, or known absences let your instructor know by e-mail as soon as possible.
- If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: [303-492-8671](tel:3034928671), Center for Community N200, and <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>.
- If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html>
- Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, you will be offered a take-home essay due after religious observances are over or given extension of due date for religious observances. The take-home essay is designed to be completed in the amount of time I feel is necessary to study for and complete the in class exam. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

- Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code
- The University of Colorado at Boulder Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures, the University of Colorado Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures, and the University of Colorado Conflict of Interest in Cases of Amorous Relationships policy apply to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at [303-492-2127](tel:303-492-2127) or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at [303-492-5550](tel:303-492-5550). Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>
- 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; [303-735-2273](tel:303-735-2273)). 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). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>
- Please keep all returned exams (and other returned work) in the event that you have a grade dispute at the end of the semester. If your calculation of your grade does not match our records, it is your responsibility to provide proof of graded work.
- Web Page: The course web page is on Desire2Learn, accessed at <http://learn.colorado.edu>. The syllabus, some readings, examples, grades, instructional videos, quizzes, and other information will be posted on the website. The most recent course information will be available here, as information in this syllabus may be changed over the course of the semester. Email updates will be sent out when important material is posted on the website.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE (reading assignment is due before the first listed class):

	Topic	Reading	Assignments
UNIT 1	SOCIOLOGY RESEARCH METHODS		
WEEK 1			
Jan 12	Course introduction	Course syllabus	
Jan 14	Thinking sociologically	Chambliss Ch. 1	
WEEK 2			
Jan 19	Intro to social research	Chambliss Ch. 2	Clickers start
Jan 21	Process and problems of social research		
WEEK 3			
Jan 26	Ethics in social research	Chambliss Ch. 3	Groups set
Jan 28	Conceptualization and measurement	Chambliss Ch. 4	HRC certificate due in class
WEEK 4			
Feb 2	Conceptualization and measurement		
Feb 4	Sampling	Chambliss Ch. 5	
WEEK 5			
Feb 9	Causation	Chambliss Ch. 6	
Feb 11	Causation, experiments	Khan Ch. 1	
WEEK 6			
Feb 16	Presenting and reviewing research	Chambliss Ch. 11 and 13	
Feb 18	Exam #1: Research Methods Bring #2 pencil	Exam 1: Research Methods Bring #2 pencil	Exam #1:
	METHODS AND ANALYSIS		
WEEK 7			
Feb 23-25	Content analysis	Khan Ch. 7-8, Week 7 folder on D2L	
WEEK 8			
March 1 March 3	Survey Design Wrap and present content analysis	Khan Ch. 2, Chambliss Ch. 7	Content Analysis Project due IN CLASS THURS
WEEK 9			
March 8-10	Survey analysis— MEET IN CLRE 111 (COMPUTER LAB) ON THURSDAY	Chambliss Ch. 8, Week 9 folder on D2L	
WEEK 10			
March 15-17	In-depth interviewing	Khan Ch. 5, Chambliss Ch. 9, Tips for interviewing	Survey project due TUESDAY IN CLASS
	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break
WEEK 11			
March 29-31	Interviewing continued	Chambliss Ch. 10, Week 12 folder on D2L	
WEEK 12			
April 5-7	Field observations	Khan Ch. 4, Observation training guide	Interview project due TUES IN CLASS
WEEK 13			
April 12-14	Observations continued	Week 13 folder on D2L	
WEEK 14			
April 19-21	Mixed-method studies, evaluations	Khan Ch. 9, Chambliss Ch 12	Observation Project due TUES IN CLASS
WEEK 15			
April 26-28	Course conclusion, exam review		
FINALS	Final exam, TBA available on My CUInfo (scheduled by registrar's office)		Final exam