Sociology 20: Introduction to Sociological Research Methods, Spring 2015
Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30 – 4:45 p.m.

Professor: Megan Sweeney
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Haines 228  Haines A55

Course web page: https://moodle2.sscnet.ucla.edu/course/view/15S-SOCIOL20-1

Course Description: This introductory course in social research methods offers an overview of how sociologists study the social world. It provides 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 sociological research, and move on to consider a variety of approaches to social research. This course, which assumes no background in research methods or statistics, aims to: (1) introduce you to the basic elements of research design; (2) improve your ability to critically evaluate the research of others; (3) enhance your understanding of what it means to be a sociologist; (4) familiarize you with the problems and limitations of studying the social world through firsthand experience with data collection and hypothesis testing; (5) demonstrate the relevance of sociological research methods to your everyday lives. (Yes, really!)

Required Readings: All required readings should be completed before coming to class and discussion section on the dates specified in the syllabus.


Sociology 20 Course Packet: A small collection of articles assigned in the course. Referred to as CP in the syllabus. Please note that a complete “virtual” course packet is also available to enrolled students via the course website.

The text and course packet will be available for purchase at the campus bookstore. The text will also be available for 2 hour loan through College Library and the complete course packet will be available online through the course web page (see above). Note that you will need to log into the course web page in order to access this information.

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 two hands-on group research projects. Full instructions for these projects will be posted on the course website. DATA COLLECTION EXERCISES MUST BE SUBMITTED BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF CLASS BY THE DUE DATE TO RECEIVE FULL CREDIT. These assignments must be typed and submitted through turnitin.com before the start of lecture on the assignment due date. The first data collection exercise contributes 15
percent to your final grade and the second data collection exercise contributes another 20 percent to your final grade.

*Exams:* There will be two exams that cover material from the lectures, readings, discussion sections, and group projects. NO make-up exams will be given unless I receive notification prior to the examination and you have a valid reason for missing the scheduled exam. The midterm contributes 25 percent and the final contributes 35 percent to your final grade.

*Homework:* There will be several homework assignments during the quarter, all graded on a credit / no-credit basis. NO LATE HOMEWORKS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Missing class is not a valid excuse for late homework. You must complete FIVE of the seven homework assignments. Together, these five homework assignments contribute five percent to your final grade. These assignments must be typed and submitted through turnitin.com. You should be able to complete them in no more than one page. Please be sure to write your name and discussion section on all assignments!

*Attendance and participation* will be considered in borderline cases, although in my experience students who actively participate in class discussions also tend to perform better on assignments and exams. 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. Attendance at all discussion sections is a requirement of this course.

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

- Exam 1 -- 25%
- Exam 2 -- 35%
- Observation exercise -- 15%
- Survey exercise -- 20%
- Homework -- 5%

*A note on academic integrity:* Students in this course, as in all courses at UCLA, are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Behaviors that violate University policy include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism in written work, and receiving or providing unauthorized assistance. You are expected to be familiar with UCLA’s standards of academic integrity. Please refer to the “Student Guide to Academic Integrity,” which is available for your review at: [http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/Student%20Guide%20Pamphlet%202014-2015.pdf](http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/Student%20Guide%20Pamphlet%202014-2015.pdf). If you have questions about specific assignments, be sure to check with the instructor or TA.

**Tentative Course Schedule:**

**Tuesday 3/31**  
Overview of course

**Thursday 4/2**  
Scientific study of the social world  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 1 & Chapter 2 (pp. 30-44 ONLY)  
Web - Instructions for observational study.  
(*) Homework #1 is due at the beginning of class.

**Tuesday 4/7**  
Elements of research design  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 2 (pp. 45-60 ONLY)
Thursday 4/9  Measurement I  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 4 (pp. 100-130 ONLY)  
(*) Homework # 2 is due at the beginning of class.

Tuesday 4/14 Measurement II: reliability & validity  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 4 (pp. 131-143 ONLY)  
(*) Homework #3 is due at the beginning of class.

Thursday 4/16 Causality and association in social research  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 6 & Chapter 9 (pp.331-344 ONLY, “crosstabulating variables”)  
(*) Homework #4 is due at the beginning of class.

Tuesday 4/21 Sampling and generalizability  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 5  
(*) Observation project report due today before 3:30pm

Thursday 4/23 Experiments I  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 7 (pp. 218-236 ONLY)  
WEB: Questionnaire project instructions

Tuesday 4/28 Midterm exam

Thursday 4/30 *** No lecture today ***

Tuesday 5/5 Experiments II  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 7 (pp.236-248 ONLY)  
(*) Homework #5 is due at the beginning of class.

Thursday 5/7 Survey research I  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 8 (pp. 251-277 ONLY)

Tuesday 5/12 Survey research II  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 8 (pp. 277-305 ONLY)  
(*) Homework #6 is due at the beginning of class.

Thursday 5/14 Statistics in social research: An introduction  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 9
Tuesday 5/19  Secondary data analysis & content analysis  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 13 (pp. 495-510 ONLY) & Chapter 14

Thursday 5/21  Qualitative methods I  
Readings: SCHUTT Chapters 10 & 11

**** Completed code sheets (in Excel format) due Friday 5/22, no later than 4:30pm. ***

Tuesday 5/26  Qualitative methods II  
(*) Homework #7 is due at the beginning of class.

Thursday 5/28  Elementary data analysis  
Reading: Review SCHUTT Chapter 9

Tuesday 6/2  The ethics and politics of social research  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 3

Thursday 6/4  Mixed methods research  
Reading: SCHUTT Chapter 15  
(*) Questionnaire reports are due today before 3:30pm.

Thursday 6/11  Final exam 3pm
Homework Assignments:

Homework #1 (Due Thursday 4/2): Media warm-up. Find an example in the media (newspaper, magazine, television, website, etc.) of a claim based on some kind of empirical evidence. (If you can admit to 150 people that US Magazine™ is your favorite source of information, feel free…) (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 include your source, or a brief description of your source if this is not possible.)

Homework #2 (Due Thursday 4/9): Measurement. (1) Identify the major independent variable and dependent variables in the Doob and Gross article. How was each measured? (2) What hypothesis were the authors trying to test? (3) Was this research a convincing test of their hypothesis? Why or why not?

Homework #3 (Due Tuesday 4/14): Measurement. (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 Thursday 4/16): 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?

Homework #5 (Due Tuesday 5/5): Experiments. (1) Briefly identify the key manipulated independent variable(s) and measured dependent variable(s) from the Pager study. (2) What conclusions about the relationship between the independent and dependent variable(s) does this researcher draw? Do you find her results convincing? Why or why not?

Homework #6 (Due Tuesday 5/12): Survey design. (1) Tourangeau and Smith experiment with several different survey modes, question contexts, and question formats when asking respondents about sensitive behaviors. Briefly identify and describe one of these ‘manipulations.’ (2) Did this manipulation affect reporting behavior? If so, how, and why do you think this was the case?

Homework #7 (Due Tuesday 5/26): Qualitative research. (1) Which methodological technique did Duneier choose for studying the magazine vendors? Why do you think he chose this approach over others we’ve discussed thus far? (2) Duneier discusses many methodological issues he faced in conducting his research. Which did you find to be most interesting or thought-provoking? Why?