

**SOC100-401: Introduction to Sociological Research**

Draft Copy (Final Copy given on First Day of Class)

Meets: Mon/Wed 3:00-4:30, Vance B6

Instructor: Prof. Kristen Harknett, harknett@sas.upenn.edu, 271 McNeil Building  
Office Hours: Mon/Wed from 4:30-5:15 or by appointment

## Course Objectives:

- (1) Learn the basic principles underlying all types of social research
- (2) Become familiar with a variety of methods of conducting social research
- (3) Develop tools to be an intelligent consumer and critic of social research

## Grading:

- Four research projects (50%)
- Midterm exam (15%)
- Final examination (30%)
- Attendance and participation (5%)

## Required Books:

- (1) *Approaches to Social Research* by Royce Singleton, Jr., Bruce C. Straits, Fourth edition, Oxford University Press (2004). Available at Penn Bookstore.
- (2) Course packet. Available at Campus Copy Center.

## Course Rules:

*Procedures for contesting a grade:* If you disagree with a grade you received, you may submit a written request for a review of the test question or assignment. Written requests will be accepted during the 5-day period after you receive the graded test or assignment. Written requests must include your argument for why you think you should have received a different grade. Please note that grade reviews may result in your grade being changed either up or down.

*Late projects:* Late projects will be accepted, but your grade on the assignment will be lowered by 1 letter grade for each day the assignment is late. For example, an assignment that would have earned an A if on time would receive a B if 1 day late, a C if 2 days late, etc.

IMPORTANT DATES		% of grade
Sep 27	Project 1 due (10%)	10%
Oct 18	Project 2 due (15%)	15%
Oct 20	Midterm examination (15%)	15%
Nov 22	Project 3 due (15%)	15%
Dec 6	Project 4 due (10%)	10%
Dec 22?	Final examination (30%)	30%

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## PART I: FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

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**Week 1 Course overview**Readings: Syllabus

9/8 Discuss syllabus, course requirements, and course goals  
In-class survey

**Week 2 General Introduction: Social Research and Theory**

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 1  
Durkheim, Emile. 1982. "What is a Social Fact?" Pp. 50-59 in *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*. New York: The Free Press.

9/13 What is sociological research and why is it important?

9/15 The role of theory in social research

**Week 3 Research Design**

Readings: Singleton, Chapters 3-4  
Gottlieb, Bruce. September 1, 1999. "Cooking the School Books: How U.S. News cheats in picking its 'best American colleges.'" <http://slate.msn.com/id/34027/>  
Duffy, Brian, and Peter Cary. September 7, 1999. "Dissension in the Rankings: US News responds to Slate's 'best colleges' story." <http://slate.msn.com/id/34278/>

9/20 Research Design

9/22 Measurement

PROJECT #1: Assignment based on the US News and World Report rankings.
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<b>DUE 9/27</b>
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**Week 4 Sampling**

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 5  
Michael, Robert T., et al. 1994. "The Sex Survey," in *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey*. Boston: Little, Brown and Compay. Chapter 2, pp. 15-41.

9/27 Sampling

9/29 Sampling

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## PART II: COMMONLY-USED RESEARCH METHODS

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### Week 5 Survey Research

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 8-9  
Schuman, Howard. 2002. "Sense and Nonsense about Surveys."  
*Contexts*. Summer, pp 40-47.  
Read about the General Social Survey at the following web sites:  
<http://www.norc.uchicago.edu/projects/gensoc1.asp>  
<http://www.norc.uchicago.edu/projects/gensoc3.asp>

Assignment: Choose a topic and write a testable hypothesis based on the General Social Survey codebook. (More detailed instructions will be handed out in class).

10/4 Survey Research

10/6 Survey Instrumentation

### Week 6 Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 14  
Tufté, Edward R. 1997. "The Decision to Launch the Space Shuttle Challenger" PP. 17-30 in *Visual and Statistical Thinking: Displays of Evidence for Making Decisions*. Chesire, CT: Graphics Press LLC.

10/11 Data analysis lab and demonstration

10/13 Data analysis and presentation of results

PROJECT #2: Analysis and report using the General Social Survey
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<b>DUE 10/18</b>
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### Week 7 Review and Midterm

10/18 Midterm review

10/20 In-class Midterm examination

**Week 8 Public Opinion Polls and Predicting Election Results**

Readings: Freedman, David, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves. 1998. *Statistics: Third Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapters 19-21. Pp. 333-375.  
Gawiser, Sheldon R. and G. Evans Witt. "Twenty Questions a Journalist Should Ask about Poll results." Appendix G in Earl Babbie (2004) *The Practice of Social Research: Tenth Edition*. Wadsworth/Thomson Learning. Pp. A25-A30.

10/25 Fall Break –Class does not meet

10/27 The Statistics behind Public Opinion Polls

**Week 9 Evaluation Research**

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 13  
1996. *When Work Pays Better Than Welfare: A Summary of the Self-Sufficiency Project's Implementation, Focus Group, and Initial 18-Month Impact Reports*. Ottawa: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. <http://www.srdc.org/english/publications/work.htm>

11/1 Evaluation Research

11/3 Evaluation research

**Week 10 Experimental Research**

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 6  
Freedman, David, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves. 1998. *Statistics: Third Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapters 1-2. Pp. 3-28.  
Lovaglia, Michael. 2003. "From Summer Camps to Glass Ceilings: The Power of Experiments." *Contexts*, Fall. Pp. 42-49.

11/8 Experimental research design

11/10 Experimental research design

**Week 11      Qualitative Research**

Readings:      Singleton, Chapter 10  
Adler, Patricia A. and Peter Adler. 2003. (Spring) "The Promise and Pitfalls of Going into the Field." *Contexts*. Pp.41-47.  
Edin, Kathryn, and Laura Lein. 1997. *Making Ends Meet*. New York: Russell Sage. Chapter 1-2 Appendix A  
Liebow, Elliot. 1967. *Tally's Corner; A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Chapters 1-2 and Appendix.

11/15 Qualitative research

11/17 Qualitative research

PROJECT #3: Qualitative Research Project
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<b>DUE 11/22</b>
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**Week 12      Historical/Comparative Research**

Readings:      Ragin, Charles C. 1994. *Constructing Social Research: the Unity and Diversity of Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Chapter 5.  
Useem, Bert, and Jack A. Goldstone. 2002. "Forging Social Order and Its Breakdown: Riot and Reform in U.S. Prisons." *American Sociological Review*. 67(4): 499-525.  
Weir, Margaret. 1995. "The Politics of Racial Isolation in Europe and America." In Paul E.Peterson (ed.) *Classifying by Race*. Princeton University Press. Pp. 217-242.

11/ 22 Historical/comparative research

11/ 24 Historical/comparative research

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## **PART III: CRITICS, POLITICS, AND ETHICS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH**

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### **Week 13 Social Research in Critical Perspective**

- Readings: Lieberman, Stanley. 1989. "When Right Results are Wrong." *Society*. Pp. 60-66.
- Ragin, Charles. *Constructing Social Research: the Unity and Diversity of Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Appendix
- Weber, Max. 1949. Excerpts from "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" Pp. 50-63 in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. New York: The Free Press.
- Burawoy, Michael. 2004. "Public Sociologies: Contradictions, Dilemmas, and Possibilities." *Social Forces*. 82(4):1603-1618.
- Tittle, Charles R. 2004. "The Arrogance of Public Sociology." *Social Forces*. 82(4):1639-1643.
- Nielsen, Francois. 2004. "The Vacant 'We': Remarks on Public Sociology." *Social Forces*. 82(4): 1619-1627.

11/ 29 Social Research Critiques

12/1 The Debate over Public Sociology

PROJECT #4: Report summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of one of a choice of research articles
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<b>DUE 12/6</b>
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### **Week 14 The Ethics of Social Research and Review for Final Exam**

- Readings: Singleton, Chapter 16
- 12/6 The Ethics of Social Research
- 12/8 Final examination review

### **Week of 12/15 – 12/22**

- 12/22 Final examination 8:30-10:30am  
NOTE: Date and time are tentative. Confirm with instructor!

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