

SOC100-401: Introduction to Sociological Research

Meets: Tu/Th 10:30-11:50, 309 McNeil
Instructor: Professor Kristen Harknett, harknett@sas.upenn.edu, 271 McNeil
Office Hours: Thursday 9:30-10:30 or by appointment
Teaching Assistant: Alicia Lee, alicial@sas.upenn.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Objectives:

To learn the basic principles underlying all types of social research, become familiar with a variety of methods of conducting social research, and develop tools to be an intelligent consumer and critic of social research.

Required Books and Material:

- (1) *Approaches to Social Research* by Royce Singleton, Jr., Bruce C. Straits, Fourth edition, Oxford University Press (2004).
- (2) *Sidewalk* by Mitchell Duneier
- (3) Additional assigned readings listed on the syllabus. (location of readings TBA).

Grading:

Midterm exam (20%)
Final examination (30%)
Three research projects (10%, 15%, 15%)
Short assignments and pop quizzes (10%)

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

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 7-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.

PART 1. Foundations of Social Research

Week 1 Course overview

Readings: Syllabus

9/7 Discuss syllabus, course requirements, and course goals

Week 2 Introduction to Social Research; How Does Theory Fit In?

Readings: Singleton, Chapters 1 and 2
 Durkheim, Emile. 1982. "What is a Social Fact?" in *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*. New York: The Free Press. Pp. 50-59

9/12 What is sociological research and why is it important?

9/14 The role of theory in social research

Week 3 Cross-Cutting Principles: Research Design, Causality, Measurement

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/>

9/19 Research Design and Causality

9/21 Measurement: Reliability, Validity, Measurement Error

PROJECT #1: Assignment based on the US News and World Report rankings.

DUE 9/26 (beginning of class)

Week 4 Cross-Cutting Principles: Selecting a Research Sample

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 5
 Michael, Robert T., et al. 1994. "The Sex Survey," in *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. Chapter 2, pp. 15-41.
 Freedman, David, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves. 1998. *Statistics: Third Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Pp. 273-277, 333-354.

9/26 Discuss Project 1, Sampling

[Short sampling assignment DUE WED. 9/27]

9/28 Sampling, Election Polls, Confidence Intervals

PART 2. Different Approaches to Data Collection, Analysis, and Research Design

Week 5 Collecting Data Using Surveys

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 8-9
Schuman, Howard. 2002. "Sense and Nonsense about Surveys." *Contexts*.
Summer, pp 40-47.

10/3 Survey Research, in-class survey

10/5 Survey Instrumentation

Week 6 Analysis of In-Class Survey Data

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 14

10/10 Half of students attend SPSS lab and demo in McNeil 108-9

10/12 Other half of students attend SPSS lab and demo in McNeil 108-9

PROJECT #2: Analysis and report using the General Social Survey

DUE 10/19 (beginning of class)

Week 7 Presenting Research Results

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 17
Tuft, Edward R. 1997. "The Decision to Launch the Space Shuttle Challenger" in *Visual and Statistical Thinking: Displays of Evidence for Making Decisions*. Chesire, CT: Graphics Press LLC. Pp. 16-30

10/17 Data analysis and Hypothesis Testing using SPSS

10/19 Discuss GSS Project, regression analysis

Week 8 Experimental and Observational Research Design

Readings: Freedman, David, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves. 1998. *Statistics: Third Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapters 1-2. Pp. 3-28.
Singleton, Chapter 6

10/24 Experimental Research Design and Causality

10/26 Experiments compared with Observational Studies

Week 9 Historical/Comparative Research and Midterm

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 13
Extra reading TBA

10/31 In-class midterm
11/2 Evaluation Research

Week 10 Evaluation Research

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 11
Ragin, Charles C. 1994. *Constructing Social Research: the Unity and Diversity of Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Chapter 5. Pp. 105-130.

11/7 Content Analysis [**Note: possible assignment related to Election Day--TBA**]
11/9 Historical/Comparative research

Week 11 Qualitative Research

Readings: Singleton, Chapter 10
Selections from Duneier, *Sidewalk*

11/14 Qualitative research
11/16 Qualitative research (short video)

PROJECT #3: Research Project designed by Class.

DUE 12/5 (<i>beginning of class</i>)

Week 12 Qualitative research

Readings: Adler, Patricia A. and Peter Adler. 2003. (Spring) "The Promise and Pitfalls of Going into the Field." *Contexts*. Pp.41-47.

11/21 Research project design – IRB and other protocols
11/23 Thanksgiving – NO CLASS

PART 3: Critiques, Politics, And Ethics of Social Research

Week 13 Social Research in Critical Perspective

- Readings: Weber, Max. 1949. Excerpts from "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. New York: The Free Press. Pp. 50-63
- 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.

- 11/28 Objectivity and Social Research
11/30 The Debate over Public Sociology

Week 14 The Ethics of Social Research and Review for Final Exam

- Readings: Singleton, Chapter 16

- 12/5 Project 3 due, the Ethics of Social Research
12/7 Wrap-up, review

- 12/20 (Wednesday) FINAL EXAM 12:00-2:00pm. Location to be announced.
[NOTE: a take-home final option may be offered instead of the 12/20 exam. We will discuss this possibility in class.]

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