

Sociological Research Methods

SOCI 2000 / HSOC 2002

The University of Pennsylvania

Fall 2023

LECTURE:

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:15 – 11:14 AM, *STNH AUD*

RECITATIONS:

Mondays, 1:45-2:44 PM, JAFF B17

Mondays, 5:15 PM-6:14 PM, WILL 301

PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR

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RECITATION INSTRUCTOR

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LEARNING ASSISTANT

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

One of the defining characteristics of all the social sciences, including sociology, is a commitment to empirical research as the basis for knowledge. This course is designed to provide you with a basic understanding of research in the social sciences and to enable you to think like a social scientist. Through this course, students will learn both the logic of sociological inquiry and the nuts and bolts of doing empirical research. We will focus on such topics as the relationship between theory and research, the logic of research design, issues measurement, basic methods of data collection, and what social scientists do with data once they have collected them. By the end of the course, students will have completed their own research projects and will be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of published accounts of social science research.

GRADES AND ASSESSMENTS

Your grade in this course will be calculated based on the following assessments:

Participation	10%
PollEverywhere	5%
Recitation Attendance	5%
Midterm Exams	20%
Midterm 1	10%
Midterm 2	10%
Quantitative Analysis Lab	10%
Research Project	60%
Assignment 1: Qualitative Research Proposal	5%
Paper 1: Qualitative Paper	25%
Assignment 2: Quantitative Research Proposal	5%
Paper 2: Mixed Methods Paper	25%
TOTAL	100%

Deadlines and examination dates are posted on Canvas. Please let us know about any conflicts as soon as possible!

Participation: We will administer 1-3 ungraded PollEverywhere questions during each lecture, both to facilitate engagement and to take attendance (see Technology section, below). We will drop up to 10 missing quizzes when calculating your PollEverywhere grade, to account for a reasonable number of absences or technology hiccups. If you are facing obstacles to attendance such that your missing quizzes will exceed this amount, you should talk to us and make a plan with your advisors. You may not take PollEverywhere quizzes offsite. Additionally, attendance will be taken at recitation. You may miss 3 recitations no questions asked. Again, talk to us if you need to miss more than that.

Midterm Exams: Each midterm consists of 25 multiple choice questions to be completed in class on a scantron sheet. Midterm exams are intended to check that you've been doing the reading and paying attention in lecture.

Quantitative Analysis Lab: This lab gives students hands-on experience performing secondary data analyses on high quality data from the General Social Survey. The exercise will be demonstrated in recitation and submitted a week later.

Research Project: Students will complete a research project over the course of the semester on a topic of their choice, using two research methods, one qualitative, one quantitative. Students will report on their qualitative findings in Paper 1 and synthesize those findings with their quantitative findings in Paper 2. Assignments 1 and 2 are check-ins that allow us to give you feedback. More details will be distributed in class.

REQUIRED BOOKS

The following books are required for the course. Selections marked * are available through the Penn Library system as a free eBook. If you're a paper person, cheap used copies of most books can be found from the book vendor of your choice. More expensive copies can be found at the University Bookstore. All books are also on hold at the library reserve desk.

*Macleod, Jay. 2009. *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Third Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. ISBN: 9780813343587

*Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura Hamilton. 2013. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. ISBN: 9780674049574.

*Davidman, Lynn. 1991. *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women turn to Orthodox Judaism*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520075450

Smith, Christian. 1998. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226764191

All other readings will be provided on Canvas.

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

PollEverywhere (www.pollev.com). Students must register for a PollEverywhere account. Information on how to get started can be found here: <https://www.polleverywhere.com/poll-everywhere-student-guide.pdf>

Canvas. Your readings and post-lecture slides will be shared on Canvas. All assignment, lab, and paper submissions must be made through Canvas, and all grades will be posted to Canvas in a timely fashion.

Berkeley SDA. This free online statistical tool will be used for the Quantitative Analysis Lab. You will be taught how to access it and use it during recitation.

Microsoft Office Suite. As a Penn student, you are entitled to free Microsoft Office software. Many of the formatting requirements for papers, tables, and visualizations are much easier in Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel!

COURSE POLICIES

Readings: You are responsible for completing course readings before the session in which they will be discussed.

Required Lecture Materials: You must bring assigned readings to class on the days that they are discussed, as we refer to them frequently. They can be brought in either digital or paper format. You should also plan to have a writing implement handy even if you're a digital reader/note-taker, because we do a lot of worksheets in class.

Laptops: Laptops and other devices are allowed in lecture for accessing online readings and taking notes. However, the instructors may ask you to switch to analog books or note-taking if the laptop becomes a distraction.

Class Notes: I do not provide notes or recordings for missed classes. However, slides for completed class sessions will be available for you to review on Canvas. I encourage you to seek out additional notes from classmates if you need to miss class.

Late Work and Extensions: Any extensions must be requested more than 24 hours before the deadline. Late work will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day.

Academic Integrity: The University's policy on academic integrity can be found here: <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>. If a situation arises where you feel you must cheat or else fail the class, please talk to me before you make a mistake that will follow you for the rest of your life. In particular, please note that taking PollEverywhere quizzes offsite counts as academic dishonesty.

Communication: We prefer more communication over less communication! If something is preventing you from taking full advantage of the course, please let us know! We worry about our students when they fall off our radar, so we appreciate you keeping us in the loop. When in doubt, talk to us.

Emails: In all emails to course instructors, please include SOCI 2000 in the subject line. If you are dissatisfied with your grade on an assignment, please wait 24 hours before contacting the instructors, and use that time to review our feedback.

Incompletes: Incompletes will only be considered for students who have completed Paper 1 and both Midterms.

Difficult Topics: In taking society as a serious object of inquiry, this course deals with several difficult subjects, including (but not limited to): racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, violence, and mental illness. In our class discussions, please keep in mind that these things may not be simple academic exercises for your peers! Good science does not have to be callous or impersonal. Your instructors will step in if they feel that a discussion has lost sight of this. If you feel strongly that you do not want to be part of a class discussion that makes you feel vulnerable, you may opt out and follow up with your instructor later.

CLASS SESSIONS

Week	Date	Topic and Readings
1	Tuesday, August 29	Lecture 1: Course Introduction <i>No assigned readings</i>
	Thursday, August 31	Lecture 2: Thinking like a Social Scientist <i>No readings, but start brainstorming your research topic!</i>
	Monday, September 4	<i>Labor Day Observed, No Recitation</i>
2	Tuesday, September 5	Make-Up Recitation: From Topic to Research Question <i>Note: both recitation sections will be meeting together in our normal lecture hall!</i>
	Thursday, September 7	Lecture 3: From Theory to Research Question MacLeod, <i>Ain't No Makin' It</i> , Part 1 pp. xi-83 ¹
	Monday, September 11	Recitation: Ethnography Practicum <u>*ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE ON CANVAS!*</u>
3	Tuesday, September 12	Lecture 4: Evidence and Patterns of Variation MacLeod, <i>Ain't No Makin' It</i> , Part 1 pp. 84-153
	Thursday, September 14	Lecture 5: Longitudinal Outcomes MacLeod, <i>Ain't No Makin' It</i> , Part 2 pp. 157-240
	Monday, September 18	Recitation: Interview Practicum, Feedback on Assignment 1
4	Tuesday, September 19	Lecture 6: Alternative Hypotheses and Generalizability MacLeod, <i>Ain't No Makin' It</i> , Part 2 pp. 241-271 <i>Note: Add period ends today!</i>

¹ Content Warning: Quotes from MacLeod's respondents are rife with sexism, homophobia, and especially racism. In particular, the Hallway Hangers use the n-word frequently in pages 37-45. Please talk to the instructors if you have concerns or want more information.

Week	Date	Topic and Readings
4	Thursday, September 21	Lecture 7: The Perils and Promise of Participant Observation MacLeod, <i>Ain't No Makin' It</i> , Methodological Appendix, pp. 465-504
	Monday, September 25	Recitation: Qualitative Data Analysis Practicum
5	Tuesday, September 26	Lecture 8: Selecting on the Dependent Variable Davidman, <i>Tradition in a Rootless World</i> , Ch. 1, 2, 5 and appendices A, B, and C.
	Thursday, September 28	Lecture 9: Methodological Honesty Regnerus, <i>Cheap Sex</i> , Introduction and Ch. 5, with Endnotes. Gonalons-Pons and Ronen, "Sexist Cheap Shots"
	Monday, October 2	<i>No recitation today!</i>
6	Tuesday, October 3	Lecture 10: Mechanisms I Armstrong and Hamilton, <i>Paying for the Party</i> , Preface, Introduction, and Chapters 1-3 and Appendix B
	Thursday, October 5	Lecture 11: Mechanisms II Armstrong and Hamilton, <i>Paying for the Party</i> , Chapters 5-8.
	Monday, October 9	Recitation: Alternative Hypothesis Workshop <i>Note: Drop Period Ends Today!</i>
7	Tuesday, October 10	<u>*MIDTERM 1 IN CLASS*</u>
<i>FALL TERM BREAK, October 12-15</i>		
	Monday, October 16	Recitation: Writing Workshop
8	Tuesday, October 17	Lecture 12: Cross Tab Worksheet (No Readings Due, Worksheet in Class)

Week	Date	Topic and Readings
	Thursday, October 19	Lecture 13: Intro to Quantitative Research Smith, <i>American Evangelicalism</i> , Introduction
***	Sunday, October 22nd	<u>*PAPER 1 DUE ON CANVAS BY MIDNIGHT*</u>
	Monday, October 23	Recitation: Quantitative Data Analysis Lab Demo
9	Tuesday, October 24	Lecture 14: Validity, Reliability, and Bias Smith, <i>American Evangelicalism</i> , Appendices A&B
	Thursday, October 26	Lecture 15: Interpreting Quantitative Evidence Smith, <i>American Evangelicalism</i> , Chapters 2 and 3
	Monday, October 30	<i>No Recitation Today!</i> <u>*QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS LAB DUE ON CANVAS*</u>
10	Tuesday, October 31	Lecture 16: Interpreting Quantitative Evidence II Smith, <i>American Evangelicalism</i> , Chapters 4 and 5
	Thursday, November 2	Lecture 17. Audit Studies Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record” Podcast Episode: Give Methods a Chance, “Devah Pager on Experimental Audits”
	Monday, November 6	Recitation: Survey Practicum, Preparation for Assignment 2
11	Tuesday, November 7	Lecture 18: Randomized Control Trials Podcast Episode: Planet Money, “Moving to Opportunity?” <i>Optional:</i> Chetty et al., “The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children”
	Thursday, November 9	Lecture 19: Content Analysis Griswold, “The Fabrication of Meaning”

Week	Date	Topic and Readings
	Monday, November 13	Recitation: Research Check-In <u>*ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE ON CANVAS*</u>
12	Tuesday, November 14	Lecture 20: Explaining Historical Events Armstrong and Cragg, “The Making of the Stonewall Myth”
	Thursday, November 16	<u>*MIDTERM 2 IN CLASS*</u>
	Monday, November 20	Recitation: Research Check-In, Feedback on Assignment 2
13	Tuesday, November 21	<i>Optional Hand-On Research Help in Lecture</i>
	Thursday, November 23	<i>THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS</i>
	Monday, November 27	Recitation: Analyzing Survey Results
14	Tuesday, November 28	Lecture 21: Data Visualization (No readings, but come to class ready to learn about creating data visualizations)
	Thursday, November 30	Lecture 22: Which Method? (No readings but come to class ready to argue the benefits and drawbacks of different methodological approaches!)
	Monday, December 4	Recitation: Cross-Tab Workshop
15	Tuesday, December 5	Lecture 23: Notes from the Research Trenches (No readings but come to class ready to learn about Andres’ and Tessa’s research!)
	Thursday, December 7	Lecture 24: Course Conclusion
	Monday, December 11	Recitation: Writing Workshop
	Monday, December 18	<u>*PAPER 2 DUE ON CANVAS *</u>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Laura Hamilton. 2013. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Suzanna M. Crag. 2006. "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth" *American Sociological Review* 71: 724-751.
- Chetty, Raj, Nathaniel Hendren, and Lawrence F. Katz. 2015. "The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment." NBER Working Paper.
- Davidman, Lynn. 1991. *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women turn to Orthodox Judaism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Give Methods A Chance Podcast. 2015. "Devah Pager on Experimental Audits" <https://thesocietypages.org/methods/2015/05/22/devah-pager-on-experimental-audits/>
- Gonalons-Pons, Pilar and Shelly Ronen. 2019. "Sexist Cheap Shots" *Contexts* 18(1): 64-65
- Griswold, Wendy. 1987. "The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies" *American Journal of Sociology* 92(5): 1077-117.
- Macleod, Jay. 2009. *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Third Edition. Boulder, CO : Westview Press.
- Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5):937-975
- Planet Money Podcast. 2019. "Moving to Opportunity?" <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/30/756028025/episode-937-moving-to-opportunity>
- Regnerus, Mark. 2017. *Cheap Sex: The Transformation of Men, Marriage, and Monogamy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Christian. 1998. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

IMPORTANT DATES

Monday, September 11	Assignment 1 Due
Monday, October 9	<i>Drop period ends</i>
Tuesday, October 10	Midterm 1 in Class
Monday, October 22	Paper 1 Due
Monday, October 30	Quantitative Data Analysis Lab Due
Monday, November 13	Assignment 2 Due
Tuesday, November 21	Midterm 2 in Class
Monday, December 18	Paper 2 Due