

SOC 355W: Research Methods in Sociology

Fall 2018, Tues Thurs 1:00-2:15, New Psych Bldg 250

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Office: Tarbutton 216

Office Hours: Tues Wed Thurs 11:30-12:45, or by appt.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to research design in the social sciences. We will examine a wide range of topics, including the following: hypothesis formation; measurement validity and reliability; probability and nonprobability sampling; experimental and quasi-experimental designs; survey designs and questionnaire construction; ethnographic methods such as participant observation and intensive interviewing; archival methods such as secondary data analysis and content analysis; and ethical issues such as informed consent and confidentiality.

The course has four main objectives. First, you will learn how to translate abstract theoretical ideas into empirical research questions. Second, you will see the strengths and limitations of different methods and learn how to choose the most appropriate methods for your particular research interests. Third, you will learn how to critically assess the methodological soundness of research presented in scholarly journals and news reports. Fourth, you will gain an appreciation of the ethical side of social research and how ethical concerns may vary depending on the specific method being used.

The overall goal of this course is to provide you with the practical skills needed for being a discerning consumer and producer of social research. The course fulfills an upper division writing requirement and is required for sociology majors.

Text and Materials

1. Daniel Chambliss and Russell Schutt's *Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation* 5th edition, 2016 (paperback ISBN: 9781483380612)
2. Online readings available through Woodruff Library's Course Reserves
3. Canvas course page (for posting overheads, assignments, study guides, etc.)

Course Requirements

Your course grade will be based on three papers, a midterm and final exam, and several in-class group exercises. Details provided below.

Papers. There will be two shorter papers and a longer research proposal (based on the shorter papers). The two short papers are designed to take you through the initial stages of a research project, from formulating an empirical question to developing and defending a research design. These two papers will each be approximately eight pages long, double-spaced. Combined they are worth 30 percent of your overall course grade (15 percent each).

The two short papers will become the main sections of your **research proposal**. What is a research proposal? It's a document in which you present your research idea, link it to the existing literature on the topic, and describe in detail how you plan to conduct the research. The research proposal will be roughly 20 pages in length. The proposal will incorporate and expand upon the work you already completed in the earlier two papers. Like those earlier papers, the proposal is worth 15 percent of your overall course grade. Collectively, then, the three papers are 45 percent of your total grade in the course.

A detailed description of these paper assignments will be posted on Canvas. The papers will be evaluated on the basis of several factors: correct grammar and spelling; clarity of expression; overall organization and coherence; insightfulness and originality; the extent to which suitable sources are used and appropriately cited; and, most importantly, the extent to which you accurately use the vocabulary of research methods, i.e., the technical terms from readings and lecture.

Exams. There will be a midterm exam and a final exam, both consisting of multiple choice, fill-in-blank, and short answer questions. The exams cover the most important points of the readings and lecture. Detailed study guides will be provided at least one week before each exam (see below schedule for exam dates). The midterm is worth 20 points and the final is 25 points (the final is weighted slightly more because it covers more material and is also partially cumulative). The exams together represent 45 percent of your overall course grade.

In-class Group Assignments. There will be approximately 8-10 exercises that we will work through together, as a group, during our class meetings. **Because these exercises are completed in class and are not always announced beforehand, attendance is vitally important to your success in this course.** If you miss one, it can't be made up for any credit, although you may want to obtain a copy of the assignment just to see what you missed. These in-class exercises combined are worth 10 percent of your overall course grade.

Summarizing the above, your grade in the course will be calculated as follows:

Papers	45%
Exams	45%
Group Assignments	10%
Total	100%

If you have learning needs that may affect your grade, please see me very soon to arrange accommodations.

Attendance Policy. Roll is not formally taken and there is no separate attendance grade. However, the in-class group assignments function as a periodic check on attendance. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to determine what you missed.

Late Policy. The following late policy applies to the three papers: Each day that your work is late results in the deduction of one full letter grade. Due dates for these three papers will be announced in class.

Academic Conduct. Emory College has established an Honor Code outlining an appropriate code of conduct with respect to academic honesty and plagiarism. Information on Emory's Honor Code can be accessed here:

<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures of the university. Violations of the Honor Code will be referred to the Honor Council.

A Note on Classroom Environment. Please refrain from chatting with friends during class, note passing, entering late, and leaving early. If you know that you will be leaving class early, inform me in advance, sit near the door, and leave as quietly as possible. Cell phones should be turned off in class.

Weekly Schedule of Topics and Readings

In learning research methods, it is important to keep up with the readings. The lectures, group assignments, etc., all will be much more meaningful if readings are completed beforehand. Note: **OL**=online reserve reading and **CS**=Chambliss and Schutt textbook.

Week	Topics	Readings
8/27	First Day 8/30: Course Overview	OL: Aims of Science, by Fred Kerlinger OL: Responding to Chaos, by Lisa McIntyre
9/3	Testable Theory and Empirical Research	CS: Chapter 1 (Science, Society, and Social Research) CS: Chapter 2 (Process and Problems of Social Research)
9/10	Research Ethics	CS: Chapter 3 (Ethics in Research)
9/17	Research Ethics (cont.)	OL: Reasons Scientists Avoid Thinking About Ethics, by Paul Root Wolpe OL: Measuring Race and Ethnicity: Why and How? by Margaret Winker
9/24	From Abstract Concepts to Measured Variables	CS: Chapter 4 (Conceptuali- zation and Measurement) OL: Political Democracy: Conceptual and Measurement Traps, by Kenneth Bollen
10/1	Selecting Samples	CS: Chapter 5 (Sampling)
	Midterm Exam on 10/4	

Week	Topics	Readings
10/8	Fall Break on 10/8-9	
	Experiments	CS: Chapter 6 (Causation and Experimental Design)
10/15	Experiments (cont.)	OL: The Longitudinal Effects of a Rape-Prevention Program on Fraternity Attitudes and Behavior, by John Foubert
10/22	Surveys	CS: Chapter 7 (Survey Research) OL: Survey of Sexual Behavior of Americans, by E.O. Laumann
10/29	Ethnographic Methods	CS: Chapter 9 (Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating, Listening) OL: On Being Sane in Insane Places, by David Rosenhan
11/5	Ethnography (cont.)	OL: Researching Dealers and Smugglers, by Patricia Adler
	Unobtrusive/Archival Methods	CS: Chapter 11 (Unobtrusive Measures); see also pp. 186-193 on secondary data, big data, and related ethical issues
11/12	Unobtrusive/Archival (cont.)	OL: Narrative and Event, by Larry Griffin et al. OL: Images Crime and Justice by Alexis Durham et al.
11/19	Class canceled on 11/20 and 11/22; Thanksgiving Break on 11/21-23	Students should spend this time completing their research proposal

Week	Topics	Readings
11/26	Evaluating Social and Economic Policy	CS: Chapter 12 (Evaluation Research)
12/3	On the History and Sociology of Statistics	OL: Lies, Calculations, and Constructions, by Joel Best
12/10	Last day on 12-11: Research proposals due; Catch-up and conclusion	

**Final exam is Dec. 18
from 3:00-4:30 in
our usual room**