

Soc 105 – Research Design and Sociological Methods

University of California, Berkeley

Tuesdays and Thursdays 8-9:30am, Barrows 104

Instructor: Edwin Lin, Spring 2019

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Office Hours: 487 Barrows Hall, Thursdays 10am-1pm or by appointment

Sign-up for OH at <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/icwie>

Overview of Course Content:

Sociology is a social science, which means the methods of study that sociology uses are designed in a scientific way, utilizing the scientific method, observation, and analysis to draw conclusions about social forces. This course is designed as a continuation of Soc 5 – Evaluation of Evidence. While Soc 5 provided a broad and introductory look at different sociological methods, Soc 105 asks you to put in practice methodological thinking. Specifically in this course each student will follow the steps involved in starting their own sociological research project culminating in writing a detailed proposal of research that plans, details, and justifies their methodological approach to answering an important sociological research question.

This course is perfect for students who want to start planning a research project, perhaps even one that they will (in the future) complete over the summer, seek out funding for, or pursue as part of a later thesis project. The objectives of the course are to 1) teach methodological thinking, 2) give students a taste of how to start a research project, and 3) produce a solid plan of future research that could actually be executed with reasonable chance of success.

Office Hours:

Please sign up for office hours if you know in advance that you'd like to come in. Information is above. If you do not sign up, you are still welcome to drop in, but I do sometimes step out of the office when there is no appointment to run a quick errand. Also, if the door to my office is closed during office hours, feel free to knock (loudly). I try not to run late with my appointments but it does happen—if you notice me running late and have time constraints with your assigned time, please feel free to politely interrupt and let me know.

Grade Breakdown:

Participation and Attendance	10%
Research Topic/Statement of Interest	5%
Research Question	5%
Theoretical Framing	10%
Literature Review	15%
Memo on Research Design	5%
Methods	15%
Ethical Issues	5%
Final Research Proposal	30%

Late assignments are not accepted! All assignments will be posted on the bCourses website for the class. **Attendance to class is mandatory; missing more than three classes will result in a penalty to your grade.**

Assignments worth 5% are simply graded on whether or not you completed the assignment.

Participation and Attendance:

Please come to class prepared to discuss that week's reading and how you see it relating to your own project and ideas. Your participation during class is crucial to learning and understanding the course material. "Participation" does not mean simply speaking out a lot. The content, quality, and depth of your participation is more important than how many times a week you speak. At the same time, showing that you are constantly engaged in our class discussions is also important. I do keep track of participation (you may see me doing this) as a way to ensure no personal bias against you when it comes to determining your participation grade. In-class participation includes sharing about your project, asking and answering questions during lectures, working with other students, and providing comments to other students in the class about their projects.

This class is run partly as a lecture and partly as a workshop, which means that while I do give lectures and assignments, I also expect you to engage with the material and to be ready to ask questions and share about your struggles and your experiences with your project. The more you are able to share about your project and ask questions regarding your work, the more you and other students will benefit, and the better the class will be as a result.

For those of you who may dislike participating in large groups or spontaneous participation, there are several options that I am happy to work out with you. If you are at all concerned about participation, please see me *early* in the semester in office hours to talk about this. But due to the nature of this course's subject matter, sharing about your project in class is truly an important and critical part of the course.

*****If English is not your first language**, or you have trouble writing in English, there are resources on campus to help in writing your papers. I have posted some such resources on bCourses under "Files" and "Writing Resources." You can also check out the Student Learning Center (SLC) at their website <http://slc.berkeley.edu> for more information.

Also, if you are part of the **Disabled Students' Program (DSP)** and require any special accommodations, please talk to me and/or send me an email approximately a week before the assignment's due date to discuss changes in the due date. I am more than willing to provide DSP accommodations, so please do not hesitate to keep me in the loop. Please try to avoid the situation where you are asking me the day before something is due—if so, I am under no obligation to oblige, and depending on the assignment, you may not receive accommodations.

Assignments and Due Dates:

All assignment details will be posted on bCourses. For detailed explanations and instructions, please see bCourses.

1) Research Topic/Statement of Interest (5%)

1 page paper about research topic and purpose of research

DUE: **Wednesday, February 6**

- 2) Research Question (5%)**
1 page paper detailing your research question (or questions)
DUE: **Wednesday, February 13**

- 3) Theoretical Framing (10%)**
2-3 page paper (double-spaced) discussing possible theories (w/ short summaries and citations) that may be useful for your research
DUE: **Friday, February 22**

- 4) Literature Review (15%)**
4-6 page paper (double-spaced) discussing all relevant literature
DUE: **Sunday, March 17**

- 5) Memo on Research Design (5%)**
1-page paper summarizing research question, main variables, existing literature on those variables, and the best way to test your variables
DUE: **Tuesday, April 2**

- 6) Methods (15%)**
3-5 page paper (double-spaced) detailing, explaining, and justifying what method(s) and research site(s) or case(s) you will be using
DUE: **Friday, April 12**

- 7) Ethical Issues (5%)**
1 page paper addressing any ethical concerns you might encounter in your research
DUE: **Friday, April 26**

- 8) Final Research Proposal (30%)**
15-20 page research proposal that includes an explanation of the research question, important/relevant background information, literature review and theory, detailed proposed method, justification and explanation of the method, and plan for research
DUE: **Friday, May 17**

Reading List and Semester Schedule

***Please note the rather ‘strange’ due dates of assignments and pay close attention to them! Assignments that are “handed out” means they will be explained in class and available on bCourses. Be sure to read the readings with your own project in mind! Please complete readings before class on the day listed below.

A few readings have questions (in italics under the reading) to provide some guidance as needed.

Week 1-

January 22

Introduction and Overview

Syllabus, Sociology, and Scientific Method

- Brainstorm ideas of research projects/questions for the course
- Mills, C. Wright. 2000. “Chapter One: The Promise,” *The Sociological Imagination*. 4th Anniversary Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-11.
 - o *What makes something sociological?*

January 24

Methodological/Sociological Thinking

- Ragin, Charles C. and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. “Chapter 1: What Is (And Is Not) Social Research?” Pp 5-32 in *Constructing Social Research*. Second Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Pine Forge Press.
 - o *What is and is not social research?*

Week 2-

January 29

Choosing a Topic

Examples of Sociological Research

- Handout on Durkheim Methodology
- Goffman, Erving. 1961. “Preface,” *Asylums*. New York: Routledge, pp. xvii-xix.
- Smith, Sandra Susan. 2007. *Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism among the Black Poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Appendix A-C.

*****Handout Research Topic/Statement of Interest Assignment on bCourses*****

January 31

Finding a Topic

- Read handout on Choosing a Research Topic
- Browse ASR Journal Titles/Articles to help with brainstorming (<https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/asra/83/6> requires CalNet ID login)

**Week 3-
February 5**

Initial/Early Research

Interest and Library Research

- Davis, Murray, "That's Interesting!" *Phil Soc Sci*, (1), 1971
 - o *What makes something interesting? Is your research topic interesting? In what ways?*

*****Research Topic/Statement of Interest DUE Wednesday, February 6*****

February 7

Going from Topic to Research Question

- Booth, Wayne C et al. 2003. "Chapter Three: From Topics to Questions." Pp 40-55 in *The Craft of Research. Second Edition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

*****Handout Research Question Assignment on bCourses*****

**Week 4-
February 12**

Theory

What is Theory?

- Merton, Robert K. 1968. "On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range," *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: The Free Press, pp. 39-72.

*****Research Question DUE Wednesday, February 13*****

February 14

Theory and Research

- Babbie, Earl. 2010. "Chapter 2: Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research," *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont: Wadsworth, pp. 46-61.
 - o *What is the difference between deductive and inductive approaches? How does that change the use of theories in research? What approach are you taking with relevant theories to your research question?*

*****Handout Theoretical Framing Assignment on bCourses*****

**Week 5-
February 19**

Literature Review

Introduction to Literature Reviews

- UNC Literature Reviews Handout
- Visit VCU Research Guides Website:
<https://guides.library.vcu.edu/lit-review> and look through the section labeled "Lit Review 101"

February 21

Example of a Literature Review

- Lin, Edwin, "Big Fish in a Small Pond," *International Migration Review*, 48 (1), 2014: pp. 181-190.
 - o *Only read up to the Methods section—pay particular attention to the "Theoretical Framing" section. Notice the style, use of citations, goals, transitions, and organization.*

*****Handout Literature Review Assignment on bCourses*****

*****Theoretical Framing DUE Friday, February 22*****

**Week 6 to Week 9-
February 26**

Sociological Methods

Sampling and Generalizations

- Luker, Kristin. 2008. "Chapter 6: On Sampling, Operationalization, and Generalization" Pp 99-128 in *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in the Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
 - o *What is sampling and how do you generalize from it?*

February 28

Choosing Your Cases

- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. Excerpt "Intentional Selection of Observations" pp. 139-49 and "Increasing the Number of Observations" pp. 208-217 in *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
 - o *How do you choose what variables to focus on?*

**Week 7
March 5**

Methods Overview- A Primer

- National Research Council. 2012. "Appendix A," *Using Science as Evidence in Public Policy*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

March 7

Survey Research

- Schuman, Howard. 2002. "Sense and Nonsense about Surveys" *Contexts* 1 (2): 40-47.

**Week 8
March 12**

In-Depth Interviews

- Weiss, Robert S. 2004. "In Their Own Words: Making the Most of Qualitative Interviews." *Contexts* 3 (4):44-51.
- Lareau, Annette and Aliya Hamid Rao. 2016. "It's about the depth of your data," *Research Collection School of Social Sciences*. Paper 2555.
 - o *What is the most important and valuable thing about in-depth interviews as a data source?*

March 14

Existing Data and Content Analysis

- Alder, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. 2015. "Chapter 12: Using Available Data," and "Chapter 13: Content Analysis," pp. 309-357 in *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*. Fourth Edition. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

*****Literature Review DUE Sunday, March 17*****

Week 9

March 19

Ethnography and Fieldwork

- Van Maanen, John. 2011. "Fieldwork, Culture, and Ethnography," *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-12.
 - o *What is the relationship between fieldwork, culture, and ethnography?*

*****Handout Memo on Research Design Assignment on bCourses*****

March 21

Workshop on Method

- Handout on Methodology 2016 by University of South Australia.
 - o *Identify all the important issues you must consider in justifying what method you did and how you did it.*

*****Handout Methods Assignment on bCourses*****

Week 10-

*****NO CLASS SPRING BREAK MARCH 25-29*****

Week 11 and 12-

Workshop and Individual Meetings

April 2

Workshop on Memo

*****Memo on Research Design DUE Tuesday, April 2*****

Bring in 2 copies (printed) of Memo to class for workshop!

April 4

Individual Meetings

April 9

Individual Meetings

April 11

Individual Meetings

*****Methods DUE Friday, April 12*****

Week 13-

Ethical Issues

April 16

Foundations of Ethics

- Adler, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. 2011. "Chapter 3: Ethics and Social Research" Pp 39-70 in *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*. Fourth Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

*****Handout Ethical Issues Assignment on bCourses*****

April 18

Speaking for Others

- Lewis-Kraus, Gideon. 2016. "The Trials of Alice Goffman." *The New York Times*. January 12.
 - o *An example of problematic ethics as well as positionality between researcher and subject—what is problematic and how could the researcher solve it?*

**Week 14-
April 23**

Analyzing Data

Quantitative Data Analysis

- Adler, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. 2015. "Chapter 15: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis." Pp. 414-441 in *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*. Fourth Edition. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

April 25

Qualitative Data Analysis

- Adler, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. 2015. "Chapter 15: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis." Pp. 441-463 in *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*. Fourth Edition. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

*****Ethical Issues DUE Friday, April 26*****

**Week 15-
April 30**

Research Writing

On Writing Well

- Zinsser, William. 2006. "Simplicity," and "Clutter," *On Writing Well*. New York: HarperCollins, pp. 6-16.
 - o *Break down your writing style to be simpler and cleaner with the goal of saying what you mean and meaning what you say.*

May 2

Putting It All Together

*****Handout Final Research Proposal on bCourses*****

Final Research Proposal DUE Friday, May 17