

Sociology 5 - EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE Syllabus - Fall 2023

TIME and LOCATION: 8:00-9:30am Tuesday and Thursday, Stanley 105

INSTRUCTOR

Professor Samuel R. Lucas
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Office hours: Mondays 8:00am-10:00am

GSIs

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SUBJECT MATTER

The course covers a variety of research approaches in sociology. The first part of the course emphasizes fundamental concepts in the methods of sociological research. The second part of the course emphasizes hands-on data collection experiences.

TEXTS

Some materials, marked **Google Scholar** or **JStor**, are available online. Some, marked **UC Library Search**, are available electronically from the Library. Some materials are in a coursepack that is for sale at Copy Central, 2411 Telegraph Ave. And the book below can be purchased at the Cal Student Store or online (at, for example, Amazon.com):

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are three types of assignments. Each one is meant to help you experience and grapple with the research process, which is far less direct than many realize. Every researcher occasionally follows leads that lead nowhere, revises written work to reflect new information or clearer thinking, and defends positions that are vulnerable to attack. The assignments are designed to help you learn and use the skills of a researcher in an imperfect (and imperfectly known) world.

Collaborative Methods Opportunities

You may seize all three, only two, only one, or none of these opportunities. For each opportunity you seize you must form a 2-person group. The group can differ across opportunities or be the same, by mutual consent. One opportunity is to conduct a participant observation study of some issue of your own choosing. You will need to hand in your observation notes as well as a short write-up of what you found. A second collaborative opportunity is to write a short one page questionnaire and, using that questionnaire, interview two other people. You will need to hand in

your questionnaire, and the results of your interview. A third collaborative opportunity is to analyze some quantitative results that will be provided to you.

Research Proposals and Portions Thereof

This is a chance for you to be an independent scholar (though, all thought and research is social). You can use the resources available in this class (i.e., the Professor's time, the TAs' time, the ear of your colleagues, the material we cover in class) to develop a strategy for investigating a question of interest. Have you often wondered why some schools focus on sports and some do not? Do you want to know whether your parents really had it harder? Have you been puzzled by the varied reaction of world governments to the COVID pandemic? These and other questions can be the point of departure for a research proposal. If you are not now and have never been curious about anything, then a course in research methods is probably a waste of your time. But, perhaps not. Why are some people very curious, while others seem to go through life taking everything at face value? That's a possible research question.

You will hand in portions of the proposal at five different times in the semester. Each later assignment should reflect the revisions you have made after thinking about the comments on the previous portions of the proposal. A proposal cannot be completed overnight. Please do not try it.

Exams

There will be one mid-term and a final exam. The mid-term will be a multiple choice/true-false format.

In the final exam you will be given two or three research questions, and asked to design a study to answer one or two of those questions. The final exam counts 15 percent toward the final grade.

With the exception of the mid-term and exam, all written assignments must be typed or word-processed. And, incompletes and extensions will not be given.

FORMAT

There are lectures on Tuesday and Thursday, and required discussion sections. Attendance at both lecture and discussion section is required.

GRADING SYSTEM

Each collaborative assignment is worth 0 percent of the grade—the gain is in visceral learning, deeper understanding, and the joy of collaboration. The mid-term and the final exam each count as 20 percent. The proposal counts as 40 percent of the final grade. Discussion section counts as 20 percent of the final grade. Note that I expect that the material we cover early in the semester will aid comprehension of material we cover later in the semester, and also aid your efforts to develop a research proposal. If this assumption is true, one would expect that hard work early in the term will pay off later in the term.

FINAL THOUGHTS by way of INTRODUCTION

On a good day the main aim of academia is to teach and to learn the answers to questions that we find important. As this is what this course is about, this course--a course in research methods--stands at the center of the academy. Thus, your work in this class may allow you to learn specific facts about conducting research, and it may provide you with time to take a first pass at questions you hope to pursue in the future. In short, our work here is not divorced from the substantive questions that interest you. Quite the contrary, our work here gives you access to the very foundation of the (shaky as well as sturdy) claims you've read elsewhere, and begins to construct the foundation on which you can stand (in the years to come) to add to society's stock of knowledge, and thereby transform the very universe from something you inherited into something you own.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

Thursday, August 24

Course Overview

Tuesday, August 29

Reading:

The Sociology Writing Group. 1994. *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*, 4th edition. Pages 3-8 and 11-17 **COURSEPACK**

Thursday, August 31

Reading:

None

Tuesday, September 5 **Empirical Research Question due (P/F)**

Reading:

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Pages xi-162.

Thursday, September 7

Reading:

Remster, Brianna, and Rory Kramer. 2018. "Race, Space, and Surveillance: Understanding the Relationship between Criminal Justice Contact and Institutional Involvement." *Socius* 4: 2378023118761434. **Google Scholar**

BASIC CONCEPTS IN GATHERING DATA

Tuesday, September 12

Reading:

Lucas 2023, "What is a Variable?" **COURSEPACK**

Thursday, September 14

Reading:

The Sociology Writing Group. 1998. *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers*, 4th edition. Pages 96-114 **COURSEPACK**

Tuesday, September 19 **The Social Science Case for Your Study Due (P/F)**

Reading:

Carmines, Edward G. and Richard A. Zeller. *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Pages 9-16.
UC Library Search

Thursday, September 21

Reading:

None

TYPES OF DATA GATHERING ACTIVITIES

Tuesday, September 26

Reading:

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Pages 211-261

Thursday, September 28

Reading:

None

Tuesday, October 3 **Collaborative Participant Observation Assignment due**

Reading:

Campbell, Donald T., and Julian C. Stanley. 1963. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Pages 1-22 and 34-42. **COURSEPACK**

Thursday, October 5

Reading:

Steele, Claude M., and Joshua Aronson. 1995. "Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69: 797-811. **COURSEPACK**

Tuesday, October 10

Reading:

Converse, Jean M., and Stanley Presser. 1986. *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*. Pages 9-47. **UC Library Search**

Thursday, October 12

Reading:

Kalton, Graham. 2021. *Introduction to Survey Sampling*, second edition. Pages 1-22. **UC Library Search**

Tuesday, October 17 **Collaborative Questionnaire/Interview Assignment due**

Reading:

None

Thursday, October 19

Reading:

None

Tuesday, October 24

Reading:

Lucas 2023, "Conduct, Advantages and Disadvantages of Quantitative Analysis"
COURSEPACK

Thursday, October 26

Reading:

Mize, Trenton D. 2016. "Sexual Orientation in the Labor Market." *American Sociological Review* 81: 1132-1160. **JSTOR**

Tuesday, October 31 **Collaborative Quantitative Analysis Assignment due**

Reading:

Taylor, Steven J. 1987. "Observing Abuse: Professional Ethics and Personal Morality in Field Research." *Qualitative Sociology* 10: 288-302. **Google Scholar**

Thursday, November 2

Working session on student methods sections

Tuesday, November 7 **Research Methods Section due**

Thursday, November 9 **In-Class Mid-Term**

Tuesday, November 14

Poster Presentations of Proposals

Thursday, November 16

Poster Presentations of Proposals

Tuesday, November 21

Final words on preparing the proposal

Tuesday, November 28 **PROPOSALS DUE**

Thursday, November 30

Wrap-up, Working session on final exam

Final Exam date Wednesday, December 13, at 3:00-6:00pm, at a place to be announced