

SOC 300: Introduction to Sociological Research Methods

Syllabus, Fall 2024

Meetings 3:00 – 4:15 on Mondays and Wednesdays
289 Behavioral Sciences Building

Instructor **Mahesh Somashekhar**
Email: msoma@uic.edu
Phone: 312-996-3005
Office: 4170 Behavioral Sciences Building
Drop-In Office Hours: 1:15 – 2:30 on Mondays (In-Person & Virtual), and by appt

Teaching Assistants **Sally Schmisek**
Sections: AD1, AD4
OH: Wednesdays & Fridays, 2:00 – 3:00 (BSB 4176D, In-Person & Virtual)
Email: jschmi46@uic.edu

Course Webpage Available on Blackboard

Contact For simple questions, email is the best way to reach me or your TA. We will respond to your messages within 72 hours. For more involved questions or discussions, please use our drop-in office hours.

Course Description and Objectives:

This introductory course in social research methods offers an overview of how sociologists study the social world. It provides basic tools needed to conduct social research while also developing the skills necessary to critically evaluate the research of others. We will begin with a discussion of the fundamental concepts and issues involved in sociological research, and move on to consider a variety of approaches to social research. This course, more concretely, aims to: (1) introduce you to the basic elements of research design; (2) improve your ability to critically evaluate the research of others; (3) enhance your understanding of what it means to be a sociologist; (4) familiarize you with the study of the social world through firsthand experience with data collection and hypothesis testing; and (5) demonstrate the relevance of sociological research methods to your everyday lives.

Prerequisites:

SOC 201; and sophomore standing or above; or SOC 201 and one additional 200-level course in sociology.

Required Equipment:

There is one required textbook for the course:

Schutt, Russell K. 2022. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 10th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

There will be other readings that complement the required textbook. These other readings will be provided to you through the course website.

Assignments and Grading:

Your course grade will be based on the following:

- **Homework (35%)**

Throughout the course, there will be 7 homework assignments worth 5 points each. These homeworks will be in the style of “mini-projects” in which you apply the methods we are learning to a real-world research context. Each homework will be posted on the course website and must be turned in there as well. Late homework assignments will be accepted up to 2 days after the due date, and 20% will be deducted from your assignment grade for each day it is late. Homework that is more than 2 days late will not be accepted. For the final grade, your lowest score will be dropped, and your highest score will be doubled.

- **Two Midterms (12% each) and a Final Exam (20%)**

There will be three in-class exams administered over the course of the semester, two midterms and one final. The midterms will be non-cumulative, but for the final, you will be tested on material covered during the full semester. No make-up exams will be administered except under extreme circumstances and with approval *prior to* the scheduled examination time.

- **Laboratory Sections (10%)**

You will meet in lab sections once each week, a total of 12 times throughout the semester. You will get 1 point for each week that you come to lab and participate in lab activities. To account for circumstances, you are allowed to miss two lab sections without harming your final grade.

- **Thought Questions (5%)**

Each week, you will be given a “thought question” based on the week’s lecture and reading material. Students will be required to prepare a brief response to the thought question in writing. Generally, one or two paragraphs should be sufficient to satisfactorily respond to thought questions. You should submit your response to the thought question by 7:00am on the Friday before your lab section meets. Late responses will not receive credit. Responses will be graded on the following scale: “0” (no response submitted), “0.25” (a minimally sufficient response that adequately addresses lecture and reading material), or “0.5” (a thorough, thoughtful response to the question that synthesizes course material in order to provide an evidence-based assessment of the topic). To account for circumstances, your lowest two grades on thought questions will be dropped.

- **Participation (6%)**

On 8 randomly determined class days, you will receive a pop quiz in which you have to provide a one- or two-sentence answer to a question about class readings. The point of these pop quizzes is to ensure that you keep up with class readings. Responses will be graded on the following scale: “0” (either no pop quiz was submitted or the student gave a nonsensical answer), “0.5” (a response was turned in that makes clear that the student did the reading), or “1” (a thoughtful response that

makes clear the student seriously engaged with the reading). To account for circumstances, the Participation portion of your grade will be based on your 6 highest scores on pop quizzes.

Academic Accommodations:

The University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access campus programs, courses, services, and activities. Students with disabilities must inform the instructor of the need for accommodations. Those who require accommodations for access and participation in this course should be registered with the Disability Resource Center. Please contact the DRC at <https://drc.uic.edu/>.

Things You Should Do to Succeed in This Class:

This course tries to engage you in active rather than passive learning. That means it is not a standard lecture course. You will be expected to participate in activities and discussion in class. The following things will help you to succeed in this kind of course:

1. Read the assigned sections of the text *before* class. This is where you will learn course content.
2. Attend and participate in class and lab section. This is where you will learn how to use course content.
3. Do homework assignments soon after class. Doing assignments soon after you have read the textbook and participated in class activities will help solidify your learning and ensure better retention.
4. Think about how the methods you learn in class connect to the data you see on the internet, in the newspaper, on TV, or in other classes. How were these data collected? What concepts from class relate to those data? How could the data have been gathered and presented in a more effective way?
5. Most importantly, ASK QUESTIONS. If you are confused, others likely are too. You will be doing your classmates a favor, and make it easier to keep up, by asking the question early.

Class Rules:

1. Maintain a good learning environment by:
 - entering quietly and politely if you happen to arrive late
 - turning off the ringers on your cell phones and any other devices
 - avoid loud eating or talking
2. Respect your class partners by:
 - participating honestly and earnestly
 - pulling your weight during group activities
 - listening carefully to other students, the TA, and the instructor.

Religious Accommodations:

Following campus policy, if you wish to observe religious holidays, you must notify me by the tenth day of the semester. If the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester, you must notify me at least five days before you will be absent. Please submit this form by email with the subject heading: "YOUR NAME: Requesting Religious Accommodation."

Pregnancy Accommodations:

Following campus policy, pregnant students have rights under Title IX. To request pregnancy-related accommodations, contact the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@uic.edu or 312-996-8670.

Grievance Procedures:

UIC is committed to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity involving students and employees. Freedom from discrimination is a foundation for all decision making at UIC. Students are encouraged to study the University's "Nondiscrimination Statement". Students are also urged to read the document "Public Formal Grievance Procedures". Information on these policies and procedures is available on the University web pages of the Office of Access and Equity: <http://oae.uic.edu/>

Academic Honesty:

All students are expected to do their own work on all assignments and exams. Students who cheat and/or represent the work of others will receive a zero for the assignment in question and may fail the course or be referred to the college for disciplinary action. Although I will not stop you from relying on the use of large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT to assist you in writing some assignments, I strongly discourage your use of LLMs. LLMs, in essence, do the thinking for you, and their use will do little to help you prepare for exams and lab assignments that are done in person (and that comprise the bulk of your final grade). If you choose to use LLMs to assist you in your writing, you MUST include a brief (2-3 sentences) description explaining how you used the tool, and what prompt you gave it before it generated text for you. The intellectual work of connecting assignments to course material must be done by you, not the LLM. If the LLM is doing that work instead of you, then you are committing plagiarism and will be penalized. Any instance in which I can determine that a program like ChatGPT assisted you in your work, and you do not properly acknowledge your use of the program, will result in an automatic zero for the assignment. Students who do not properly cite their reliance on an LLM may also be referred to the college for disciplinary action.

Schedule of Topics and Required Readings:

*****Dates listed below are subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and/or the class website. Also, any required supplementary readings, such as journal articles, will be announced in class and provided to you on the course website.*****

Dates	Topics	Required Reading	Due Dates and Notes
8/26 (Week 1)	Introduction to the Course and Overview of Sociological Methods	None	<u>Lab #1 This Week</u>
8/28	Writing a Literature Review	Chapter 2	<i>Class Held in Daley IDEA Commons, 1-010</i>
9/2 (Week 2)	NO CLASS	None	<u>Lab #2 This Week</u>

9/4	The Scientific Study of the Social World	Chapter 1	<i>Homework #1 (Literature Review) Due on 9/8 at 11:59pm</i>
9/9 (Week 3)	Measurement I	Chapter 4	<u>Lab #3 This Week</u>
9/11	Measurement II	None	
9/16 (Week 4)	Sampling and Generalizability	Chapter 5	<u>Lab #4 This Week</u>
9/18	Causality and Association	Chapter 6	<i>Homework #2 (Sampling Activity) Due on 9/22 at 11:59pm</i>
9/23 (Week 5)	Review (or Jump Start to Next Section)	None	<u>No Lab This Week</u>
9/25	EXAM 1		
9/30 (Week 6)	Experiments I	Chapter 7	<u>Lab #5 This Week</u>
10/2	Experiments II	Marked (Pager), Ch. 4	
10/7 (Week 7)	Survey Research I	Chapter 8	<u>Lab #6 This Week</u>
10/9	Survey Research II	"Drawing Blood from Stones" (Harris et al.)	<i>Homework #3 (Survey Experiment) Due on 10/13 at 11:59pm</i>
10/14 (Week 8)	NO CLASS	None	<u>Lab #7 This Week</u>
10/16	Statistics in Social Research I	Chapter 9	
10/21 (Week 9)	NO CLASS (OSU)	None	<u>Lab #8 This Week</u>
10/23	Statistics in Social Research II	"Country Music and Suicide" (Stack)	<i>Homework #4 (Quantitative Analysis) Due on 10/27 at 11:59pm</i>
10/28 (Week 10)	Evaluation & Policy Research	Chapter 13	<u>Lab #9 This Week</u>

10/30	Computational Social Science	Chapter 14	<i>Homework #5 (Social Media Data) Due on 11/3 at 11:59pm</i>
11/4 (Week 11)	Qualitative Methods I: Ethnography	Chapter 10	<u>No Lab This Week</u>
11/6	Review (or Jump Start to Next Section)	None	
11/11 (Week 12)	MIDTERM 2		<u>Lab #10 This Week</u>
11/13	Qualitative Methods II: Interviews	"Now Why Do You Want to Know About That?" (Garcia)	<i>Homework #6 (Ethnography) Due on 11/17 at 11:59pm</i>
11/18 (Week 13)	Qualitative Methods III: Data Analysis	Chapter 11	<u>Lab #11 This Week</u>
11/20	Comparative/Historical Research & Content Analysis	Chapter 15	
11/25 (Week 14)	Social Network Analysis	"Uncovering Terrorist Networks" (Krebs)	<u>No Lab This Week</u>
11/27	NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)	None	
12/2 (Week 15)	Research Ethics	Chapter 3	<u>Lab #12 This Week</u>
12/4	Review (and a Sneak Peek at More Advanced Methods)	None	<i>Homework #7 (Archival Work) Due on 12/8 at 11:59pm</i>
12/9	FINAL EXAM, 289 BSB, 8:00 – 10:00AM		