

01:920:311 Sociology 311 - Social Research Methods

(Section 90, Index 10147, Section 91, Index 10148)

Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey — Fall Semester 2024

Course Website: <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>

Class Hours: Asynchronous Remote

Lecturer: Dr. Chris Drue, (chris.drue@rutgers.edu) Pronouns: He, Him

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-4pm, and by Appointment, [Zoom Link](#)

Teaching Assistant: Stella Petkova (smp427@scarletmail.rutgers.edu) Pronouns: She, Her

Virtual Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-3pm, and by Appointment, Zoom Link TBA

Description of Course

This introductory course in social research methods offers an overview of how sociologists study the social world. It provides the 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 social science research and move on to consider a variety of approaches to social research, including qualitative research methods, surveys and experimental research design. Students will learn these methods through firsthand experience with data collection and hypothesis testing. The course assumes no background in research methods or statistics.

Course Format

This is an entirely online course, but it is *not* self-paced. You must keep up with the course content each week and pay attention to posted due dates. Weekly lectures will be presented asynchronously (which means they are pre-recorded and you may watch them at a convenient time). While there are no set meeting times, you are still expected to find time for virtual meetings with the instructors or with classmates for small group work; we all will do our best to understand that we have different schedules and accommodate those differences when possible.

To be successful in this online course you should have access to a computer and reliable internet connection. Please visit the [Rutgers Student Tech Guide](#) page for resources available to all students. If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email Dean of Students deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu for assistance. If you are facing other financial hardships, please visit the Office of Financial Aid at <https://financialaid.rutgers.edu/>.

Course Learning Goals

Core curriculum goal (QQ):

- Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information

Additional Learning Goals



- Define and explain the research process and the elements of research design
 - Create appropriate research questions that can be answered with sociological data
 - Operationalize variables that are valid and reliable and can be used to study abstract sociological concepts
 - Make connections between the requirements for causality and research designs
 - Evaluate the ethics of research projects
- Apply qualitative research methods and interpret qualitative evidence
 - Develop an observational research study design, implement the study in a field setting, and correctly interpret the results
 - Use interviews, focus groups, discourse analysis, comparative historical analysis, and other qualitative methodologies to gather qualitative evidence
 - Present qualitative evidence clearly and concisely
- Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information
 - Explain the difference between sampling methods and understand the basics of inferential statistics
 - Develop a survey instrument that uses appropriate survey questions, conduct the survey, and provide and interpret descriptive statistics
 - Analyze survey data using elementary statistical procedures
 - Present statistical data and conclusions clearly and concisely using tables, charts, and text
- Critically evaluate the research of others

Method of Evaluation

Your learning will be evaluated through four summative projects, each of which will be graded using a rubric that is available to you in advance, and given a numerical score from 0-100%.

- Project 1: Survey Project (25% of grade)
- Project 2: Observation Project (25% of grade)
- Project 3: Interview Project (25% of grade)
- Project 4: General Social Survey Project (10% of grade - No Revisions Allowed)

In addition to the four projects, there are weekly low-stakes assignments and video quizzes which are graded as either *“credit”* or *“no credit”* based on whether the assignment meets the posted specifications.

- Assignments (10% of grade)
- Video Quizzes (5% of grade)

In addition, by earning credit for these assignments and completing challenges, you can earn **Merit Tokens**, which can be used to improve your score on the research projects.

How to earn **Merit Tokens**:

Challenge	Reward
Credit for at least 90% of Video Quizzes (Wk 6)	Earn 1 Token
>85% Class Participation on Midcourse Survey (Wk 8)	Everyone earns 1 Token
>80% Participation on Final SIRS Survey (Wk 15)	Everyone earns 1 Token

How to spend **Merit Tokens**:

Number of Tokens	Reward
1 Token	Revise and Resubmit Any Project
1 Token	Reopen a Project to Submit Late
1 Token	Add 1% extra credit to any project

To spend a Merit Token, choose one of the options above, and leave a comment on the relevant project stating how you wish to use your token. Any unused Merit Tokens at the end of the term will be automatically added as extra credit to the lowest scoring project.

Late Work & Revision Policy

- **Late work will only be accepted if you have arranged with the instructors in advance.** However, we understand the challenges of online learning and are happy to help accommodate your schedule if you request an extension *in advance*.
 - Projects: Projects will not be accepted late unless you have arranged an extension in advance, or unless you spend a Merit Token to reopen a project for submission.
 - Assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have arranged an extension in advance.
 - Video Quizzes: Video quizzes have deadlines and I expect you to complete them on time, but there is no penalty for late submissions as they are auto-graded. You can re-take a video quiz if you don't get a perfect score the first time. (If you retake a video quiz and it doesn't give you credit, please let me know; there are sometimes errors in the system)
- To revise a Project, resubmit your project to Canvas and leave a comment indicating that you are redeeming one Merit Token to do so, and telling me about your changes. Assuming you have an available Merit Token, I will regrade the Project.

Grading Scale

Rutgers University uses a grading scale that ranges from A to F with plusses but no minuses. There is no A+ option, and an F is a failing grade. If you are a sociology major, you must receive a C or better for this class to count towards the major. Your final course percentage will be converted to a letter grade using the following scale (grades will not be rounded up – ie, an 89.9994% is a B+):

A 90-100%	B+ 86-89%	B 80-85%	C+ 76-79%	C 70-75%	D+ 66-69%
D 60-65%	F Less than 60%				

Required Readings

This course has received an Open and Affordable Textbooks Program award from the Rutgers University Libraries. Each week you will read one or two required reading assignments, which are available to you electronically **for free** on the course website. You should plan to spend approximately one-to-two hours reading each week. In addition to various research articles, we use the following free online textbook:



- Blackstone, A. (2012). Principles of Sociological Inquiry – Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. Saylor Foundation. Retrieved from <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/139>

You may use SensusAccess independently to transform your readings into audiobooks (MP3 and DAISY), e-books (EPUB, EPUB3, and Mobi) and digital Braille formats by accessing Rutgers SensusAccess (<https://it.rutgers.edu/it-accessibility-initiative/knowledgebase/sensus-access/>).

Office Hours, Contact Information, Course Announcements

I will hold weekly office hours (see schedule at top of syllabus) and I am also available to meet by appointment. You do not need a reason to visit me; you can stop by just to chat: about the class, about sociology, about Rutgers, or anything else. The office hour link will be located under the “Zoom” tab in Canvas. My email address is chris.drue@rutgers.edu. I will do my best to respond to your email within two business days.

Course announcements will be posted on our Canvas site every week. To receive copies of these through email, make sure that you have your email notification settings turned on for announcements and assignment feedback:

- Click on “Account” in the Global Navigation (the red bar on the left)
- Click on “Notifications”
- Ensure that the preference for Announcement is set to ‘Notify me right away.’
- [Guide for Students](#)

Academic Integrity

I assume your familiarity with the [Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy](#) and with scholarly norms concerning proper attribution and citation. The bottom line for this course is that it is never acceptable to cheat on an assignment or represent others’ work as your own, even a little bit, even by mistake. If you are unsure whether your written assignments conform to this policy, ask me for help before you turn it in. This class will use Turnitin.com to check papers and assignments for plagiarism. If I find evidence of academic dishonesty, I will assign a failing grade on the assignment or exam and initiate disciplinary action.

Artificial Intelligence Tools Policy

While use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT is not recommended, neither is it prohibited. In this class, students may use AI programs to assist in the writing process, however, students are required to conduct research on their own and fact check all sources and claims

presented in their work. Students are solely responsible for the accuracy of work. Submitting work that is false, untrue, or fabricated by artificial intelligence is a violation of academic integrity. If I find evidence of fabricated statements or sources, I will assign a failing grade on the assignment or exam and initiate disciplinary action.

Student-Wellness Services

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/
<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professionals within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community, and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Crisis Intervention:

<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/crisis-intervention/>

Report a Concern: <http://health.rutgers.edu/do-something-to-help/>

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Course Schedule & Outline

Wk	Begin Date	Lecture Topic	Due Dates
1	Tuesday 9/3/24	Orientation The nature of scientific knowledge	Tuesday - Optional Live Orientation* Assignment 1 (Introduction Discussion) Assignment 2 (Class Policy Quiz)
2	Monday 9/9/24	Survey research Survey instrumentation	Assignment 3 (Survey Questions)
3	Monday 9/16/24	Measurement Reliability and Validity	Assignment 4 (Class Survey Discussion)
4	Monday 9/23/24	Survey analysis Statistics in social research	Assignment 5 (Survey Analysis Worksheet)
5	Monday 9/30/24	Writing about research Literature and Citations	Survey Project Due
6	Monday 10/7/24	Field research Observation research	Assignment 6 (Observation Protocol) Merit Challenge: Credit for 90% of Video Quizzes
7	Monday 10/14/24	Interviews & Example Causality & research design	Assignment 7 (Observation Field Notes)
8	Monday 10/21/24	Qualitative analysis	Observation Project Due Merit Challenge: >85% Class Participation on Midcourse Survey
9	Monday 10/28/24	Discourse & content analysis Discourse analysis example	Assignment 8 (Google Trends Discussion)
10	Monday 11/4/24	Focus groups Comparative historical analysis	Assignment 9 (Qualitative Project Protocol)
11	Monday 11/11/24	Comparative historical analysis example Focus group example	Assignment 10 (Qualitative Analysis Worksheet)
12	Monday 11/18/24	Research ethics	Interview Project Due
13	Monday 11/25/24	General Social Survey Research ethics examples	Assignment 11 (GSS Preparation)
14	Monday 12/2/24	Statistics in social research part 2 Social experiments Social experiments examples	Assignment 12 (Discussion)
15	Monday 12/9/24	Conclusions	General Social Survey Project Due 12/11/24 Last Day of Classes: Wednesday 12/11/24 Merit Challenge: >80% Participation on Final SIRS Survey

*Attendance at live orientation is optional – Meeting will be recorded and turned into video assignment for those who are not available

**Readings and specific due dates and times for all assignments are specified in Canvas