

SOCI 315: Research Methods



Dr. Heather Sullivan-Catlin

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Office Hours: Mon 3:30-4:15, Tues/Thur 11:00-12:00 or by appointment

Note: Office hours may sometimes be cancelled due to departmental or other meetings. If so, I will post a note.

Class Location and Time: Monday/Wednesday 2:00-3:15 (Satterlee 300) OR Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:45 (Flagg 103)

Required Texts:

- Emily Stier Adler and Roger Clark, *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*. (2011 – 4th edition, Wadsworth) **NOTE – There is now a newer edition, but we are using this one – the 4th.**
- Rebekah Nathan, *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student*. (2006, Penguin). Reading questions for each chapter will be on Moodle – take notes and bring to class.
- The texts will be supplemented by articles placed on Moodle or handed out in class [Moo]

Course Objectives:

Understanding the social world is a major goal of sociology. Sociologists pursue this understanding through the process of social research. Research is central to the practice and profession of sociology. The goals of this course are to orient you to the practice of sociological research and to provide you with skills necessary both to conduct basic social research and to be critical consumers of reported research. At the end of this course you will be able to:

- Differentiate between and explain the relative strengths and weaknesses of both *qualitative* and *quantitative* approaches to data collection and analysis.
- Design a basic study to answer a social research question.
- Critically interpret reports of research in both academic and popular reporting.
- Identify ethical issues involved in social research and apply ethical principles in research practices.

Beyond the sociological content of this course there are a number of general learning objectives. The readings, activities, and assignments in this course are designed to hone your skills in the following areas: problem solving, critical thinking, communication (oral **and** written), and interpersonal interaction. The skills you develop in this course have numerous practical applications. In fact, research skills are among the most marketable skills sociology majors possess. This course *will* be challenging. If you apply yourself, you will leave this class prepared for a variety of careers and/or graduate school.

Active Learning: I believe strongly in the value of active learning for deepening student understanding of course material. We all have the capacity to be both teachers and learners. To that end, we will often work in small groups and you'll complete a hands-on group project. I envision this class as an active learning community. As such, we all have important roles to play. My role is that of facilitator. I will create the conditions in which you can take an **active role** in your own learning. In this way, we can *all* learn from *and* teach each other. Please be **prepared** and ready to participate.



An important aspect of participation is being fully present. **Generally speaking** cell phones and laptops are a distraction to me and to the other students in the class. If you want to use a tablet or laptop for note-taking or on group projects, go ahead, but please restrict your use to class-related activity. Thanks in advance for observing this.

Requirements:

- Team Research Project: 25% (weekly team reports (20), proposal (30), final report (50): total of 100 points)
- Reading Quizzes: 25% (10 quizzes, 100 points each –averaged into a single 100 point quiz score – the lowest quiz score will be dropped)
- Exams: 50 % (Mid-term = 25%, Final = 25%, 100 points each)

Team Research Projects: The class will be divided into six research teams. Each team will carry out a mini-study which replicates some aspect of Rebekah Nathan’s study which we will be reading about in her book *My Freshman Year*. Each team will conduct a mini study using one of six different research methodologies. Each team will present a proposal for their study when that method is covered in class and then will report results in the last week of class. I will provide some time in class to work on these projects, but you are also required to spend time meeting with your group outside of class each week. More details will be provided in class and on Moodle.

Reading Quizzes: It is **vital** for you to **prepare** for each class in advance by completing the reading. There is a lot of material for you to learn and I want you to familiarize yourself with each topic before we focus on it in class. With the exception of a few weeks (see schedule below) each week will start off with a brief quiz **on the readings for that week** (*not* the previous week’s readings).

Quizzes will be 10 multiple choice and true/false questions and done first individually and then in a group. Each one is worth 100 points. Your individual grade is 50% of your quiz grade and the group grade is the other 50%. The way this works will become clear on the first quiz day. You **must** be present at the beginning of class to take the quiz. There will be **no make-ups** for reading quizzes. Please don’t be late.

These weekly reading quizzes are intended to meet a number of objectives. They will help you keep up-to-date on the readings, help prepare you for exams, and help encourage attendance. The quizzes will also provide you with a collaborative learning opportunity. Finally, they will also help me assess your progress and determine which areas need more emphasis and elaboration.

Exams: Exams will be a combination of multiple choice, true-false, and possibly other types of questions. Test dates are listed in the class schedule below. The final exam **is** cumulative. Make-ups for missed exams will not be given (unless proper documentation of illness or other valid excuses are provided).

Grading System:

4.0 (A): 95-100 3.7 (A-): 90-94 3.3 (B+): 87-89 3.0 (B): 83-86 2.7 (B-): 80-82 2.3 (C+): 77-79
2.0 (C): 70-76 1.7 (C-): 67-69 1.3 (D+): 64-66 1.0 (D): 60- 63 0.0 (F): 59 or lower

Course Schedule* *Course Schedule is tentative, subject to change	Topics and Readings	Quizzes (Day One unless otherwise noted) Team Reports (Day Two) & Other Assignments
Week 1 1/25 →	Introduction to Social Research Methods For day two please read: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Adler & Clark Appendixes A-D (“Comparing Methods,” “Multiple Methods,” “Writing the Research Report,” “Checklist for Preparing a Research Proposal”) **Bring Adler & Clark text on 2nd day**	<i>Scientists have only studied the world in various ways, the point is to change it.</i> - Karl Marx

Week 2 2/1 →	Theory and Research Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 1 “The Uses of Social Research” ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 2 “Theory and Research” ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 4 “Selecting Researchable Topics...” ▪ Nathan: Preface ▪ O’Sullivan et al “I Did Not Miss Any, Only When I Had a Valid Reason”: Accounting for Absences from Sociology Classes.” [Moo – print this and bring it to class – we will refer to this article in multiple classes and you will need a copy in front of you] 	Q1 – on this week’s readings TR1
Week 3 2/8 →	Research Design and Sampling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 5 “Sampling” ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 7 “Cross-Sectional, Longitudinal and Case...” ▪ Nathan: Ch. 1 “Welcome to “AnyU”” ▪ “I’ve Never Been Called. How Can a Poll Represent Me?” [Moo] ▪ NSSE Instrument, Student FAQs, and “About NSSE” [Moo] <p style="text-align: center; border: 1px dashed black; background-color: #90EE90; padding: 5px;"> Day One - Research Training Session - Crumb Library —Meet in lobby </p>	Q2 – on day two this week due to workshop TR2
Week 4 2/15→	Ethical Considerations in Social Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 3 “Ethics and Social Research” ▪ Nathan: “Afterword: Ethics and Ethnography” ▪ Bales - “A Note on Research Methods” from <i>Disposable People</i> [Moo] ▪ Gonzalez-Lopez – “The Maquiladora Syndrome” [Moo] 	Q3 TR3
Week 5 2/22 →	Experiments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 8 “Experimental Research” ▪ Lovaglia - "From Summer Camps to Glass Ceilings: The Power of Experiments" [Moo] ▪ Nathan Ch. 2 “Life in the Dorms” 	Q4 TR4
Week 6 2/29 →	Measurement, Survey Research and Existing Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 6 “Measurement” ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 9 “Questionnaires and Structured Interviews” ▪ Carlson - “Census-Taker’s Tale” [Moo] ▪ Bates & Demaio - “Measuring Same-Sex Relationships” [Moo] ▪ Schuman - “Sense and Nonsense about Surveys” [Moo] 	Q5 TR5
No class – Spring Break - week of 3/7		
Week 7 3/14 →	Measurement and Survey Research (cont) <i>Why strive for knowledge of reality if this knowledge cannot serve us in life? -Emile Durkheim</i>	
Week 8 3/21 →	Mid-Term Exam – Day One Bring scantron sheet <i>** We will go over the mid-term on day after exam ~ consider it a final exam review session ☺**</i>	Day Two: Research Team Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey

Week 9 3/28 →	Qualitative Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 11 “Observational Techniques” ▪ Adler & Adler - "The Promise and Pitfalls of Going into the Field" [Moo] ▪ Nathan Ch. 3 “Community and Diversity” 		Q6 TR6 Day Two: Research Team Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Available Data
Week 10 4/4 → Note: 4/8 is last day to W/D or S/U classes.	Qualitative Research (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 10 “Qualitative Interviewing” ▪ Weiss - “In Their Own Words: Making the Most of Qual. Interviews” [Moo] ▪ Nathan Ch. 4 “As Others See Us” 		Q7 TR7 Day Two: Research Team Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field Observation
Week 11 4/11 → (no class on 4/11 & 4/12)	Catch-up Day Proposal presentations		Day Two: Research Team Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative Interview
Week 12 4/18→	Unobtrusive Research Methods – Using Available Data & Content Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 12 “Using Available Data” ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 13 “Content Analysis and Comparing Methods” ▪ Nathan Ch. 5 “Academically Speaking” ▪ Dagaz & Harger, “Race, Gender, and Research...” [Moo] Be sure to see the reading questions for this article posted on Moodle <p style="background-color: #90EE90; margin: 0; padding: 2px;">**For this week please re-read pp.21-27 in the Nathan book and bring to class. **</p>		Q8 TR8 Day Two: Research Team Proposals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content Analysis ▪ Comparative/ Historical
Week 13 4/25→	Quantitative Data Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 15 “Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis” pp.411-432 ▪ Nathan Ch. 6 “The Art of College Management” 		Q9 TR9
Week 14 5/2 →	Qualitative Data Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adler & Clark Ch. 15 “Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis” pp.441-463 ▪ Nathan Ch. 7 “Lessons from My Year as a Freshman” <p style="margin-top: 10px;">Some class time for preparation for presentation of findings</p>		Q10 TR10
Week 15 5/9 →	Research Team Reports		
	Day One: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey ▪ Available Data ▪ Qualitative Interview 	Day Two: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field Observation ▪ Content Analysis ▪ Comparative/Historical 	Research Team Reports
Final Exam	Both Sections - Wednesday, May 18, 10:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Kellas 106 - Bring scantron sheet		

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*Clearly, the social scientist should be accurate and objective but not neutral; he [sic] should be passionately partisan in favor of the welfare of the people and against the interests of the few when they seem to submerge that welfare. In a word, the reason for the existence of the social scientist is that his [sic] scientific findings contribute to the betterment of people's well-being.*

-Oliver Cromwell Cox  
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Additional Course Information and Campus Policies

Attendance and participation are a must and will be reflected in your grade for the course. To encourage attendance I have the following policy. When it comes time to calculate the final grades, if you have not missed **more than one class** (for *any* reason), you will earn an **attendance bonus** of one point on your final average. This means that if you are within one point of the next higher grade, your grade will be bumped up (e.g. from 3.0 to 3.3).

Missed Quizzes: As noted above, there are no make-ups for missed quizzes. However, if you miss a quiz due to circumstances beyond your control and have appropriate documentation, I will substitute your average on the other quizzes for that zero in calculating your final quiz grade. Note – you must communicate your legitimate, documented excuse to me as soon as possible after missing the quiz.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to be aware of and uphold the academic integrity standards set forth by SUNY Potsdam. You are to hand in only original work. Cheating, in any form, will not be tolerated. Click on this link for handy 2-page sheet on [avoiding plagiarism from UC-Davis](#).

Title IX: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, contact Dr. Susan A. Stebbins, Title IX Coordinator/Affirmative Action Officer, (315) 267-3372 stebbisa@potdam.edu.

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**A Word about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ~ Everyone is welcome!**

You *all* belong here. If you have concerns or ever feel you are not welcome to be who you are, please come to office hours to talk to me about it. We are *all* part of the solution. It's everyone's responsibility to be aware of what's happening and to work to make SUNY Potsdam a place where everyone feels safe and welcome. Check out *The Potsdam Pledge* ([www.potsdam.edu/about](http://www.potsdam.edu/about)) and strive to uphold it. Be the change.

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