Social Research I
Fall Semester 2020
21:920:301:01

Professor Peter Hepburn   Office Hours: Thurs 10 am - 12 pm or
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I use male pronouns.

Course Overview

This entirely online course offers an introduction to social research. We will learn how social scientists observe, document, measure, analyze, interpret, and explain social phenomena. It aims to provide a broad survey of the methods used in such research, particularly in Sociology, and the tools to critically assess research.

The course will begin with a discussion of the connection between theory (the *why* questions) and research (the *how* and the *what* questions), with a focus on the logic, process, and ethics of social research. From there, we will examine common methods used by social scientists to gather data, formulate and test hypotheses, and answer research questions. These include experimental and quasi-experimental methods, surveys, field research, comparative-historical methods, and the use of existing statistics. We will explore the strengths and weaknesses of each method for answering different kinds of questions. Throughout the course we will be discussing actual examples of research. So, while we are thinking about how to conduct research, we will also be thinking through some of the most pressing concerns we face in America today: inequality, housing instability, and the criminal justice system.

The tools developed in this class are vital in all sorts of careers. These skills are integral to jobs in marketing, journalism, finance, law, and many others. They are also required in non-professional settings, for example in decisions regarding medical treatments, where to live, graduate school, or even which car to buy. This course will be useful in helping you to make informed decisions in many facets of your life.

By the end of the semester you should be a knowledgeable practitioner and an informed consumer of social scientific research. That is, you should be able to:

1. discuss the relationship between theory and research;
2. formulate research questions and hypotheses and select an appropriate research method to assess them;
3. know how to carry out a research project that generates data that can be used to test hypotheses and answer research questions;
4. understand and critically evaluate social science research done by others; and
5. understand some of the ethical implications of studying human beings.

Course-Specific Practicalities

- The textbook for this course is Earl Babbie's *The Basics of Social Research* (Cengage Publishing). The current printing is the 7th edition, but the 4th, 5th, or 6th editions are fine alternatives—and likely less expensive. The textbook is on reserve at Dana Library. It can be purchased from the Rutgers University Bookstore or from any number of other sources. All other texts will be available via Canvas.

- This course will take place entirely on Canvas. Canvas is where you will find introductions and/or mini-lectures for each week, all course readings (aside from those in the textbook), and the discussion boards that we will be using to talk about the material. All assignments will be available and *must* be submitted via Canvas. To successfully complete the course, you must have access, either on your personal computer or in a Rutgers computer lab, to these technology tools:
  - Desktop or Laptop computer
  - Updated Internet browser with JavaScript enabled (Google Chrome preferred)
  - Text Editor (Microsoft Word preferred)
  - Audio/Video Player
  - Digital Camera (this can be in your smartphone)

- You must have regular internet access, for several hours a week at minimum. If your situation changes during the semester, and you no longer have regular internet access, please email me as soon as possible so we can discuss options for course success.

- Check your Rutgers email every day to avoid missing important communications about the course. I will send all announcements via Canvas, which should be forwarded to your Rutgers email.

- Office hours will be held, via an [open Zoom channel](), between 10 am and noon EST every Thursday. If you are unable to make that time but would like to meet with me, please email me to arrange an alternate time. Include three time slots when you will be available in the upcoming week. You can use office hours not only to discuss the course but also your career plans, internships, letters of recommendation, networking, and so on.

- You can email me at peter.hepburn@rutgers.edu with any questions, concerns, pictures of cats, updates about your career, etc. Here are some tips for making our email exchanges more efficient:
  - Use your Rutgers email account to send me email. Email from a personal address may be blocked by my spam filter.
  - Include a subject line with your first and last name, course, and an indication of what your email is about. For example: "Firstname Lastname, Soc 301, Question about Week 2 Assignment."
  - I will generally reply to your email within 24 hours on business days. If your email asks a question that is answered in the syllabus, I may reply "see syllabus."

Structure, Requirements, and Grading

This is a fully online, asynchronous course. The course is structured in terms of modules: one module for each of the 15 weeks of the semester. In order to pass this course, you must keep up with the reading and the various tasks for the given module. This course requires a lot of reading and thinking. Much of the material will have to be re-read and thought through in order to be comprehended. Participation is essential.

In each module—aside from the first—you will find four things:

1. *An introduction*. Some modules will have text-based introductions, some will have brief lectures, and some will have both. Start each module at the introduction.
2. *A reading list*. This list includes the sections from Babbie's *The Basics of Social Research* that we will read for the module as well as any additional resources. Additional resources include newspaper and magazine articles, academic journal articles, and videos.
3. *Discussion boards*. Each module will contain two discussion boards. The first (which is graded) includes a module-specific prompt: a question or task that I want you to respond to, and then to respond to one another. The second (which is not graded) is an open space where you should discuss any thoughts or questions about the module's material, social research methods generally, relevant events in the news, or whatever you like.
4. *An assignment*. Each week will include a short assignment, either a project or a quiz.

All graded elements of a given module (reading, discussion board, and assignment) are due at **11:59 pm Wednesday night**. Modules are clearly labeled with the due date. Each module will be available at least two weeks before the due date. You can complete your work early, although you will have to wait until enough other students have posted to the discussion board to make your required comments. If you complete a reading, discussion board post, or assignment after the deadline listed for that module, you will receive a late penalty. **Everything must be completed by 11:59 p.m. on December 16, 2020**. After this time, you will not be able to access these items and you will receive a grade of zero on any remaining items.

There are five criteria on which you will be graded in this course:

Reading Engagement	15%
Discussion Board Posts	20%
Quizzes	15%
Projects	40%
Comments on Others' Projects	10%

Reading Engagement: With the exception of the textbook, all readings and resources for this course are made available on Canvas through a platform called Perusall. This software allows for collaborative annotation of texts. As you read, I would like you to highlight key passages (and explain why they are key), point out connections between readings, stress contradictions, ask questions, and answer questions raised by others. In short, engage with the readings and with one another. You will be assessed on your participation. Afd—

Quizzes: You will be tested five times throughout the semester on the assigned resources. Quizzes are short and untimed. You should complete the quiz in a single session so that you do not lose your answers. You may use the assigned resources during quiz, but you may not consult with fellow students or anyone else.

Discussion Board Posts: You must take part in each module's assigned discussion board. To get full credit for participation, you must (1) post a reply to the prompt, (2) respond to at least two of your classmates, and (3) do so in a coherent, precise, and respectful fashion. A rubric is applied to each discussion board.

Projects: There are nine short, inter-connected projects over the course of the semester. You start by identifying a topic of interest, develop a research question and hypotheses, and then think through how you might address the question using various methods. *These projects build upon one another: staying up to date is critical*. Some of these projects will take more time than others, but each should result in a one-page (single-spaced) document. Rubrics will be made available for all projects. I will drop the lowest project score when determining your final grade.

Project Comments: Giving constructive feedback is an acquired skill. To work on developing this skill, I will ask you to respond twice—in approximately half a page, single-spaced—to projects submitted by your fellow classmates. A rubric will be made available. Project comments are due one week after they are assigned.

Final grades are defined as follows.

Grade	Points		Grade	Points
A+	97-100		C+	77-79
A	93-96		C	73-76
A-	90-92		C-	70-72
B+	87-89		D+	67-69
B	83-86		D	63-66
B-	80-82		D-	60-62

- Any assignment with plagiarized material will earn no credit. If I conclude that two students' submitted work contains overly similar material, I will give each student no credit for this work. More information about plagiarism is available on p. 7 of this syllabus.

- Incomplete Grade requests are granted in extreme, documented circumstances only, and only to students who would pass the course if they were to satisfactorily complete all outstanding course requirements. All incomplete materials must be submitted within 30 days of the end of the semester.

- Extra credit work refers to optional work that may be assigned by the instructor to all students in addition to the required work for the course that all students must complete. It might happen, but you should not plan your final grade around it.

Course Schedule

Module	Topics	Due Dates
1	Course Introduction	Wed., 9/2 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 1**
2	Introduction to Social Research	Wed., 9/9 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 2** • **Project 1**: Choose a Topic
3	Inductive and Deductive Research	Wed., 9/16 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 3** • **Quiz 1**
4	Research Design	Wed., 9/23 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 4** • **Project 2**: Reading the literature
5	Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement	Wed., 9/30 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 5** • **Quiz 2**
6	Indexes, Scales, and Typologies	Wed., 10/7 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 6** • **Project 3**: Identifying a research question
7	Sampling	Wed., 10/14 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 7** • **Quiz 3**
8	Surveys	Wed., 10/21 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 8** • **Quiz 4**
9	Analyzing Quantitative Data	Wed., 10/28 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 9** • **Project 4**: Design a survey study
10	Experiments	Wed., 11/4 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 10** • **Project 5**: Design an experimental study
11	Qualitative Field Research	Wed., 11/11 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 11** • **Quiz 5**

12	Analyzing Qualitative Data	Wed., 11/18 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 12** • **Project 6**: Design a qualitative study
13	Unobtrusive Research	Wed., 11/25 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 13** • **Project 7**: Design an unobtrusive research study
14	Mixed Methods	Wed., 12/2 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 14** • **Project 8**: Design a mixed methods study
15	Research Ethics	Wed., 12/9 11:59 pm • **Discussion Board 15** • **Project 9**: Ethical issues in your proposals

Student Resources

- **Tech support.** For Canvas support, click on the "Help" button on the far-left side of Canvas window, or visit the Rutgers Canvas help desk. Please use these resources before contacting me. If your issue is due to your computer or a Canvas error, I cannot help you.

- **Online Etiquette and Anti-Harassment Policy.** The University strictly prohibits the use of University online resources or facilities, including Canvas, for the purpose of harassment of any individual or for the posting of any material that is scandalous, libelous, offensive or otherwise against the University's policies. Any member of the Rutgers online community who has experienced incidents of harassment is encouraged to report the complaint. This University considers violations of this online etiquette policy to be a serious offense. Anyone found to have used the University's online services in violation of this policy is subject to punishment, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. Serious offenses may lead to criminal and/or civil liability.

- **Academic Integrity**. As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here.

- **Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Using the ideas or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge (which do not require documentation) and restatements of the ideas of others. Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. More information about plagiarism is provided here. The Library has guides designed to help students with problems of documentation.

- **Students with Disabilities.** The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and follow up with a discussion. This should be completed as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS: (973) 353-5375 or ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

- **Temporary Hardship**. The Division of Student Affairs can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition of injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request for assistance at: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.

- **Pregnancy.** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students who are pregnant with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

- **Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the office at: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University's Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct.

- **Interpersonal Violence:** The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a **confidential resource** and does **not** have a reporting obligation to report information to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office at: (973) 353-1918 or run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential, text-based line students can text for support: (973) 339-0734.

- **Crisis and Concerns:** The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact academic performance. Students may contact the CARE Team at: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or careteam@rutgers.edu.

- **Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-Being:** The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. To schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out *TAO at Rutgers-Newark* for an easy, web-based approach to self-care: https://tinyurl.com/RUN-TAO.

- **Emergencies:** Call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) at (973) 353-5111.

- **Learning Resources.** Rutgers-Newark makes several resources available to help you in learning and writing. You should use these resources!

    o Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services)
       Room 140, Bradley Hall, (973) 353-5608

    o Writing Center (tutoring and writing space)
       Room 126, Conklin Hall, (973) 353-5847, nwc@rutgers.edu