

## Introduction to Sociological Research (SOCI 100)

Mon/Wed 4:00-4:50, DRLB A4

### Instructor

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Office hours: Mon. 1:30-3:00 or by appointment

### Teaching assistants

TBA

As a science, sociology uses various tools to establish knowledge about the social world, as one step in the process of producing explanatory (and ideally, predictive) theory. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to different sociological methods, including survey research and associated quantitative/statistical analysis, interviewing, ethnography, historical-comparative and archival research, experimentation, and computer simulation. We will review basic mechanics for applying these methods, and discuss the assumptions behind each and the kind of insight each yields. The class is required of sociology majors, and satisfies the College quantitative data analysis requirement.

### On the course blackboard site:

- Readings
- Writing resources
- Announcements
- Assignments
- Sociology links
- Exam preparation

### Required books (available at the Penn bookstore):

Fischer, Claude, et al. *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth* (Princeton University Press, 1996)

Royce A. Singleton and Bruce C. Straits. *Approaches to Social Research*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford University Press, 2005)—*note the edition*

Additional readings are available on the class web site, mainly as links to online articles.

### Requirements

**Paper 1: Measurement.** Propose and justify possible indicators of some latent variable on Penn's campus, such as isolation and social consciousness. Then put these variables into a causal model (diagram), and relate them to long-term outcomes. (Detailed instructions online.) Maximum of 8 points.

**Paper 2: Quantitative analysis.** Analysis of GSS (General Social Survey) data using SDA online archive. (Detailed instructions online.) Maximum of 14 points.

**Paper 3: Ethnography.** Analyze some public setting for the implicit rules people use to navigate through it. Suggestions: street corners, train station. You will have the option to conduct this as a group project. (Detailed instructions online.) Maximum of 14 points.

**Midterm** (maximum of 22 points). This will be an in-class exam, with format ranging from short definitions to medium-length essays.

**Final exam** (maximum of 32 points). This will be a **cumulative** exam, of the same format as the midterm though longer.

**Recitation attendance, participation, and reading reactions** (max of 10 points). There will be eleven recitations:

September 10-11, 17-18, 24-25  
October 1-2, 8-9, 15-16, 22-23  
November 5-6, 12-13, 19-20  
December 3-4

The functions of recitation are to provide clarification of material presented in lectures, to provide a venue for discussion, and to hold you accountable for doing the reading in a timely manner.

The mechanism for the last of these is a reading response due by on the Wednesday before recitation, at a time to be announced, emailed to your teaching assistant. This will be a one-page, double-spaced answer to a question to be emailed out the previous Friday or Saturday. You are responsible for submitting a reading response even if you need to miss recitation, and even if recitation is canceled. Reading responses will not be accepted late. Each will be graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. The most important requirements are that your responses address the question asked, *and provide evidence that you did the associated reading*. There are eight reactions assigned (see the Schedule); your lowest two reaction grades will be dropped in the calculation of the recitation grade. (In practice that means that you could skip two but you should resist doing so until the very end of the semester.)

Reading responses will not only hold you accountable for doing the reading; they will also prepare you to talk about those readings during recitation, and will alert the TAs to issues particularly in need of, or worthy of, discussion.

### **Other issues:**

**Lecture attendance:** While attendance will not be taken in lecture, you should attend class since the exams will cover material presented in the lectures but not in the text (and conversely), and you should participate (time permitting) because (a) that gives you a chance to test out your understanding of the concepts and (b) it's more fun to talk than to be lectured to. If, during the course of a lecture, anything is unclear, ask a question! If something doesn't make sense to you, it probably doesn't make sense to other people either.

**Due dates:** *All written assignments are due on the dates given below, in paper form, except for reading reactions which are to be emailed. Reading responses will not be accepted late. Papers 1-3 will be docked 1/2 point per day late, inclusive of weekends, to a maximum of a 5 point deduction. (Though I require a hard copy, if you submit a paper late you should email me a copy so that I know when to stop applying the penalty.)* The College Office must confirm illnesses, emergencies, etc., allegedly responsible for missed examinations or work not submitted by the final examination. Lacking such confirmation (which the College Office must communicate to me directly), you will receive zero credit on missed examinations and incomplete work.

**Extra credit:** None.

**Religious holidays:** The class will operate in compliance with the University's Policy on Secular and Religious Holidays, available online at <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/holidays.html>.

**Reading:** To do well in the course, you also need to keep up with the reading. Be warned I will *not* summarize all readings during lectures, and I promise that every exam will include questions about aspects of the readings not covered in class.

**Writing:** Your written assignments will be graded not only for content but for logic, clarity, and mechanics. Remember to proofread your work carefully. When assignments are returned, take note of any corrections or recommendations, and incorporate these into later writings. Some tips:

1. All papers should have introductory and concluding paragraphs.
2. Write plainly; avoid flowery language.
3. Avoid moral evaluations.
4. Avoid claims that you cannot substantiate. (Ex: “For hundreds of years, women have struggled to balance family and career.”) Only state something as a fact if you have supporting evidence, or you can cite someone reputable who does, or it is something truly self-evident (e.g., “a misstep while crossing the street can result in injury”).
5. Avoid vacuous statements. An example: “Detailed observations and interpretation of these observations garnered during field research is essential in determining the significance of our data.” Conserve toner.
6. Use the thesaurus sparingly. So-called synonyms are rarely truly synonymous, and you should never use a thesaurus in an attempt to create the impression that your vocabulary is larger than it actually is.
7. Quote written sources sparingly.
8. Use in-text citations of the format (Gibson 2004, p. 12) or (Gibson 2004:12), and then provide full bibliographic information at the end of the paper. (The format of the bibliography is up to you – the important thing is that you give me enough information that I can locate your sources if I’m so inclined.)

Neither the instructor nor the TAs will read drafts of papers, but will provide feedback of virtually any other sort.

**Academic honesty:** Any work submitted must be your own, and all sources must be carefully documented. (See the Penn Code of Academic Integrity, online.) Cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported, with severe consequences for anyone found guilty.

### Grading

The final grades will be calculated as follows, based on your cumulative percentage for the semester:

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

Note that *all final grades are final*, unless a calculation error was made. Under no other circumstances will a course grade be changed.

## Class Schedule

**Note:** S&S chapters and pages are from the 5<sup>th</sup> edition, with 4<sup>th</sup> edition equivalents indicated in brackets.

Date	Lecture topics	Reading	Exam/due
Sept. 9	Intro Theory & research	S&S chs. 1-2, 4 [4 <sup>th</sup> : chs. 1-3]	
Sept. 14 Sept. 16	Variables and units, measurement	S&S pp. 434-39 [4 <sup>th</sup> : pp. 384-89] USNWR ranking methodology* <i>Inequality by Design</i> Preface, Appendix, chs. 1-2	Reading response
Sept. 21 Sept. 23		Causation	<i>Inequality by Design</i> , ch. 3-4
Sept. 28	“After the Bell Curve”* “Twin Studies”* “Sociology and the Gene”*		Paper #1 due
Sept. 30			
Oct. 5 Oct. 7	Surveys: sampling and design	S&S chs. 6, 9-10 [4 <sup>th</sup> : chs. 5, 8-9] <i>Listen</i> : “What’s in a Number”*	Reading response
Oct. 12 Oct. 14		Statistics primer	S&S chs. 15-16 [4 <sup>th</sup> : chs. 14-15] <i>Listen</i> : “Tough Report on Daycare”*
Oct. 19	Fall break—no class		S&S pp. 420-26 [4 <sup>th</sup> : pp. 371-76]
Oct. 21	General Social Survey (GSS), content analysis	Griswold, “American Character and the American Novel”* “The True Clash of Civilizations”*	Reading response
Oct. 26	Exam review		
Oct. 28		<i>No recitation this week</i>	Midterm
Nov. 2 Nov. 4	Experimentation: laboratory, field, natural	S&S chs. 7-8 [4 <sup>th</sup> : chs. 6-7] “Misconduct”*	Paper #2 due
Nov. 9 Nov. 11		Interviewing	“In Their Own Words”* “Unmarried with Children”* “Talk of Love”*
Nov. 16 Nov. 18	Ethnography		S&S ch. 11 [4 <sup>th</sup> : ch. 10] “On the Run”* “Doing Time in Space”*
Nov. 23		Conversation analysis	TBA
Nov. 25	No class	<i>No recitation this week</i>	
Nov. 30 Dec. 2	Historical research: comparative and archival	S&S ch. 12 [4 <sup>th</sup> : ch. 11] “Archival reflections”*	Reading response
Dec. 7 Dec. 9		Simulations Conclusion	“Seeing Around Corners”* S&S ch. 3 [4 <sup>th</sup> : ch. 16] <i>No recitation this week</i>
Dec. 15, 12-2 p.m.			Final exam

\* Online under Course Documents/Readings