Research Methods
Spring 2014, Section 762:395:06, Hybrid Course
Lab: Records Hall Room 156, Mondays 6:10 PM - 7:30 PM

Instructor: Lee Polonsky
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Civic Square Building, Room 371
Office Hours: Monday, 3PM - 5PM and by appointment
Overview and Objectives

This hybrid course will engage a variety of methods for and approaches to social science research. Throughout the semester, we will explore each topic through the theme of policing and public safety. As we return to this topic each week, we'll uncover new layers in our understanding of a complex social problem and learn first-hand how different methods and approaches point us to different kinds of knowledge, or help us answer different kinds of questions.

Weekly labs and online lectures will be divided into three units. First, we'll examine the process and functions of research. What motivates our research? What logical strategies do we employ? What counts as “data,” and how well does it measure the concepts we seek to understand? Second, we'll look at the research design process. Where do our research questions come from? What kinds of claims can we make about our findings? Finally, we will cover a range of the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis available to us as social researchers. In homework and lab assignments, you'll apply various methods as you develop a survey, analyze quantitative data, create a focus group protocol, and so on. Finally, you'll put this all together to develop a research proposal on a topic of interest to you.

The hybrid format of this course places substantial responsibility on the student to manage his or her involvement. In this sense, we are a team. The Sakai site is arranged to help you navigate your weekly responsibilities. You can also see the weekly schedule below. Each “week” begins on Wednesday when a new lecture page becomes available. There, you'll find links to weekly lectures (narrated slides), reading and other media materials, and links to the week’s discussion forum and lab assignments (see assignments below). Lab sessions will be held on Monday evenings in Records Hall Room 156.

By the semester’s end, students will be able to:
- Evaluate the quality and political character of data for use in research
- Develop research questions to explore important social problems and identify appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative methods to answer them
- Analyze quantitative data using SPSS and Excel to test your hypotheses about relationships between concepts
- Reflect on the utility and limitations of research methods and approaches

Required Text


Available at the Rutgers bookstore, online (Amazon) and on reserves at Alexander Library.

Additional reading will be available on Sakai.
Grading and Assignments

Weekly Discussion Forum (20%)
Each week, the online lecture will include a question to which you will respond in a Sakai discussion forum. This is essentially your “participation” grade, since we will not be together for a class period. The questions will generally not have “right” or “wrong” answers but require you to reflect on the week’s topics. Discussion forums will be graded 0 for non-submission or 1 - 3. Forum submissions are due on Sakai each Friday evening at 11:59 PM.

Weekly Lab Assignment (20%)
Students will complete a weekly assignment to create material for use in lab. The assignment will vary depending on the week’s topic and will be distributed each Wednesday with the week’s lecture and due on Sakai each Sunday evening at 11:59 PM. Lab attendance and participation is required for credit. Lab assignments will be graded 0 for non-submission/attendance or 1 - 3.

Unit Papers (30%)
Deconstructing a Crime Statistic (10%) - Due February 18
Quantitative Analysis Report (10%) - Due April 8
Qualitative Method Protocol (10%) - Due April 22
Throughout the semester, students will write three 2 - 3 page papers covering three central course topics. Specific guidelines and a rubric will be distributed in advance for each paper.

Final Research Design (30%)
Draft for workshop (5%) - Due April 29
Research design (25%) - Due May 12
For the final project of this course, students will develop a research design based on a topic of their choosing. The design will include a problem statement and research question and incorporate two or more methods covered during the semester. Students will workshop drafts of their research designs in small groups.

Weekly Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Week begins, lecture posted, lab assignment posted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Forum submissions due on Friday at 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Lab assignment due on Sunday at 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Office hours (3 PM - 5 PM) and Lab section (6:10 - 7:30 PM)</td>
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Policies and Expectations

Attendance
Lecture “attendance” is mandatory; in other words, you will definitely want to watch the narrated slides each week after you have completed the week’s reading assignment. You’ll indicate that you’ve “attended” by responding on the discussion forum to a question posed in the lecture. Lab attendance is mandatory and required for credit on weekly lab assignments. I will make exceptions for excused absences on a case-by-case basis. Please contact me by email before lab (!!!) to let me know why you will not be attending.

Respect in the “Classroom”
Believe it or not, research can get very personal. Online and in lab, all voices and perspectives are respected. Disagreement is fine; disrespect is not. If at any point you feel you have been disrespected, please reach out to me so that we can discuss a solution.

Electronics in the “Classroom”
This is a tricky one. For lecture, you’re on your own to avoid email and Instagram, etc. Good luck! In lab, I will be able to see the very large computer in front of you and will let you know that no non-course related material is allowed during our very brief time together. Please turn off your ringers and put away your cell phones. Thanks!

Academic Integrity
Plagiarism and “cheating” in any form will not be tolerated and will result in an “F” or (0) for the assignment. As it is unlikely that we will all read the academic integrity policy (link below) in great detail, I’ll point out that you typically know it when you see/do it. So don’t do it! Academic Integrity Policy: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy

Late Assignments
Late forum and lab assignment submissions will not be accepted and will result in a “0.” Late paper submissions will result in a 10% per day penalty.

Writing Guidelines
All papers must be double spaced, in a 12-point font, with reasonable margins. Proper citation formatting is also required, and the Rutgers Libraries offers several helpful tutorials on this subject (see link below). On the first week of class, we’ll review some aspects of clear and effective writing. I also strongly encourage you to review the short segments of Strunk and White’s The Elements of Style that are posted on Sakai in under “Resources”; it’s helpful and entertaining! Citation and Other Tutorials: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/tutorials
PART I: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Week 1 - January 21 - Introductions!
*Introductions - Expectations all around - Course orientation*

**Materials:** This American Life Episode 414: Right to Remain Silent, Act 2, “Is That a Tape Recorder in your Pocket, or Are You Just Unhappy to See Me?”

“Serious crime has dropped an astonishing 77% in New York City since CompStat began in 1994.”

Week 2 - January 28 - Situating Social Science
*Functions of social science - Research ethics - Theory and epistemology*

**Materials:** Schutt, Chapters 1 & 3

Week 3 - February 4 - Concepts, Measurement & Data
*Concepts and Conceptualization - Measurement Operations - Data - Units of Analysis*

**Materials:** Schutt, Chapters 4 & 13 (413 - 430); Jacobs, “The Kind of Problem A City Is” (segments, available on Sakai).

PART II: RESEARCH DESIGN

Week 4 - February 11 - Introduction to Research Design
*Research topics and problems - Research Questions - Good Research - Proposal Design*

**Materials:** Schutt, Chapter 2

Week 5 - February 18 - Sampling and Causality
*Probability sampling - Non-probability Sampling - Causal Explanation*

**Materials:** Schutt, Chapters 5 & 6

Crime Statistic Paper - Due Wednesday February 18
Week 6 - February 25 - Methodological Strategies of Inquiry
Experiments - Case study - Phenomenology/Ethnomethodology - Ethnography - PAR

**Materials**: Schutt, Chapter 7; Chapter 9 (286 - 287; 311 - 312) Chapter 10 (333 - 345)

**PART III: RESEARCH METHODS - DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

**Quantitative Methods**

**Week 7 - March 4 - Survey Research**
*Functions in Social Science - Survey Questions - Analyzing Surveys*

**Materials**: Schutt, Chapter 8

**Week 8 - March 11 - Quantitative Data Analysis I**
*Statistics Review - Univariate Analysis (Central tendencies and dispersion)*

**Materials**: Schutt, Chapter 14 (445 – 470)

**Week 9 - March 25 - Quantitative Data Analysis II**
*Statistics Review - Bivariate Analysis (Association) - Intervening Variables and Controls - Inference*

**Materials**: Schutt, Chapter 14 (470 – 487)

**Week 10 - April 1 - Quantitative Data Analysis III**

**Materials**: TBD

**Qualitative Methods**

**Week 11 - April 8 - Interviews, Focus Groups & Qualitative Data Analysis**
*Introduction to Qualitative Methods - In-depth Interviews - Group Interviews - Qualitative Data Analysis*

**Materials**: Schutt, Ch 9 (303 - 310); Ch 10 (321 – 333)

**Quantitative Analysis Paper**: Due Wednesday April 8
Week 12 - April 15 - Observation & Participation
Observation, Participatory Research, PAR

**Materials:** Schutt, Ch 9 (287 – 303)

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Week 13 - April 22 - Evaluation and Historical Research
Historical Methods - Demographic Analysis - Secondary Data Sources

**Materials:** Schutt, Ch 11 (358 - 375), Ch 12 (387 – 395)
Qualitative Protocol - Due Wednesday April 22

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Week 14 - April 29 - Research Design and Proposals
Individual research proposal workshops

**Materials:** Proposals for Lab Workshop
Draft Proposals - Due Wednesday April 29

Final Research Proposal - Due Monday May 12