

SOC 321
Research Methods
Fall 2003

General Information:

Classroom:

Time: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday 1:35-2:40

Instructor: Mark Melnik

Office: 525 Holmes Hall

Office Phone: (617) 373-4989

E-mail: melnik.m@neu.edu

Office Hours: M 10-11:30, W 11-12:30,
or by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Corina Medley

Office:

Office Phone: (617) 373-

E-mail: corinamedley@hotmail.com

Office Hours:

Course Description and Objectives:

This course is designed to give students an overview of the methodologies used in sociological research, as well as experience the professional writing and data analysis process undertaken by sociologists in the field. The first part of the course will lay the foundation for understanding the research process for sociologists. In that, we will look at issues in research design, causality, measurement, and sampling in social research. In addition, we will explore the four main methods of observation: surveys, experiments, field research, and various “unobtrusive” methods, as well as consider ethical issues in social research.

The second part of the course will require the students to develop a professional research paper, including a comprehensive literature review, backed with data analysis. In total, this class will look at *how we know what we know* about the social world. In that, this course is extraordinarily important for sociology majors. Sociologists make a number of important comments about the social world, however, these comments are based in scientific processes that you will be introduced to in this class.

Text and Class Materials:

Required: Schutt, *Investigating the Social World*, 3rd edition, 2001.

Course Packet at Gnomon Copies (325 Huntington Ave).

Class Policies

Regular class attendance is expected, but is not mandatory. I firmly believe that required courses in sociology (theory, stats, and methods) require **proactive** learning. Reading the text, being in class, and stopping by office hours are the best ways to succeed in this class.

Makeup exams and homework extensions will also not be granted. All the assignment dates are on the tentative schedule, giving students plenty of time to prepare for the exams and complete the papers. Makeups and extensions may be granted in cases of ***extreme emergency*** (with documentation).

University rules on plagiarism and academic misconduct will be strictly enforced. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty please consult the student handbook.

Student Evaluations:

Your grade will be based on 100 total points.

8 Homework Assignments: 5 points each (40 points total)

Midterm: 30 points

Group Research Paper: 30 points

100 total points

Your grade will be determined on the following scale:

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

Homework Assignments:

You will be asked to complete eight homework assignments. Six of the assignments will be done independently, asking you to apply various concepts learned in class. Two assignments will be a part of your group research paper (pre-writing). Each assignment will make up 5% of your overall grade. Homeworks will make up 40% of your final grade. The specifics of each assignment will be handed out in class. Homework is due at the start of class on the due date. Homework that is one class day late will be penalized one letter grade (10%). Homework that is more than one day late will not be accepted.

In-Class Exam:

The midterm will be 30% of your overall grade. The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, as well as some fill-ins and essay questions. The exam will be discussed in more detail later in the quarter.

Group Research Project:

During the first week of class I will ask students to split up into groups of 3 or 4 in order to work on a group research project together. The group research project will require students to write a professional style sociology paper, including a literature review, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion (grand total-around 10-15 pages). The project will require statistical data analysis. It is assumed that students have taken statistics or are currently taking statistics. There will be lab reviews of statistics and how to use SPSS (a statistical software package).

Students will be supplied the General Social Survey (GSS) data set for 2000. Students will be asked to come up with a research question based in sociological literature that can be explored using the GSS. Students are welcome to use another existing data source with professor approval.

Each group will be required to turn in a literature review during the **blank** week. In addition, each group will need schedule two progress report meetings with Corina or myself in order to help clarify issues and problems during the writing and analysis process.

Everyone in the group will be asked to sign off that each member worked equally in completing the assignment. Throughout your professional life, you will need to be able to work well in groups. In addition, peer-to-peer learning can be very beneficial when conducting research and applying statistics. If you are doing well in the class, you will see how much it helps to try and convey that knowledge to your peers. If you are struggling a bit, one of your fellow classmates may do a better job explaining the material to you than we do.

Tentative Schedule

Week One: 9/10-9/11

- Introduction
- Read Chapter 1 in the text

Week Two: 9/15-9/18

- Read Chapter 2 in the text.
- Groups Due
- **Library Tour**
- **SPSS and GSS Introduction**
- **HW #1 assigned**

Week Three: 9/22-9/25

- Ethics Readings
- How to read a sociology article
- **HW #1 due**
- **HW #2 assigned (group topics)**

Week Four: 9/29-10/2

- Read Chapter 3 in text
- **10/2 Topics due**

Week Five: 10/6-10/9

- Lab Day 10/6-Descriptive statistics and Chi-Square
- Read Chapter 4 in text
- **HW#3 assigned**
- Schedule group progress reports with Corina or Mark

Week Six: 10/13-10/16

- **10/13-University Closed**
- Read Chapter 5

- **HW #3 due**
- Group progress reports

Week Seven: 10/20-10/23

- Read Chapter 6
- Milgrim Film
- **HW# 4 Due (Group Literature Review)**

Week Eight: 10/27-10/30

- 10/27-Lab Day (T-Test and ANOVA)
- 10/28-Review
- **10/30-Midterm**

Week Nine: 11/3-11/6

- 11/3 Lab Day (Regression)
- Read Chapter 7
- **HW #5 assigned**

Week Ten: 11/10-11/13

- **HW #5 Due**
- Read Chapter 8
- HW #6 assigned

Week Eleven: 11/17-11/20

- HW #6 due
- Read Chapter 9

Week Twelve: 11/24-11/27

- Use Monday to Catch up
- Schedule second status report with Mark or Corina
- **11/26 and 11/27-University Closed**

Week Thirteen: 12/1-12/4

- Status reports with Mark or Corina

Week Fourteen: 12/8-12/11

Finals Week: 12/15-12/19

I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule as necessary during the semester.