Sociology 60: The Practice of Social Research

Spring 2025, Professor April Sutton

Wednesday: 5-7:50pm

Office Hrs: By appointment

**Course Description and Goals**

Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson tweeted: “In science, when human behavior enters the equation, things go nonlinear. That’s why Physics is easy and Sociology is hard.” This course will introduce you to the challenges social scientists encounter in their methodological endeavors to better understand human behavior and social phenomena. You will learn about the obstacles that social scientists confront at each phase of the research process, and you will gain a broad understanding of the various methodological tools social scientists use in their attempts to surmount these obstacles. You will learn skills that will enhance your ability to critically assess research, evaluate stories in the media, and uncover your own (and others’) assumptions and ideas about how the social world works. Further, you will develop the foundational skills necessary to design and conduct your own ethical and rigorous social scientific research in the future. Major topics covered in the course include the political and ethical dimensions of research, the relationship between theory and research, survey design, variables and measurement, and the chief methodological approaches of data collection and analysis in social science. The subject matter for this course is generally sociological, but the methods we will explore apply to the social sciences more broadly, public policy, and journalism among other domains.

**Course Communication and TA Office Hours**

It is critical that you check your email and Canvas regularly for class updates.

For questions and issues, please first email your TA and allow 2 *business* days for us to respond to emails. If you still have questions after contacting your TA, please feel free to email me.

Be mindful that your TAs and I have very tight schedules and limited time to meet outside of scheduled office hours. We will consider appointments outside of office hours on a case-by-case basis.

TA Office Hours

Caroline Petronas (cpetronis@ucsd.edu): Wed 3-4; Zoom or SSB 450 (sign up link)

Victor Verde Neri (vverdeneri@ucsd.edu): Tues: 12-2; Zoom or SSB 421

**Required Text**

Babbie, Earl. 2015. *The Basics of Social Research, Seventh Edition.* Boston, MA: Cengage

Learning.

*Book options: The above is the official textbook for this course, but you may also purchase the 6th edition. If you do not wish to keep your book, you might also consider “renting” the book via Amazon or purchasing a PDF, which costs about $20. Feel free to purchase the loose-leaf version if you wish, as well.*

**Grade components**

The requirements for the course and their approximate weights are:

Midterm: 25%

Final: 30%

Homework Assignments (4): 30%

Discussion Section Participation (mandatory attendance): 15%

**Lectures**

1. Lecture attendance is not mandatory but is encouraged because verbal study guides and bonus point opportunities will only be provided during lecture.
2. While there will be no formal study guide, I will offer clues during lectures and will post all lecture slides for your review one week before each exam.

**Assignments**

You will have four major homework assignments which will be posted on Canvas about one week before the due date. All assignments must be submitted via Canvas.

All assignments are open-book and open-note (but—unless the homework says otherwise—you must do the work yourself, not in collaboration with others), and are designed to help reinforce materials we discuss in class. Assignments should be submitted via Canvas by the deadline. The penalty is one letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

Classes and sections are participatory and will incorporate discussion and group work. There is a lot of evidence that students learn more effectively when they are actively engaged, so please come to each to class ready to contribute your thoughts, listen carefully to others, respond to questions, and raise meaningful questions. If you don’t understand something, speak up—chances are that I haven't made myself clear and that others are puzzled, too.

**Midterm and Final**

The exams will be a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. The midterm will be taken in class. It is designed to be completed in 50 minutes, but you will be given 90 minutes.

The final will be taken online and is open book. You can begin the final online at any point during finals week as long as you complete it by Friday at 11:59pm. You will have 3 hours to complete the exam once you begin it.

There will be no make-up exams except in extreme circumstances.

**Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory for sections but not mandatory for lectures. However, it is in your best interest to join in for the live lectures because 1) I will provide hints during lecture on specific topics you will be tested on (which is helpful because I do not provide written study guides); and 2) Some days you will earn bonus points on your assignments or exams for your attendance or participation during lectures.

**Course rules and other things you should know**

• Lectures are based on the assumption that you have read the material assigned for the day prior to class.

* Please note that if you do not read the assigned material before coming to class, you will likely trouble following the lecture. While there will be overlap, lectures will supplement and not duplicate your assigned readings.

• Homework and test keys will not be posted online but will be reviewed during your discussion section.

• Please restrict laptop use in class to notetaking or looking at materials on the class website during live lectures.

• All requests for grading adjustments must be submitted *in writing* within three business days of when the item is returned to you. You must indicate how many points you think you should have received and justify your request. The final course grade is a compilation of graded components throughout the semester. Therefore, if you did not challenge a specific component in a timely manner, ***I will not consider any requests for adjustments to your final grade*.**

**Academic Integrity and Campus Resources**

*Academic Integrity:* UCSD’s policy on academic integrity will be in effect throughout this course for all assignments.As an academic community, none of us can afford to tolerate academic dishonesty of any sort,including plagiarism, falsifying data, or otherwise cheating. I take academic integrity veryseriously. Please talk to me or visit the following UCSD website if you have any questions aboutwhat constitutes academic integrity: http://www.ucsd.edu/currentstudents/

academics/academic-integrity/index.html.

*Accommodations:* UCSD is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs, and I support and adhere to the UCSD accommodation policies on all assignments, exams, and other classroom activities. If you have a documented disability (or think you might have one) and as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class or complete course requirements, **let me know as soon as possible.**

Students who need special accommodation or services should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), University Center 202, email osd@ucsd.edu, tel 858.534.4382.

*Counseling services and test anxiety*: Free and low-cost counseling and mental health services are available on campus. Please take advantage of services if needed. Information is available at https://caps.ucsd.edu/. Additionally, it is important for you to remember that you are more than your grades. This doesn’t mean you should not try to do well, but sometimes “bad” grades happen. I do not judge you as a person or look down on you if you do badly on an exam – it happens to all of us sometimes. Don’t let a suboptimal grade—whatever that means to you— keep you from coming to talk to me if you are serious and willing to put in the time to improve.

**A note on syllabus revisions:**

No matter how carefully I plan, I may need to make syllabus revisions during the quarter. I will post any revisions on Canvas. It is your responsibility to keep up with due dates, syllabus revisions, etc.

