**Sociology 60**

**Practice of Social Research**

**Winter 2025**

**Classroom: FAH 1101**

**Class Hours: MWF 9:00am – 9:50am**

Professor: Vanesa Ribas

Office: 470 Social Sciences Building

Email: vribas@ucsd.edu

Course website: Canvas

Office Hours: M 11:30 – 1:30 pm and by appointment

Teaching Assistants (TAs): Samantha Tesfaye and Jesus Ayala Candia

## Course Overview

This course will introduce students to the major premises and practices of sociological research. It is intended as a primer in which students develop an applied understanding of the sociological imagination. That is, students will become acquainted with both the concepts and tools that guide researchers who study social life. Broadly speaking, social science methodologies can be divided into quantitative and qualitative approaches to the construction, collection, and analysis of data relating to phenomena of sociological interest. These major divisions involve different epistemologies, or accounts of how it is that we know what we know, and present a variety of opportunities and challenges. Neither quantitative nor qualitative approaches to studying social life are better than the other in any abstract sense. Depending on the particular object of study and the specific research questions, one or another methodology may be more appropriate. In this course, we will focus on the basics of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Along the way, I hope you’ll develop a strong critical consciousness of how knowledge is produced, and the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to answering questions of social scientific interest.

**Course Goals**

By the end of this course, you will have acquired the following skills:

* an understanding of the research process from a variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives
* a sense of the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges specific to conducting different kinds of sociological research
* an ability to formulate research questions and adapt a research design suitable to studying sociological phenomena
* a recognition of important ethical considerations in all research endeavors
* experience conducting sociological research using various methods
* an ability to express, both orally and in writing, your own ideas related to class readings and research projects.

## Class Guidelines

1. Attend class and sections, and be ready to start on time.
2. Read all materials for the assigned day and turn in assignments on schedule.
3. Contribute to class and section discussions as requested.
4. Check your email account daily.
   * + 5. Check the course Canvas site frequently.
     + 6. Students are responsible for keeping up with announcements made through Canvas so

check your notification settings.

**Contacts**

You can reach me by email at vribas@ucsd.edu. This is especially convenient if you have a question that your TA cannot answer. If you’d like to talk to me outside of class, I encourage you to stop by during my office hours, or to meet with your section TA. If your schedule does not allow you to come to my office hours, we can try to set up an appointment to talk at another time.

**Office Hours**

I have office hours on Mondays from 11:30 to 1:30 pm. If you can’t make these hours, please let me know and we’ll try to arrange another time. You might come to my office hours if you have a question about a reading you don’t understand, want to review a concept we’ve talked about in class, or would like to discuss how you’re doing in the class. Regardless of your particular question or concern, I encourage you to meet with me.

**Policies and Procedures**

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. Using AI or other kinds of programs to generate text responses or essays is cheating. Let me be clear, I take academic integrity very seriously. Please talk to me or visit the University’s website if you have any questions about what constitutes academic integrity: <http://www.ucsd.edu/current-students/academics/academic-integrity/index.html>

**Required Text – AVAILABLE on Brytewave tab in Canvas**

Daniel F. Chambliss and Russell K. Schutt. (2013). *Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation*. Sixth Edition. Sage Publications, Inc. All other readings will be on Canvas.

**Format**

This course will typically consist of lectures peppered with discussion and small group work. You should be prepared to contribute your thoughts, listen carefully to others, and both respond to questions and raise meaningful questions yourselves on a regular basis. We will sometimes work on exercises in class, both individually and in small groups. One objective of working in small groups is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage with the material actively. Some assignments will also be done in groups, and the details will be discussed in lecture and your section meetings.

**Attendance**

Achieving success in this class requires consistent attendance and participation in both lectures and section meetings. Please don’t schedule any appointments, trips, or other activities that would require you to miss class.

**Evaluation**

Your course grade is based upon several different components, including various written assignments and a research project proposal. Late assignments will receive an automatic -10.

1. ***Assignments***: You will have five assignments to complete. Prompts for these assignments will be given at least one week before the due date. You will get more details and assistance in carrying out each assignment in your section meetings and in class. Please note that completion of these assignments will take time and effort outside of allotted class/section time, and will at times require you to work in pairs or groups.
2. ***Exercises***: There will be around 3 exercises that you will have to complete. These will be graded simply as completed or not completed. Some may be in class, others on Canvas.
3. ***Exams***: The two exams can include any material covered to date.
4. ***Research Project Proposal***: Much of the work you do for this class is geared towards preparing you to write a research project proposal, which lays out your research questions, relevant literature, your research methods and project design, any preliminary findings, and discussion. This paper needs to be 8-10 double-spaced pages, 12-point Times New Roman font. More guidelines will be available later.

***Class and Section Participation***: Your attendance and contributions to class and section activities and discussion are extremely important to doing well in this course. If you are unable to attend a lecture or section, please make sure to ask a classmate for notes. Attendance will be spot-checked in lecture periodically and regularly checked in sections. One unexcused absence allowed for each. Any additional absences count for a -10 each.

**Components of Your Grade**: **Percent of Grade**

# Assignments (5) 25%

Exercises (3) 10%

Exams (2) 30%

Research Project Proposal 25%

Participation/Attendance 10%

**Total 100%**

**Grading Scale**

At the end of the term, you will receive a letter grade, based on the following scale:

A+ = 97-100

A = 93-96

A- = 90-92

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76

C- = 70-72

D = 60-69

F = Below 60

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**(Always check email and Canvas for changes to readings)**

**January 6th** – Introductions and Course Overview

**January 8th** – What Is Sociological Research and Why Do It?

Russell K. Schutt, Hubert M. Blalock, Jr. and Theodore C. Wagenaar. (1984). “Goals and

Means for Research Methods Courses.” *Teaching Sociology* 11(3): 235-258.

C. Wright Mills. (1959). Chapter 1: “The Promise,” in *The Sociological Imagination*.

New York: Oxford University Press.

**January 10th** – Types and Components of Sociological Research

Chambliss and Schutt, Chs. 1 and 2

Joel Best. (2012). Introduction and Ch. 1 in *Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling*

*Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists*.

**January 13th** – Review and continue Types and Components of Sociological Research

**January 15th** – Ethics and the Research Process

Chambliss and Schutt, Ch. 3

American Sociological Association statement on ethics: <http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm>

Assignment #1 Prompt

**January 17th** – In-class documentary - “The Stanford Prison Experiment” (Link in Media)

Exercise #1 Due (on canvas)

**January 20th – No Class (Holiday)**

**January 22nd** – Review

**January 24th** – Sociological Epistemology: Objectivity, Bias, and the Politics of Truth in Social Science Research

Sandra Harding. (1992). “After the Neutrality Ideal: Science, Politics, and ‘Strong

Objectivity.’” *Social Research*. 59(3): 567-587.

<https://www.ajlunited.org/> - browse the contents of this website and be prepared to

discuss in class: What is algorithmic bias?

**January 27th** – Sociological Epistemology: Objectivity, Bias, and the Politics of Truth in Social Science Research, continued

Assignment #1 Due

**January 29th** – Exam 1

**January 31st** – Theory-Building and the Production of Knowledge

Robert K. Merton. (1949). “On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range,” pp. 39-53 in

*Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Simon & Schuster, The Free Press.

Research Project Proposal Workshop: Using Library Resources

**February 3rd** – Conceptualization and Measurement

Chambliss and Schutt, Ch. 4

Hart Blanton and James Jaccard. “Unconscious Racism: A Concept in Pursuit of a

Measure.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. 34: 277-297.

Assignment #2 Prompt

**February 5th** – Every Study Has a “Sample”

Chambliss and Schutt, Ch. 5

<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-polls-missed-trump-we-asked-pollsters-why/?ex_cid=2016-forecast>

Exercise #2 Due

**February 7th** – Conceptualization, Measurement, and Sampling continued

Assignment #3 and #4 Prompts

**February 10th** – Causal Connections

Chambliss and Schutt, Ch. 6

Michelle Jackson and D.R. Cox. (2013). “The Principles of Experimental Design and

Their Application in Sociology.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 39: 27-39.

Assignment #2 Due

**February 12th** – Survey Research Fundamentals

Chambliss and Schutt, Ch. 7

**February 14th** – Survey Research Fundamentals, continued

Assignment #3 Due

**February 17 – No Class (Holiday)**

**February 19th** – Quantitative Data Analysis

Chambliss and Schutt, Ch. 8

Best, Ch. 2 and 3

Exercise #3 Due

**February 21st** – Quantitative Data Analysis, continued

Best, Ch. 5-6

**February 24th** – Exam #2

**February 26th** – Assignment #4 Due and Class Shares

Assignment #5 Prompt

**February 28th** – Qualitative Research Methods, with a Focus on Audits and In-Depth Interviews

Chambliss and Schutt, Chs. 9 and 10

Devah Pager. (2011). Chapter 29: “Marked” in *The Inequality Reader*. Ed. By David Grusky and

Szonja Szelényi. Boulder: Westview Press.

Annette Lareau. Selection from *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley:

University of California Press.

**March 3rd** – Qualitative Research Methods, Continued with a Focus on Ethnography, and In-Depth Interviews

Rinaldo, Rachel and Jeffrey Guhin. (2019). “How and Why Interviews Work: Ethnographic Interviews and Meso-Level Public Culture*.” Sociological Methods and Research.*

Vanesa Ribas. (2016). Selections from *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the*

*Making of the New South*. Oakland: University of California Press.

**March 5th** – Continued

Research Project Proposal Workshop: Literature Review

**March 7th -** Qualitative Research Methods, Continued with a Focus on Comparative Historical Research and Discourse Analysis

Chambliss and Schutt, Ch. 10

Leo R. Chavez. (2013). Selections from *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants,*

*Citizens, and the Nation*. Stanford University Press.

**March 10th** – Research Project Proposal Workshop: Data and Methods

**March 12th** – Assignment #5 Due and Class Shares

**March 14th** – In-class Workshop

**March 19th 8:00-10:59 am: Final Exam (no exam - research project proposals due)**