

**L40 SOC 3030, Fall 2021**  
**Introduction to Research Methods**  
**(or How Sociologists Know Anything)**

**Instructional Team:**

**Instructor:** Rick Moore, PhD

**Pronouns:** he/him/his

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**Office Hours:** Immediately after class or by appointment. In-person or [virtual](#).

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**Class Information:**

**Meeting Time:** M/W 1:00p - 2:20p

**Mode:** In-person

**Location:** Seigle 304

**Course Prerequisites:** No specific prerequisites but some familiarity with sociological analysis is recommended.

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## The Basics

### An Invitation to our Course:

Welcome to an “Introduction to Research Methods” (aka “How Sociologists Know Anything”)! This course will take you on a whirlwind tour of various methods that sociologists (and other social scientists) use to collect and analyze empirical data. Along with the creation and use of social theory, these methods form the basis for sociological claims of knowledge. In other words, whenever sociologists “do” sociology, they’re using these methods to learn about the world around them.

The course covers a lot of ground and only touches on each method briefly; you could, in fact, take an entire semester-long class on each of the topics we discuss. So, our goals are to achieve an overview of these methods, get a little experience with them, become familiar enough to know when to use them, and better understand the work of others who use them too. We’ll talk about research design, ethics, surveys, interviewing, ethnography, archival research, experimental research, computational sociology, plus quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

The skills you’ll learn should be useful to you in many ways. The methods we cover are used in academic research, but are also used in the for-profit, non-profit and government sectors – just think of all of the customer satisfaction surveys you’ve taken. And if you do go on to become a professional sociologist or other social scientist, these practices will form the basis of much of your future work. But regardless of your eventual career path, having familiarity with social science research methods gives you a more sophisticated perspective on data-driven public debates, whether the topic is racialized policing, immigration, COVID-19, or something else entirely. You’ll never react to the claim, “the data says...” in the same way again!

How do we accomplish all of this? Like learning to ride a bicycle, the only way to really learn about research methods is to try them out, so that’s what we’ll do. You’ll have the opportunity to gain experience with a variety of methods through practical assignments and writing a research proposal. You’ll also have lots of opportunities to engage with these methods through in-class activities. This course is based on [active learning](#) principals where more class time is spent doing and discussing, and less time is spent listening to the instructor talk. I structure the class like this because there’s [a lot of evidence](#) that people learn better this way, sometimes even [learning more than they think they do](#).

The course format means that it’s vital that you come to class prepared and that you participate once you’re here. Coming prepared means having carefully read the readings and having done any other small tasks we talk about ahead of time (e.g. answering a short prompt, discussion board post, etc.). Participating means that you’re on task, engaging in any activities or group work, and doing your best to learn the material. There will be multiple avenues to participate in class, so it’s not just about taking during full-class discussions.

We’re excited for the semester, and we think our methodological journey together is going to be fun and productive!

## Learning Goals:

The learning goals are the specific things that we're working towards this semester. Think of them as our destinations on a road trip. The rest of the syllabus is the map of how we get there.

In this course, participants should...

1. Become familiar with major research methods utilized by sociologists, including: interviewing, surveys, ethnography, qualitative analysis, analysis of existing datasets, archival research, experimental research, computational sociology.
2. Gain practical experience working with several of those research methods.
3. Apply the logic of social science reasoning to develop research questions and choose a research design.
4. Develop the ability to critically evaluate both the methods and results of published research in scientific journals and public discourse.
5. Be able to design, implement, and analyze their own research projects, including writing a research proposal.
6. Understand the ethical implications of conducting social science research, as well as how to ensure research is performed ethically.

## Course Requirements:

This part of this syllabus explains what you actually do as a member of our course community.

### 1. Practical Assignments (40%)

Throughout the semester you will have to complete **seven** homework assignments (out of a total of nine possible). However, assignments below with an asterisk (\*) cannot be skipped because they're experiences you need to have had in a course like this. Each homework assignment you complete is worth approximately 6% of your final grade. These assignments are designed so you get some practical experiences with the various research methods we will cover in class; remember gaining experience with a variety of research methods is one of the main learning goals of the course, which is why this is the largest single part of your grade. Assignments are due on the dates below at 9a central time, unless otherwise specified. Further information about the individual assignments will be provided as the semester progresses.

- 1) Writing research questions (Wednesday, 9/8)
- 2) Ethics discussion (Monday, 9/13)
- 3) Literature review (Monday, 9/20)
- 4) Interviewing\* (Monday, 9/27)
- 5) Survey Design\* (Wednesday, 10/13)
- 6) Fieldnotes\* (Monday, 10/25)
- 7) Qualitative analysis (Monday, 11/1)
- 8) Dataset Exercise (Monday, 11/8)
- 9) Experimental Designs (Monday, 11/22)

## 2. Midterm Exam (15%)

On October 4<sup>th</sup> and October 6<sup>th</sup> there will be an in-class two-stage midterm exam covering the first five weeks of course material. The first stage will be completed individually, and the second stage will be completed in small groups. The reason that we're doing a 2-stage exam is because we see exams not just as an assessment of what you know, but as an opportunity to increase your knowledge as well. Further information will be given closer to the exam date.

## 3. Class participation (15%)

As described above, this is an active learning course, so your attendance and participation are vital to our collective learning project. If people don't participate, our class won't work. This means that attendance is mandatory, as long as it's safe for you to do so. We are still in a pandemic, so do not come to our in-person class if you feel sick or you suspect that you have COVID. *Missing class due to health reasons will not adversely affect your class participation grade.* In addition, if you have to miss class because of health reasons, we'll make sure that you still get a full learning experience.

Course participation will be evaluated around midterms and at the end of the course. Participation can take many forms, including being a strong group member during groupwork, contributing to online activities, asking questions, making comments, etc.

When it is safe to be in class, remember that class participation is more than just attendance: You should come to class having read the assigned readings for that day and be prepared to discuss them in detail. Bring copies of the readings to class; we will refer to and discuss specific pages. Most days there will also be ungraded exercises to complete in class. In-class exercises cannot be made up at a later date. If for some reason you cannot come to class, please refer to the procedures in the course attendance policy located under COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols and the General Course Policies section of this syllabus.

## 4. Presentation (10%)

On December 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> we will have a mini-conference where you will present a draft of your research proposal to your peers for feedback. The main purpose of this presentation is to make writing the final proposal easier by giving you input on your ideas from your peers and encouraging you to start working on the proposal sooner rather than later. The presentation has the secondary purpose of practicing presentation skills – something that almost always comes in handy. Further information about the presentation will be given later in the semester.

## 5. Research Proposal (20%)

You will write a research proposal for a hypothetical sociological research project of your choosing. Writing a research proposal allows you to demonstrate all that you've learned throughout the semester and practice designing an actual research project. **Research proposals will be due at 12 noon on Wednesday 12/15 via Canvas.** Further information will be distributed later in the semester. There is no final exam and we will not meet during exam week.

## On Deadlines and Late Work:

As someone once said, “Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.” To help you look around and/or to deal with anything unexpected that comes up, you have one automatic 48-hour extension on an assignment, no questions asked. Just email me (Dr. Moore) that you’re taking your extension. The only exceptions to this are things that happen in class (exams, presentations) and the final research proposal (so we can grade them in time to meet the university deadline for final grades).

Other assignments that are accepted late will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day overdue – for example, A will become A-, B- will become C+ etc. In theory, late assignments can receive grades below failing (< 59%) as there will be a continued reduction of 3.3% credit each day late beyond the time the work would receive an F. In-class assignments and quizzes will not be accepted late and cannot be made up. No work will be accepted after the end of exam week.

All of that said, remember we’re still in a pandemic, so if you find yourself getting behind, come talk to us and we can help you get back on track.

### Course Requirements Summary:

Practical Assignments	40%
Midterm Exam	15%
Class Participation	15%
Presentation	10%
Research Proposal	<u>20%</u>
TOTAL	100%

## Books and Readings:

Some of the readings in the course are of the how-to variety, others offer examples of methods in use so that we have the raw material to discuss the method in class. Reading and engaging with these texts is a vital part of your learning journey in this course.

There are 2 required books, available in the [WashU Campus Store](#) and usual places online. Other required readings will be posted on Canvas.

### *Required Books:*

Carr, Deborah, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, and Mary C. Waters. 2020. *The Art and Science of Social Research*. Second edition. W. W. Norton & Company.

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Picador.

### *Optional Books:*

We will read some chapters from this book, which I'll provide as pdfs, but there's a lot of good stuff in here, if you care to purchase a copy.

Martin, John Levi. 2017. *Thinking Through Methods: A Social Science Primer*. Chicago ; London: University Of Chicago Press.

### **Our Class During a Pandemic**

When I started preparing for this course it looked like things might be back to normal this fall. Now, it's unclear what the semester will bring. But whatever does happen, we'll work through it together. In the event that we have to pivot online, we'll be ok – I've taught a graduate version of this material online and it worked very well. If some of us have to miss classes due to illness or quarantine, we'll be ok – we'll work with those people to make sure they get a great educational experience and remain integrated within our class community. All of this means that we may have to make some changes as the semester goes on. If we do, we ask that you're open to being flexible and we'll together make this work. And hopefully, none of that will be necessary and we'll still have a close-to-normal semester!

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to us and we'll be happy to discuss them with you.

### **COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols:**

We're still in the middle of the pandemic and the most important thing is that we stay safe and treat each other with compassion.

If you have a COVID-19 diagnosis, symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or exposure to a person with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 diagnosis that requires quarantine or isolation, please contact me ASAP. We will work out appropriate accommodations as needed.

Most importantly: Do not come to our in-person class if you feel sick or suspect that you may have COVID.

While on campus, it is imperative that students follow all public health guidelines established to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within our community. The full set of University protocols can be found at <https://covid19.wustl.edu/health-safety/>. This includes:

- **Completing a self-screening using the [WashU COVID-19 Screening app](#) every day before coming to campus or leaving your residence hall room.** If you do not receive a green check and pass the screening, you are not permitted to come to campus or leave your residence hall room. You must contact the COVID Call Center (314-362-5056) or the Habif Health and Wellness Center (314 935-6666) immediately. **Note:** In addition to the symptoms listed in the screening tool, everyone also should pay attention to symptoms that are new or different for you, including things like headache and

congestion, particularly in combination with diarrhea. These can also be signs of COVID-19. **Call the COVID Call Center or Habib to report these symptoms.**

- **Complying with universal masking.** All individuals on campus must wear disposable masks or cloth face coverings while occupying indoor public settings, including: multi-person offices, hallways, stairwells, elevators, meeting rooms, classrooms and restrooms. Masks are encouraged but not required for outdoor activities, particularly at large events or in crowded settings. Students with disabilities for whom masked instructors or classmates create a communication barrier are encouraged to contact Disability Resources ([www.disability.wustl.edu](http://www.disability.wustl.edu)) or talk to their instructor for assistance in determining reasonable adjustments. Adjustments may involve amplification devices, captioning, or clear masks but will not allow for the disregard of mask policies.
- **Maintaining physical distancing as needed.** While distancing requirements have been removed for vaccinated students, those who are not fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged, for their own health, to maintain a distance of 6 ft from others in the classroom. If you are not able to be vaccinated or have conditions that may put you at increased risk of failed immunity and classroom activities would bring you in frequent proximity to other students, contact your instructor to discuss alternatives.
- **Practicing healthy personal hygiene,** including frequent handwashing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds and/or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

COURSE SCHEDULE ON NEXT PAGE

## Course Schedule and Readings:

Note: ASSR = *The Art and Science of Social Research*. We will likely make some adjustments as the semester progresses, especially in the exact readings assigned. All changes will be clearly communicated ahead of time.

Please remember to bring the readings for the day with you to class!

<u>Wk</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Daily Topic (80 min)</u>	<u>Reading:</u>	<u>Due 9a:</u>
1	8/30	Intro / Preview	Intro	None	
	9/1		Basics of Research Design	ASSR: SKIM Ch 4-5; Martin 2017, Ch. 1: Sharpen your tools	
2	9/6		<b>NO CLASS – LABOR DAY</b>	None	
	9/8	Questions	Writing questions	Martin 2017, Ch. 2: How do you formulate a question?	Writing research questions
3	9/13	Ethics	Ethics	ASSR, Chapter 3: Ethical Issues; Warwick, “Tearoom Trade: Means and Ends in Social Research.”	Ethics discussion
	9/15	What others have done?	Lit reviews	ASSR: pp. 56-58	
4	9/20	Why not ask a few people?	Interviewing	ASSR, Chapter 11: In-depth Interviewing	Literature review
	9/22		Interviewing	Chou et al 2015	
5	9/27	Why not ask a whole bunch of people?	Surveys	ASSR, Chapter 7: Survey Research	Interviewing*
	9/29		Surveys	Strawn 2019	
6	10/4	Midterm Week	Midterm: Stage 1	None	
	10/6		Midterm: Stage 2	None	
7	10/11		<b>NO CLASS – FALL BREAK</b>	None	
	10/13	Why not watch and try it yourself?	Ethnography	ASSR, Chapter 10: Ethnography; Goffman: Prologue, Preface, Introduction, Ch 1	Survey design*
8	10/18		Ethnography	Goffman: Ch 2-4	
	10/20		Ethnography	Goffman: Ch 5-6, Appendix	
9	10/25	How do I make sense of all this junk data?	Qual analysis	ASSR, Chapter 17: Analysis of Qualitative Data (online)	Fieldnotes*

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Daily Topic (80 min)</b>	<b>Reading:</b>	<b>Due 9a:</b>
	10/27		Qual analysis	Emerson et al, Chapter 6	
10	11/1	Did someone count it?	Existing datasets	TBA	Qualitative analysis
	11/3		Existing datasets	TBA	
11	11/8	Is it in the library?	Archival	Benzecry et al 2020	Dataset Exercise
	11/10		Archives Visit	TBA	
12	11/15	Why not mess around with them?	Experimental	ASSR, Chapter 8: Experimental Research	
	11/17		Experimental	Pager et al 2009	
13	11/22	Let's get the computer to do it	Big Data	Kozlowski et al 2019	Experimental Designs
	11/24		<b>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING</b>		
14	11/29	Let's tell others!		ASSR, Chapter 14: Communicating Social Science Research Findings	
	12/1			TBA	
15	12/6	Mini-Conference: Works in Progress		None	Presentations (in-class)
	12/8			None	
	12/13	Research Proposal	FINALS WEEK		

\* Assignments marked with an asterisk cannot be one of your skipped assignments

SYLLABUS CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

## Other Useful and Important Information

### Course Hashtag:

When I see news related to topics we're covering in the course I occasionally post it on Twitter using the #WustlMethods hashtag. Feel free to post things there too! My twitter handle is @prairiedogking. More information will be given during the semester.

### Course Policies:

University-wide policies and student resources can be found on our Canvas page and are also part of the syllabus for this course. I encourage you to read through them by following the links below.

University-Wide Policies: <https://wustl.instructure.com/courses/73030/pages/university-wide-policies>

Student Resources: <https://wustl.instructure.com/courses/73030/pages/student-resources>

### Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is at the core of all academic work, and I encourage you to uphold the highest standards in this area. Naturally, all work that is not your own must be cited appropriately. Academic dishonesty *of any sort* will not be tolerated and may result in a failing grade for an assignment, the entire course and/or other actions the instructor and university deem appropriate. Unless I have informed you otherwise in writing, reusing material from previous work you wrote for this class or other classes also constitutes an academic honesty violation. You should work on assignments individually unless instructed otherwise. It's ok to talk to your peers about your assignments, but what you turn in needs to have been written by you. Ignorance of academic honesty expectations (including citation practices) or "unintentional plagiarism" do not excuse violations; it is your responsibility to ensure that your work and conduct comply. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic honesty, please speak with me and I will be happy to help you.

WashU's Academic Integrity Policy: <https://students.wustl.edu/academic-integrity/>

Arts & Sciences Academic Integrity Policy: <https://artsci.wustl.edu/academic-integrity>

A helpful page with resources for citation practices is <http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/cite>

### Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory as long as you are healthy because of the active learning structure of the course. If you are sick or you suspect that you have COVID-19, do not come to our in-person class. If you do become sick (or suspect you may have COVID) please email me within 24 hours of the class you missed and we will work out accommodations.

For other excused absences (e.g. athletic participation), please notify me by email at least 48 hours before the absence in order for it to count as excused. Absences on exam days should be avoided whenever possible as long as you are healthy; if the absence cannot be avoided you must email me at least 2 weeks before the exam date to arrange an alternate time to take the exam. Frequent or extended absences may require additional documentation.

### Course Changes:

Over the quarter there might be changes made to the syllabus, especially concerning the exact readings. If any changes are made, we will go over them in class.

### Grade Changes:

If you feel that I, or an AI, have graded something incorrectly, or not entered the correct grade in the Canvas gradebook, please contact us within one week from the time the assignment was returned (or graded on Canvas) to discuss the possibility of any changes.

### Grade checks:

If you require a grade check form signed for any reason, please inform me via email 48 hours before you would like me to sign it. If I do not receive an email from you ahead of time, I cannot sign any grade check forms.

### Grading Scale:

A	> 93%	A-	90.0 – 92.9%	B+	88.0 – 89.9%
B	83.0 – 87.9%	B-	80.0 – 82.9%	C+	78.0 – 79.9%
C	73.0 – 77.9%	C-	70.0 – 72.9%	D+	68.0 – 69.9%
D	63.0 – 67.9%	D-	60.0 – 62.9	F	< 60%

### Email and Electronic Etiquette:

Communication between us and our classmates is a big part of this course. Therefore, it's important that you regularly check your official WashU email account, as important class messages will be periodically sent to it. Having not checked that account or having technical problems are not excuses for missing something in the course. We will also post things on Canvas and using Canvas announcements, so you are also responsible for being aware of any items posted on our Canvas page. I [recommend turning on email \(or others\) notifications](#) for this class so that you don't miss anything.

I and the AIs do our best to answer emails quickly. However, I cannot guarantee that last minute emails will be answered as soon as you might wish. I generally don't work evenings and I try to limit my working time on weekends (especially Saturday), so please do not expect an answer to your email faster than 48 hours. Most likely I'll answer much sooner but there are no guarantees - please plan accordingly. Also, I will not answer emails related to an assignment after 5p the day before the assignment is due.

Computers are great for taking and organizing notes but can also be distracting from class discussion. If you choose to bring a laptop or tablet to class, please be respectful and do not use it for anything except taking notes relevant to this class (i.e. no browsing the web, email, messaging, working on other assignments, etc.). And of course, resist temptation to mess around with your phone. Remember, active participation is part of your class grade, as described in other parts of the syllabus.

### Exceptions:

Any exceptions to standard course procedures due to exceptional circumstances must be worked out with me over email in addition to any in-person discussions we might have. This helps prevent any misunderstandings.

### Inclusive Space:

This course is an inclusive space that strives to be LGBTQIA+ friendly. Check out these [LGBTQIA+ resources at WashU](#).

### Incompletes:

An incomplete will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

## **Appendix**

### **Acknowledgements:**

This syllabus and this course has been influenced by many, many people over the years. Special thanks to John Levi Martin and his 2010 Sociological Inquiry course and syllabus.

### **Full Citations for Course Readings (for those readings on syllabus as of 8/28/21):**

Benzecry, Claudio E., Andrew Deener, and Armando Lara-Millán. 2020. "Archival Work as Qualitative Sociology." *Qualitative Sociology* 43(3):297–303.

Carr, Deborah, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, and Mary C. Waters. 2020. *The Art and Science of Social Research*. Second edition. W. W. Norton & Company.

- Chou, Rosalind, Kristen Lee, and Simon Ho. 2015. "Love Is (Color)Blind: Asian Americans and White Institutional Space at the Elite University." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1(2):302–16. doi: 10.1177/2332649214553128.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Picador.
- Kozlowski, Austin C., Matt Taddy, and James A. Evans. 2019. "The Geometry of Culture: Analyzing the Meanings of Class through Word Embeddings." *American Sociological Review* 84(5):905–49.
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- Pager, Devah, Bart Bonikowski, and Bruce Western. 2009. "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment (English)." *American Sociological Review* 74(5):777–99.
- Strawn, Kelley D. 2019. "What's Behind the 'Nones-Sense'? Change Over Time in Factors Predicting Likelihood of Religious Nonaffiliation in the United States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 58(3):707–24. doi: 10.1111/jssr.12609.
- Warwick, Donald. 1975. "Tearoom Trade: Means and Ends in Social Research." Pp. 191–212 in *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.