2025FA - RESEARCH METHODS LER 37:575:401:90 & 38:578:501:90

Labor Studies 401/501: Research Methods in Labor Studies

Rutgers University
Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations

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Office hours: Email yana.rodgers@rutgers.edu to set up in-person or Zoom appointment.

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to the methods of research most commonly employed by social scientists. Most of us are exposed to social research every day, from reports of the effects of the pandemic on telework to articles on the impact of having children on the gender wage gap. The main purpose of this course is to make you a more critical consumer of this kind of material in part by showing you how social research is done and also by engaging you in the process of social research itself.

Objectives

This course is designed to:

1. Help students to understand the basics of methodological reasoning – how to formulate research problems and how to understand issues of social causality.
2. Guide students in making ethical decisions in doing research.
3. Give students an understanding of the nuts and bolts issues of research – e.g., research design, sampling, measurement.
4. Allow students to develop their abilities as researchers by conducting a project using three specific methodologies.
5. Make students more critical consumers of the social science knowledge presented to them in their everyday lives.

Required Texts

The required text for this course is:

Sheppard, Valerie. 2021. Research Methods for the Social Sciences. Open access. There are two options for downloading: the print pdf and the digital pdf. They are the same except that the digital pdf has hyperlinks, which I recommend.

This is a text by a sociologist, but social science research methods are pretty much universal across disciplines. This is a good basic text, and even better, it is open access and free. I will supplement with other readings as necessary. Any reading material in this course will be posted on Canvas.

Course Requirements

- This is a combined undergraduate and graduate course. This means the requirements will differ somewhat for graduate students versus undergraduates. The main difference is that graduate students (enrolled in 501) *are required to* complete a research project.

Undergraduate students (enrolled in 401) will not complete a research project and will take the exams instead.

- **Research Project – Graduate students only!** Much of your grade will be accounted for by the research project. This project will be completed in segments throughout the semester, each of which will build on one another. See Canvas for complete description. The research project will account for 30 percent of your grade.

Examinations –Undergraduate students only!: There will be three examinations, all of which will be a combination of short/long answers. Taken together, these will account for 30 percent of your grade.

- **Exercises**: There will be a series of exercises. These will count for 20 percent of your grade.
- **Quizes**: After viewing the lecture presentation every week, you will be responding to a series of questions on the lectures. The number of questions per quiz will be variable, but this component of the course will be worth 30 percent of your grade.
- **Reading Comments/Discussion**: For each reading assignment, you will be required to post a substantive comment on the reading in the discussion section. In total, these comments will be worth 20 percent of your grade.
- **Class participation**: Keep in mind that Canvas gives me information on the time you spend in the course. Though I will not use this to take "attendance," per se, it will matter in borderline cases.
- **Final Grade**: Your grade for the class will be calculated as follows:

Research Project/Exams	30 percent
Exercises	20 percent

Quizzes	30 percent
Reading comments	20 percent
Total	100 percent

Policies

Class day/Assignment Policies:

I have treated this class as if it meets on Tuesday morning at 10:00am every week, though of course I realize that this is an asynchronous class and you will be doing your assignments and listening to and reading the content as your schedules allow. Assignments, quizzes, and comments on readings are all due by 11:59 PM on Monday night the following week. Hence each class week spans from Tuesday morning at 10:00am through and including the following Monday night at 11:59pm.

I expect you to submit your assignments on the specified due dates - this is especially important for project components. Refer to your Canvas classroom for each week's assignment and/or project due dates. My grading policy for late assignments is as follows:

- 1 day late – 1% will be deducted from your total grade
- 3 days late – 10% will be deducted from your total grade
- 5 days late – 20% will be deducted from your total grade

Assignments more than 5 days late will have points deducted at my discretion - talk to me about why the assignment is late and when you plan to get it in. If you know you will be late with your assignments ahead of time, please contact me to discuss alternative dates, - ahead of time, preferably - but asap.

Scholastic Dishonesty/Use of AI:

For the purposes of this course, scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the submission of assignments that are plagiarized or written in collusion with another or the falsification of any records connected with this course or any examination. Plagiarism includes quoting or closely paraphrasing a printed source without giving appropriate credit (i.e. Gould, 1981:123). It is acceptable to talk with classmates about homework assignments, projects and papers. Handing in substantially the same assignment constitutes plagiarism, however.

Our course now takes place in the world of AI and large language models. In this course you are expected to reason and think. You will likely use AI models to summarize articles and readings. I do this myself to get a sense of an author's overall argument, though then I

fill in with my own reading and notes. I cannot penalize you for this. Though this is not my preference, this is an acceptable use of AI.

It is unacceptable - and constitutes academic dishonesty - for you to use the program to write and think for you. Entering an assignment or exam prompt and submitting the output - no matter how paraphrased or edited - is scholastic dishonesty and is punishable by me and by the University. I will give a grade of 0 to any written assignment that appears to have been created through academic dishonesty; further consequences - including a formal charge of dishonesty - may follow at my discretion. I will use Turnitin.com and other tools to check assignments. If you believe I have made an error, we will set up a real-time appointment in which I will pose a related question and you will be allowed to verbally defend your answer and show that you understand the methodological issue at hand.

My deal with you is this. I will always reward reasoning and evidence of thinking questions through. I will penalize answers that may technically be "right" but that lack reasoning or evidence of original thought.

Office hours:

You can also set up an appointment with me for a Zoom meeting or in-person meeting to accommodate your schedule. You can drop in to talk about whatever you want - questions you have about the material, how you're doing in the course, and things that you find particularly striking (or irritating) about the course or the readings. Please do not hesitate to use this time. If you are having trouble, it is better for both of us if I know this early in the semester. Please also understand that I serve as Chair of the Department of Labor Studies & Employment Relations and I try to maintain at least a little work/life balance myself. If I don't get back to you immediately (particularly outside regular business hours), you will hear from me as soon as possible.

Copyright/Intellectual Property:

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university's Academic Integrity PolicyLinks to an external site..

Similarly, these copyright protections extend to original papers you produce for this course. In the event that I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent to do so. Finally, as the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students' right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of online sessions are to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.

Unit One: Framing Research/Basic issues*				
Week	**Date**	**Topic**	**Reading**	**Assignments**
0	9/1 - 9/2	Learning your way around the Canvas course site	None	None
1	9/2 - 9/8	Epistemology and intro to methodology	Sheppard Ch 1	View lecture, take quiz Post comments on reading

2	9/9 - 9/15	Theory and research	Sheppard Ch 2	View lecture, take quiz
				Post comments on reading
3	9/16 - 9/22	Research Ethics	Sheppard Ch 3	View lecture, take quiz
				Post comments on reading
4	9/23 - 9/29	Topics in social research	Sheppard Ch 4 and Ch 5	View lecture, take quiz
				Post comments on reading
				GRAD STUDENTS: Submit topic area
Unit Two: Research Design and Methods				
5	9/30 - 10/6	Sampling	Sheppard Ch 7	View lecture, take quiz
				Post comments on reading

	10/3/2025	EXAM 1. Posted 10/3/2025 at 10:00am. UNDERGRADS ONLY.		Due by 10/6/2025 at 11:59pm.
6	10/7 - 10/13	Measurement	Sheppard Ch 6	View lecture, take quiz Post comments on reading
7	10/14 - 10/20	Experimental research	Sheppard Ch 12.2, supplement	View lecture, take quiz Post comments on reading Occup Data homework due GRAD STUDENTS: Lit Review Due
8	10/21 - 10/27	Observation research	Sheppard Ch 10, supplemental article	GRAD STUDENTS: Observation sites approved (10/21) View lecture, take quiz

9	10/28- 11/3			Post comments on reading
				GRAD STUDENTS: Observation (11/3)
10	11/4 - 11/10	Content analysis	Sheppard Ch 11, article	View lecture, take quiz
				Post comments on reading
				Content analysis homework due (11/10)
11	11/11 - 11/17			GRAD STUDENTS: Content analysis (11/17)
	11/14/2025	Exam 2. Posted 11/14/2025 at 10:00am. UNDERGRADS ONLY.		Due by 11/17/2025 at 11:59pm.
12	11/18 - 11/24	Quantitative data analysis	Sheppard Ch 8, supplemental material	View lecture, take quiz

				Post comments on reading
				Bivariate data analysis due 12/10
13	11/25 - 12/8			GRAD STUDENTS: Data analysis (12/8)
14	12/9 - 12/10			
	12/5/2025	Exam 3. Posted 12/5/2025 at 10:00am. UNDERGRADS ONLY.		Due by 12/12/2025 at 11:59pm.
	12/16/2025	GRAD STUDENTS: Final projects due by 11:59 PM		
* Be sure to check your Rutgers email for relevant updates and announcements.				