

2026FA - RES METH LABOR STDYS 37:575:401:90

Labor Studies 401:

Research Methods in Labor Studies

Rutgers University

Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations

Professor Yana Rodgers

Office hours: Email [yana.rodgers@rutgers.edu](mailto: 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 remote work 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

- **Research Project (40% of grade).** Every student completes a research project, built in segments across the semester so that each stage feeds the next: topic selection, a short literature review, a site observation component, a content-analysis component, and a quantitative data analysis component, culminating in a final project. Because each segment depends on data or observations you generate yourself, the project is inherently a demonstration of your own reasoning. It cannot be produced by pasting a prompt into an AI tool. Our Canvas course page has a module for the research project providing the complete description and step-by-step instructions.
- **Exercises (20% of grade).** A series of hands-on exercises tied to real data (occupational data, content-analysis coding, bivariate data analysis). These ask you to work with a specific dataset or source, so critical thinking and data analysis matters most for the grade.
- **Lecture Reflections (40% of grade):** After viewing the lecture presentation every week, you will be responding to a series of questions on the lectures. The number of questions per week will be variable. You will also be asked to link to a real, current news article, report, or dataset you found yourself that connects to the week's reading, and explain in 2–3 sentences, in your own words, how the reading's concepts illuminate (or complicate) that real-world example.
- **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	40 percent
Exercises	20 percent
Lecture Reflections	40 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. This is an acceptable use of AI.

It is unacceptable - and constitutes academic dishonesty - for you to use AI 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 am juggling multiple responsibilities. 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 Policy](#)[Links 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	8/31	Learning your way around the Canvas course site	None	None
1	9/1 - 9/7	Epistemology and intro to methodology	Sheppard Ch 1 (1.1-1.4)	View lecture
				Submit lecture reflection answers
2	9/8 - 9/14	Theory and research	Sheppard Ch 1 (1.5-1.7)	View lecture
				Submit lecture reflection answers
3	9/15 - 9/21	Research Ethics	Sheppard Ch 2	View lecture
				Submit lecture reflection answers
4	9/22 - 9/28	Topics in social research	Sheppard Ch 3 and Ch 5	View lecture

				Submit lecture reflection answers
				RESEARCH PROJECT: Submit topic area
Unit Two: Research Design and Methods				
5	9/29 - 10/5	Sampling	Sheppard Ch 7	View lecture
				Submit lecture reflection answers
6	10/6 - 10/12	Measurement	Sheppard Ch 4	View lecture
				Submit lecture reflection answers
				Occup Data homework due
7	10/13 - 10/19	Experimental research	Sheppard Ch 6	View lecture
				Submit lecture reflection answers
				RESEARCH PROJECT: Lit Review Due RESEARCH PROJECT: Submit observation site for approval

8	10/20 - 10/26	Observation research	Sheppard Ch 12, + supplemental article	View lecture
9	10/27- 11/2			Submit lecture reflection answers
				RESEARCH PROJECT: Site observation due (11/2)
10	11/3 - 11/9	Content analysis	Sheppard Ch 13, + supplemental article	View lecture
11	11/10 - 11/16			Submit lecture reflection answers
				Movie content analysis homework due (11/9)
12	11/17 - 11/23	Quantitative data analysis	Sheppard Ch 9, + supplemental article	View lecture
				Submit lecture reflection answers

				Bivariate data analysis due 12/7
13	11/24 - 11/30			RESEARCH PROJECT: Data analysis (due 12/10)
14	12/1 - 12/10			
	12/14/2025	FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT: Due by 11:59 PM		
* Be sure to check your Canvas Inbox and the Announcements for relevant updates.				

Other LSER and University Resources & Policies:

- Grade appeals
- [Learning Support Resources](#)

Course Summary

Date	Details
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Fri Sep 4, 2026	Assignment Log in and introduce yourselves
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Mon Sep 7, 2026	Assignment Week 1 Lecture Reflection
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Mon Sep 14, 2026	Assignment Week 2 Lecture Reflection
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Course Summary

Date	Details
Mon Sep 21, 2026	Assignment Week 3 Lecture Reflection
Mon Sep 28, 2026	Assignment RESEARCH PROJECT: Topic selection Assignment Week 4 Lecture Reflection
Mon Oct 5, 2026	Assignment Week 5 Lecture Reflection
Mon Oct 12, 2026	Assignment EXERCISE: Measuring occupational segregation and gender wage gap Assignment Week 6 Lecture Reflection
Mon Oct 19, 2026	Assignment RESEARCH PROJECT: Literature review Assignment RESEARCH PROJECT: Observation site approval Assignment Week 7 Lecture Reflection
Mon Oct 26, 2026	Assignment Week 8 Lecture Reflection
Mon Nov 2, 2026	Assignment RESEARCH PROJECT: Site observation analysis; due as a slide deck and video presentation

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	Assignment Week 9 Lecture Reflection
Mon Nov 9, 2026	Assignment EXERCISE: Content analysis of stereotyping in the media
	Assignment Week 10 Lecture Reflection
Mon Nov 16, 2026	Assignment RESEARCH PROJECT: Content analysis; due as a slide deck and video presentation
	Assignment Week 11 Lecture Reflection
Mon Nov 23, 2026	Assignment Week 12 Lecture Reflection
Mon Dec 7, 2026	Assignment EXERCISE: Bivariate quantitative data analysis
Thu Dec 10, 2026	Assignment RESEARCH PROJECT: Quantitative data analysis; due as a slide deck and video presentation
	Assignment Weeks 13-14 Lecture Reflection
Mon Dec 14, 2026	Assignment RESEARCH PROJECT: Final Paper