LSER 401 – Research Methods in Labor Studies
Spring 2025

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Virtual Office hours: by Zoom, Thursday 4:00 – 5:00PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is an introduction to the research methods employed by social scientists. Most of us are exposed to social research every day, from the latest numbers of COVID cases and vaccination rates, to population tabulations to reports of crime rates. The main purpose of this course is to make you a more critical consumer of this kind of material 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. (Assessment goals: research skills, qualitative, quantitative and analytical skills)

2) Guide students in making ethical decisions in doing research. (Assessment goals: research skills, professional development)

3) Give students an understanding of the nuts and bolts issues of research – e.g., research design, sampling, measurement. (Assessment goal: research skills)

4) Make students more critical consumers of the social science knowledge presented to them in their everyday lives. (Assessment goal: Understanding context)

REQUIRED TEXTS
There is no required textbook for this course. If you want a text as a resource, there is an open access text linked here:

Sheppard, Valerie. 2021. Research Methods for the Social Sciences

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. Most reading and lecture material in this course will be posted in Persuall – more on this below.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Examinations: 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, mostly concerning quantitative methods. These will count for 20 percent of your grade.

Lecture/Discussion/Class Participation: Discussion will happen mostly through Perusall lecture presentations. The number of comments per lecture will be variable, but this component of the course will be worth 25 percent of your grade.

Quizzes: There will be a "quiz" posted for each lecture. These will be made up of open-ended questions, some mandatory, others you will have some choice about. In total, these annotations will be worth 25 percent of your grade.

Class participation: Keep in mind that Canvas and Perusall give me detailed reports of the time you spend in the course and the pages with which you interact. 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:

Exams	30 percent
Exercises	20 percent
Lecture/Discussion	25 percent
Quizzes	25 percent
Total	100 percent

POLICIES

Class day/Assignment Policies:

I have treated this class as if it meets on Tuesday 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 are due by 5:00 PM on Monday of a given week.

I expect you to submit your assignments on the specified due dates. Refer to your Canvas classroom for each week's assignment due dates. My grading policy for late assignments is as follows:

1 work week day late – 1% will be deducted from your total grade
3 work week days late – 10% will be deducted from your total grade
5 work week 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.

Scholastic Dishonesty/AI Use:

This is what I used to say in the "old days" (i.e., before 2023): 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. This language still applies.

I realize that we are in the world of AI and large language models. I know you understand this too. My conundrum in this course in particular is that I need you to reason and think, and I actually need you to give some wrong answers. Every single methodological choice any researcher makes changes what they (and we) can see. No choice is ever going to give you "Truth" in some absolute sense. Doing a survey may get you a lot of data, but at the same time the answers you get will lack much depth. Interview research allows you to talk to people in depth, but unless you are superhuman, you are probably not going to interview more than a few dozen people. ChatGPT does not do nuance well. It is always right - or at least it thinks so.

I also realize that 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 can not 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 struggle and reasoning. I will always reward evidence of thinking questions through. I will penalize answers that may technically be "right" but that lack reasoning and consideration of alternative explanations.

Office hours:

My office hour is on Thursdays from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM, by Zoom. My preference is that you notify me in advance if you're going to need to meet with me during this time. If you need an individual appointment at some other time I'll do my best to accommodate your request. My weekly office hour is a time when you can drop in to talk about whatever you want - questions you have about the material, how you're doing in the course, 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 Labor Studies 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 Policy](.).

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.

Special Needs Accommodations

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all educational programs. To receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where they are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation (https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS: (https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form).

Office of Disability Services contact and address
Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Suite A145, Piscataway, NJ 08854.
E-mail Address: dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu
Phone: (848) 445-6800 • Fax: (732) 445-3388
https://ods.rutgers.edu/

For other policies, see the online version of this syllabus.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS *

Unit One: Framing Research/Basic issues*

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments
0	1/15/25	Learning your way around, meeting the instructor and your classmates	View syllabus, Post on Padlet
1	1/21/25	Epistemology and intro to methodology	View Main lecture, post comments
			Complete Quiz
2	1/28/25	Theory and research	View Main lecture, post comments
			Complete Quiz
3	2/4/25	Research Ethics	View Main lecture, post comments
			Complete Quiz
4	2/11/25	Topics in social research	View Main lecture, post comments
			Complete Quiz

Unit Two: Research Design and Methods

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments
5	2/18/25	Sampling	View Main lecture, comment
			Complete quiz
	2/21/25	EXAM 1	Due 2/28/25
6	2/25/25	Measurement	View Main lecture, comment
			Complete quiz
7	3/4/25	Experimental research	View Main lecture, comment
			Complete quiz

8	3/11/25	Observation research	View Main lecture, comment
			Complete quiz
			Reading annotations
9	3/25/25		
10	4/1/25	Content analysis	View Main lecture, comment
			Complete quiz
11	4/8/25		

4/4/25	Exam 2	Due by 4/11/25

Unit Three: Existing Data and Quantitative Methods

12	4/15/25	Quantitative data analysis	View Main lecture, comment
			Complete quiz
			Reading annotations
			Data analysis 1
13	4/22/25		Data analysis 2
			Data analysis 3
14	4/29/25		
	4/28/25	Exam 3	5/5/25