

**LSER 401 – Research Methods in Labor Studies  
Fall 2017**

Professor: Dana Britton  
Office: Levin 141  
Office hours: Monday 2:00-3:30  
and by appointment

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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 the latest population tabulations to reports of increasing - or more commonly these days, decreasing - crime rates, to claims that particular behaviors or attitudes affect our risk of dying young. 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., sampling, measurement and research design.
- 4) Allow students to develop their abilities as researcher 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:

Adler, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. 2014. *How It's Done: An Invitation to Social Research*, Fifth edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Research Project: 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 Sakai for complete description. The research project will account for 250 of the 650 points allotted for the semester.

Examinations: There will be three examinations during the semester. The third examination will be a take home exam, and will be comprehensive. Examinations will account for 300 of the 650 points allotted for the semester.

Exercises: There will be a series of exercises, some from your book, some keyed to videos, others requiring online research. These will count for 100 points.

Class Participation: I aim teach all of my classes in the form of an ongoing dialogue with my students, rather than in a traditional lecture format. For this reason, discussion of the readings and lecture materials in class is both encouraged and expected. In my view, strenuous debate and discussion facilitate the learning process - some of the most important insights are often gleaned in the heat of an argument. If you don't agree with a point that is being made (either in a reading or in a class discussion) speak up and we'll address your issue. The class will be more interesting for all of us if you talk to each other, rather than allow yourselves to become passive recipients of the lecture material. I do not give a grad for class participation, per se, but it is definitely a factor in assessing borderline cases.

Final Grade: As noted above, your grade for the class will be calculated as follows:

Research Project	250 points
Exercises	100 points
Examinations	300 points
Total	650 points possible

For the purposes of calculating the final letter grade, a standard scale will be used:

90 - 100% (585-650 points) = A	60 - 69% (390-454 points) = D
80 - 89% (520-584 points) = B	0 - 59% (<390 points) = F
70 - 79% (455-519 points) = C	

## **POLICIES**

### Accommodation of disabilities

I will do what is in my power to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, but you must let me know what you need (preferably after class or during office hours). Contact the Office of Disability Services for Students at Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus, Mon – Thurs, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Fri 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for examples of services and accommodations available on campus. (848) 445-6800 or <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>

### Posting of lecture slides

I do not do this routinely. I will post charts, graphs, and statistics from each lecture (where relevant), but I will not post my other slides. It's up to you to take notes. If you must miss a class, get the notes from a classmate.

### Scholastic Dishonesty

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. I will give a grade of 0 to any written assignment that appears to be substantially similar to that of another class member or that uses others' material without proper citation; further consequences may follow at my discretion. If you have any doubts at all about what constitutes plagiarism check with me before you turn in any assignment.

For more information, see resources at the Rutgers Office of Academic Integrity: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>. Rutgers also subscribes to turnitin.com; I reserve the right to use this system to check assignments.

### Grade appeals

If you believe you have received a lower grade than you should have, you may contest it within two weeks by following these steps. 1) Allow a 24-hour “cooling off” period so that you will be calm when you ask for reconsideration of your work. 2) Write out the reason you think the grade should be changed. Describe how your work fulfills the assignment. We’re all human and make mistakes but, “I just think I deserve better” doesn’t tell me what I might have missed, and it will not make for a successful appeal.

### Assignment Policies:

I will grade late assignments down one letter grade for each class day they are late. Late assignments will lose one letter grade for each class day that they are late. The final paper will lose one letter grade for each day it is late.

Make-up exams will be given only to those who must miss an exam for a University-approved reason. You are expected to notify me if you must miss a scheduled exam. Except in very special cases, exams must be made up in advance or within one week of the exam date. I reserve the right to alter the format of the examination for make-up exams. The usual substitution will be a short-answer only format.

With the exception of the final, all other graded assignments are to be picked up in class. I will not give extra credit in this course.

### Office hours:

My office hours are Monday 2:00 to 3:30 PM (though this may change from time to time; I will let you know). This 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. I am also available at other times by appointment. Because of my responsibilities with the Center for Women and Work, I am rarely available on a drop-in basis. Please also understand that I try to maintain at least a little work/life balance myself. I am very unlikely to return your emails or calls outside of regular university work hours.

Two requests: If you miss a class, please do not ask me what happened in it or whether you missed anything important. It may surprise you how many students actually ask me these questions. Find someone in the class from whom you can get the notes and learn about other important information. If there’s a handout you didn’t get in a missed class, get it from a classmate.

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS \*

### Unit I: Framing Research/Basic Issues

Tuesday	Thursday
	9/8 – Class begins, syllabus out
9/11 – Uses of research, Chapter 1	9/14 – Theory and research, chapter 2
9/18 – Ethics – Chapter 3	9/21 – Ethics, chapter 3
9/25 – Topics in social research, chapter 4	9/28 – Sampling, chapter 5
10/2 – Topic day, come prepared with a general research topic idea	10/5 – Sampling, chapter 5 Formal statement of research topic due
10/9 – Cancelled for NSF PI meeting	10/12 – Exam I

### Unit II: Research Design and Methods

Tuesday	Thursday
10/16 – Measurement, chapter 6	10/19 – Measurement, chapter 6
10/23 – Research design, chapter 7	10/26 – Research design, chapter 7 Literature review due
10/30 – Experimental research, chapter 8 Video, Quiet Rage	11/2 – Observational research, chapter 11
11/6 – Observational research, chapter 11	11/9 – Content analysis, chapter 13 Observation assignment due
11/13 – Content analysis, chapter 13 Video: Killing Us Softly 4	11/16 – Exam II

### Unit III: Methods of Analysis: Quantitative Research

Tuesday	Thursday
11/20 – Structured questionnaires, chapter 9	11/21** – Secondary data, chapter 12
11/27 – Quantitative data analysis, chapter 15 Content analysis assignment due	11/30 – Quantitative data analysis
12/4 – Quantitative data analysis	12/7 – Quantitative data analysis, chapter 15
12/11 – Quantitative data analysis Secondary data analysis assignment due	12/21** – Final exam and final paper due by 12:00 PM

\*Reading assignment dates may change as we progress through the course. I will never change examination dates.

\*\*Date changes: 11/21 is a Tuesday; this is a Thanksgiving week change. 12/21 is a Thursday during the final exam period.