# SOC 300: Introduction to Sociological Research Methods
Syllabus, Fall 2022

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| **Meetings** | 11:00 – 12:15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays<br>D004 Lecture Center Building D |
| **Instructor** | **Mahesh Somashekhar**<br>Email: msoma@uic.edu<br>Phone: 312-996-3005<br>Office: 4170 Behavioral Sciences Building<br>Drop-In Office Hours: 12 – 1 & 2 – 2:30 on Mondays (In-Person & Virtual), and by appt |

| **Teaching Assistants** | **Marni Fritz**<br>Sections: AD, AD2<br>OH: Wednesdays, 11:30 – 1:30 (BSB 4176B)<br>Email: mfritz6@uic.edu | **Angela Silva**<br>Sections: AD1, AD3<br>OH: Tuesdays, 12:30 – 2:30 (BSB 4176C)<br>Email: asilva6@uic.edu |
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| **Course Webpage** | Available on Blackboard |
| **Contact** | For simple questions, email is the best way to reach me or your TAs. We will respond to your messages within 72 hours.  For more involved questions or discussions, please use our drop-in office hours. |

## Course Description and Objectives:

This introductory course in social research methods offers an overview of how sociologists study the social world. It provides basic tools needed to conduct social research while also developing the skills necessary to critically evaluate the research of others. We will begin with a discussion of the fundamental concepts and issues involved in sociological research, and move on to consider a variety of approaches to social research. This course, more concretely, aims to: (1) introduce you to the basic elements of research design; (2) improve your ability to critically evaluate the research of others; (3) enhance your understanding of what it means to be a sociologist; (4) familiarize you with the study of the social world through firsthand experience with data collection and hypothesis testing; and (5) demonstrate the relevance of sociological research methods to your everyday lives.

## Prerequisites:

SOC 201; and sophomore standing or above; or SOC 201 and one additional 200-level course in sociology.

## Required Equipment:

There is one required textbook for the course:

> Schutt, Russell K. 2018. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 9th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

There will be other readings that complement the required textbook. These other readings will be provided to you through the course website.

**Assignments and Grading:**

Your course grade will be based on the following:

- **Homework (35%)**
  Throughout the course, there will be 7 homework assignments worth 5 points each. These homeworks will be in the style of "mini-projects" in which you apply the methods we are learning to a real-world research context. Each homework will be posted on the course website and must be turned in there as well. Late homework assignments will be accepted up to 2 days after the due date, and 20% will be deducted from your assignment grade for each day it is late. Homework that is more than 2 days late will not be accepted. For the final grade, your lowest score will be dropped, and your highest score will be doubled.

- **Two Midterms (10% each) and a Final Exam (20%)**
  There will be three exams administered over the course of the semester, two midterms and one final. The midterms will be non-cumulative, but for the final, you will be tested on material covered during the full semester. No make-up exams will be administered except under extreme circumstances and with approval _prior to_ the scheduled examination time.

- **Laboratory Sections (10%)**
  You will meet in lab sections once each week, a total of 12 times throughout the semester. You will get 1 point for each week that you come to lab and participate in lab activities. To account for circumstances, you are allowed to miss two lab sections without harming your final grade.

- **Thought Questions (10%)**
  Each week, you will be given a "thought question" based on the week's lecture and reading material. Students will be required to prepare a brief response to the thought question in writing. Generally, one or two paragraphs should be sufficient to satisfactorily respond to thought questions. You should submit your response to the thought question by 11:59pm on the Thursday before your lab section meets. Late responses will not receive credit. Responses will be graded on the following scale: "0" (no response submitted), "0.5" (a minimally sufficient response that adequately addresses lecture and reading material), or "1" (a thorough, thoughtful response to the question that synthesizes course material in order to provide an evidence-based assessment of the topic). To account for circumstances, your lowest two grades on thought questions will be dropped.

- **Participation (5%)**
  On 8 randomly determined class days, you will receive a pop quiz in which you have to provide a one- or two-sentence answer to a question about class readings. The point of these pop quizzes is to ensure that you keep up with class readings. Responses will be graded on the following scale: "0" (either no pop quiz was submitted or the student gave a nonsensical answer), "0.5" (a response was turned in that makes clear that the student did the reading), or "1" (a thoughtful response that

makes clear the student seriously engaged with the reading).  To account for circumstances, the Participation portion of your grade will be based on your 5 highest scores on pop quizzes.

**Academic Accommodations:**

The University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access campus programs, courses, services, and activities. Students with disabilities must inform the instructor of the need for accommodations. Those who require accommodations for access and participation in this course should be registered with the Disability Resource Center. Please contact the DRC at https://drc.uic.edu/.

**Things You Should Do to Succeed in This Class:**

This course tries to engage you in active rather than passive learning. That means it is not a standard lecture course. You will be expected to participate in activities and discussion in class. The following things will help you to succeed in this kind of course:

1. Read the assigned sections of the text *before* class. This is where you will learn course content.
2. Attend and participate in class and lab section. This is where you will learn how to use course content.
3. Do homework assignments soon after class. Doing assignments soon after you have read the textbook and participated in class activities will help solidify your learning and ensure better retention.
4. Think about how the methods you learn in class connect to the data you see on the internet, in the newspaper, on TV, or in other classes. How were these data collected? What concepts from class relate to those data? How could the data have been gathered and presented in a more effective way?
5. Most importantly, ASK QUESTIONS.  If you are confused, others likely are too.  You will be doing your classmates a favor, and make it easier to keep up, by asking the question early.

**Class Rules:**

1.  Maintain a good learning environment by:
    -   entering quietly and politely if you happen to arrive late
    -   turning off the ringers on your cell phones and any other devices
    -   avoid loud eating or talking
2.  Respect your class partners by:
    -   participating honestly and earnestly
    -   pulling your weight during group activities
    -   listening carefully to other students, TAs, and the instructor.

**Academic Honesty:**

All students are expected to do their own work on all assignments and exams.  Students representing the work of others as their own or cheating in any other way will receive a zero for the assignment in question and may fail the course or be referred to the college for disciplinary action.

**COVID-19 Policy:**

This class will be taught in-person, and lectures will be recorded for later viewing. Exams will be administered in person. All students must wear facemasks while in the classroom, and unvaccinated

students must adhere to university policies regarding mask wearing and regular saliva testing. Students will social distance whenever possible. Any students who do not follow these rules will be asked to leave the classroom. Please stay home and watch the recordings if you have a temperature or show other symptoms of COVID-19. The instructor and TAs are happy to answer questions you have about content on the recordings after class time.

**Schedule of Topics and Required Readings:**

***Dates listed below are subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and/or the class website. Also, any required supplementary readings, such as journal articles, will be announced in class and provided to you on the course website.\****

| Dates | Topics | Required Reading | Due Dates and Notes |
|-------|--------|------------------|---------------------|
| 8/23 (Week 1) | Introduction to the Course and Overview of Sociological Methods | None | No Lab This Week |
| 8/25 | The Scientific Study of the Social World | Chapters 1 & 2 | |
| 8/30 (Week 2) | Measurement I | Chapter 4 | Lab #1 This Week |
| 9/1 | Writing a Literature Review | None | *Class Held in Daley IDEA Commons, 1-010* |
| 9/6 (Week 3) | Measurement II | None | Lab #2 This Week<br><br>*Homework #1 (**Literature Review**) Due on 9/7 at 11:59pm* |
| 9/8 | Sampling and Generalizability | Chapter 5 | |
| 9/13 (Week 4) | Causality and Association | Chapter 6 | Lab #3 This Week |
| 9/15 | Review (or Jump Start to Next Section) | | *Homework #2 (**Sampling Activity**) Due on 9/19 at 11:59pm* |
| 9/20 (Week 5) | **EXAM 1** | | Lab #4 This Week |
| 9/22 | Experiments I | Chapter 7 | |
| 9/27 (Week 6) | Experiments II | **Marked** (Pager), Ch. 4 | Lab #5 This Week |

| 9/29 | Survey Research I | Chapter 8 | *Homework #3 (**Audit Study**) Due on 10/3 at 11:59am* |
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| 10/4 **(Week 7)** | Survey Research II | **"Drawing Blood from Stones"** (Harris et al.) | Lab #6 This Week |
| 10/6 | Statistics in Social Research I | Chapter 9 | |
| 10/11 **(Week 8)** | Statistics in Social Research II | **"Country Music and Suicide"** (Stack) | Lab #7 This Week |
| 10/13 | Evaluation & Policy Research | Chapter 13 | *Homework #4 (**Quantitative Analysis**) Due on 10/17 at 11:59pm* |
| 10/18 **(Week 9)** | Computational Social Science | Chapter 14 | Lab #8 This Week |
| 10/20 | Review (or Jump Start to Next Section) | | |
| 10/25 **(Week 10)** | **MIDTERM 2** | | Lab #9 This Week |
| 10/27 | Qualitative Methods I: Ethnography | Chapter 10 | *Homework #5 (**Social Media Data**) Due on 10/31 at 11:59pm* |
| 11/1 **(Week 11)** | Qualitative Methods II: Interviews | **"Now Why Do You Want to Know About That?"** (Garcia) | Lab #10 This Week |
| 11/3 | Qualitative Methods III: Data Analysis | Chapter 11 | *No Class on 11/8* |
| 11/10 **(Week 12)** | Comparative/Historical Research & Content Analysis | Chapter 15 | Lab #11 This Week *Homework #6 (**Ethnography**) Due on 11/14 at 11:59pm* |
| 11/15 **(Week 13)** | Social Network Analysis | **"Uncloaking Terrorist Networks"** (Krebs) | Lab #12 This Week *No Class on 11/17 and During Week 14* *No Lab During Week 14* |

| 11/29 (Week 15) | Research Ethics | Chapter 3 | Lab Is a No-Credit Review Session This Week |
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| 12/1 | Review (and a Sneak Peek at More Advanced Methods) | | *Homework #7 (**Archival Work**) Due on 11/30 at 11:59pm* |
| **12/5** | **FINAL EXAM, 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM, D004 Lecture Center Building D** | | |