

# Sociology 11: Research Methods

Fall 2023, Dartmouth College  
Tuesday/Thursday 10:10 am-12:00 pm  
X-hour: Friday 3:30-4:20 pm  
Class Location: Carson 061

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Office Hours: Online by appointment; schedule at <https://calendly.com/kbrogers>

**Course Description.** This course will provide you with the basic skills necessary to conduct social science research and evaluate the research of others. You will be introduced to the central methods sociologists use to gather information about social phenomena, along with “best practices” in research design that help ensure data quality and usefulness. You will gain firsthand experience with the research process as you try out different data collection methods on a small scale and develop your own research design. You will also learn how to be a thoughtful consumer of social science research, and sharpen your skills as a reader and writer.

**Learning Objectives.** By the end of the course, you will be able to (1) read, understand, and critically evaluate social science research; (2) develop precise research questions and hypotheses that build on prior theory and research; (3) clearly specify and measure the variables necessary for hypothesis testing; (4) draw samples and build research designs that are appropriate to your research question; (5) identify and practice ethical research standards; (6) effectively communicate your research findings to others; and (7) construct a scholarly research proposal that addresses a research question, reviews existing literature, describes an appropriate methodology, and considers ethical issues associated with the research.

**Course Structure.** This class involves a mix of lecture, in-class activities, and lab assignments that provide basic training in and hands-on experience with a variety of sociological research methods. You will also work in teams to develop a research design addressing a social problem in our community. We will not use the X-hour for this course. However, you may wish to use this time to meet with your classmates for group work on lab assignments or your research project. A [class schedule and reading list](#) are included at the end of this document.

**Course Materials.** The books for this course are available for rent or purchase online. Required textbooks are on 2-hour reserve at Baker-Berry Library. All other readings are available on our course Canvas site: <http://canvas.dartmouth.edu>. The ASA style guide is a reference book and cannot be placed on reserve; you can find the 7<sup>th</sup> edition on the shelf in Baker-Berry Library (HM569.A54 2022). If you have difficulty accessing assigned readings or encounter financial challenges related to this class, please let me know.

## Required Books:

Dixon, Jeffrey C., Royce A. Singleton, Jr., and Bruce C. Straits. 2016. *The Process of Social Research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0199946754.

Smith-Lovin, Lynn and Cary Moskovitz. 2017. *Writing in Sociology: A Brief Guide*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0190203924.

## Optional Book:

American Sociological Association. 2022. *American Sociological Association Style Guide*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association. ISBN: 978-0912764580.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### *Class Participation*

Group work and class participation are central features of the course. You are expected to come to class prepared, which includes completing the assigned reading prior to the class meeting in which it will be discussed. You are also expected to be an active and respectful participant in small group and class discussions and activities. Class participation will count for 10% of your final grade. There is a rubric on Canvas that explains how your participation grade will be calculated. Students unable to attend class for any reason are expected to complete missed activities/work on their own. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to me.

### *Lab Assignments*

Each week, you will complete a lab assignment that engages you in the practice of social research. At the beginning of the term, lab assignments will introduce you to the basic elements of research design. Later assignments will give you hands-on experience with different social science research methods: experiments, surveys, archival research, field observation, and in-depth interviews. These assignments are an opportunity to practice and hone your research skills. They are worth 40% of your final grade in the course (5% each). I will provide comments on areas that need improvement, so you can solidify your understanding of the material before preparing your research proposal. You can find more details about these assignments on our course Canvas site.

### *Research Proposal*

Lab assignments will give you basic, hands-on experience with a variety of social science research methods. You will gain a deeper understanding of the research process as you develop a research design that examines a social issue affecting our community. Our class will pitch and vote on research questions, identify partner organizations working on these issues locally, then work in teams to develop research designs these organizations can use to gather data relevant to their work. You will develop your proposal incrementally throughout the term. The process will take time and effort; you will face challenges and moments of success as your project evolves. We will return to your proposal time and again to allow for new ideas, feedback, and improvements. Revisions are expected, and an indication that you are thinking carefully about the quality of your work.

We will hit the ground running so you have plenty of time to create the strongest research design possible. Review the schedule below carefully, and plan ahead for major deadlines. You will pitch your idea and vote on your favorite pitches during Week 2. In Week 3, you will join a team pursuing one of the research questions chosen and identify/contact a partner organization working on related issues in our community. By Week 5, you will review the literature and submit an annotated bibliography. Your team will submit a detailed outline of your research proposal in Week 7, including a list of tasks that still need to be completed and a clear action plan for each task (e.g., timeline for its completion, names of group members responsible). We will meet during office hours to discuss this proposal in Weeks 7-8. Teams will informally present and receive/provide peer feedback on their research proposals during class on Week 8. Together, these assignments are worth 20% of your final grade in the course.

Teams will formally present their research proposals to our community partners during the final class meeting of the term. This presentation is worth 10% of your grade. The final draft of your research proposal will be due during exam week, and is worth 20% of your grade. Your individual grade on the annotated bibliography, research proposal outline, final research presentation, and final research proposal will be based on a combination of: (1) the grade earned by your group, and (2) your contribution to the group's work, determined by my observations and confidential peer evaluations. For example, if your

group earns 90% on an assignment, but your contribution is graded as 80%, you would only be eligible for 80% of your group's points (individual grade =  $90 \cdot .8 = 72\%$ ). You should submit a confidential peer evaluation to Canvas by the deadline for each of these assignments.

### ***Final Grade***

Your final numeric grade in the course will be determined by your class participation (10%), lab assignments (40%), the components of your research project submitted throughout the term (20%), and your final team research presentation (10%) and proposal (20%). Your numeric grade will be converted into a letter grade using the scale below. A description of the quality of work necessary to receive a certain letter grade in the course is available [here](#).

A	95-100	B+	89-91.99	B-	80-82.99	C	73-76.99	D	60-69.99
A-	92-94.99	B	83-88.99	C+	77-79.99	C-	70-72.99	E	0-59.99

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### ***Academic Responsibility***

Dartmouth College is a community of scholars and learners committed to academic and personal honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. All students should conduct themselves in accordance with Dartmouth community standards, particularly the [academic honor principle](#). Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the Dartmouth community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

Cheating, plagiarism, use of the same work in multiple courses, and unauthorized collaboration will not be tolerated. At present, I consider the use of generative AI such as ChatGPT in producing work for this class a form of unauthorized collaboration, as ***it is my expectation is that you will independently produce any written work you submit for this course***. Use of these tools in producing written work will be considered academically dishonest and a violation of Dartmouth's academic honor principle. Minor violations of the honor principle may result in loss of credit or failure for a given piece of work or in the course. Major violations may result in suspension or expulsion from the College.

Academic dishonesty often occurs when students feel pressure to perform and that they do not have the tools to achieve their goals. If you are falling behind or feeling overwhelmed, please come chat with me. [Writing and research support](#) are available to you through RWIT. [Peer tutoring and academic coaching](#) are available through the Academic Skills Center.

### ***Absences***

As participation is an important part of this course, ***chronic unexcused absences will cause a significant loss of points from your participation grade***. If you are already aware of circumstances that will affect your ability to participate in the course regularly or occasionally (e.g., due to participation on an athletic team, college-excused events, religious observances), please arrange a meeting with me at the start of the term so we can plan ahead. If circumstances arise during the term that prevent you from attending class (e.g., serious illness, family emergency), please get in touch with me as soon as possible so we can make plans to keep you on track in the course.

I recognize that we continue to face challenging circumstances, and that you may find yourself in a situation that makes it difficult to attend class or keep up with the course material. If such a situation arises, please reach out to me as soon as possible so we can find a solution. I'm happy to work with you if you reach out. Class policies on late and missed work are outlined in more detail below.

### ***Late Work Policy***

Please speak with me at the beginning of the term if you anticipate any circumstances that might affect your ability to get your work in on time and reach out if such a situation arises along the way. My standard policy on late work is as follows. ***You will lose 10% of the points on an assignment for each day it comes in after the deadline. Assignments that are submitted more than 5 days late will receive a zero.*** If the deadline has arrived and your work isn't complete, it's best to turn in whatever you have finished. All students will receive ***one 24-hour extension on any class assignment of their choosing***, no questions asked. You should notify me via email if/when you plan to use your extension. Reasonable allowances will be made for extenuating circumstances. Students granted accommodations by Student Accessibility Services should arrange to meet with me early in the term so we can plan ahead.

### ***Course Format and Resources***

Course materials will be made available and assignments will be submitted via [Canvas](#). While I plan for our class to meet in person, we may need to shift to a [Zoom](#) format if circumstances require. Office hours are by appointment only and will be held via Zoom. You can sign up for an appointment using [Calendly](#). If you have difficulties installing/accessing these resources or are unsure of how to use their necessary features, please contact me as soon as possible.

### ***Re-Grading of Assignments***

If you believe I have made an error in grading an assignment, please provide me with a written explanation of why your grade should be changed, not to exceed one page. Based on your rationale and my careful examination of your work, ***your grade may go up, go down, or remain the same.*** You have one week from the date the assignment is returned to you to request that it be re-graded.

### ***Accommodations***

Students requiring academic accommodations, modifications, or auxiliary aids should contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) at [Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu](mailto:Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu) or 603-646-9900. Once your accommodations have been established with SAS, I encourage you to arrange a private meeting with me early in the term to discuss how I can best support you in the course.

### ***Campus Resources***

I recognize that the academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, that our terms are intensive, and that classes are not the only demanding aspect of your life. There are a number of campus resources available to support your needs. For concerns about health and wellness, you may reach out to the [Dartmouth Health Service](#) (603-646-9400 or Secure Message in DartHub), [Counseling Services](#) (603-646-9442), and the [Student Wellness Center](#) (603-646-9414). For academic needs, you may contact your [undergraduate dean](#) (603-646-2243), the [Academic Skills Center](#) (603-646-2014), and [Student Accessibility Services](#) (603-646-9900). Students with visa-related concerns may reach out to the [Office of Visa and Immigration Services](#) (603-646-3474). I encourage you to take advantage of these resources, and to speak with me if you need support in the class.

Please note that faculty and staff are required by law to report certain matters to relevant parties on campus, including disclosures of sexual or gender-based harassment, sexual assault, relationship and interpersonal violence, and stalking. You can find more information about confidential versus non-confidential resources and support options [here](#).

## CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Class	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due Dates
Tu 9/12	Introduction to the Course	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Introduction (Chapter 1), Science and Social Research (Chapter 2)	Review syllabus and Canvas
Th 9/14	Fundamentals of Research Design	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Research Designs (Chapter 4)	Nothing due, but brainstorm and research your research pitch
Tu 9/19	Measurement	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Measurement (Chapter 5)	Nothing due, but draft contents of research pitch poster for next class
Th 9/21	Research Pitch Poster Session	Background reading on your proposed topic and partner	Lab #1, Measurement due 9/24
Tu 9/26	Sampling	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Sampling (Chapter 6); Small, "How Many Cases Do I Need?"	Research team preference ranking due 9/26
Th 9/28	Refining Research Questions; work on project in class	<i>Writing in Sociology</i> , Starting Your Original Research Project (Ch 4)	Lab #2, Sampling due 10/1
Tu 10/3	Ethics in Social Research; guest speaker from Dartmouth CPHS	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Ethics and Politics of Research (Chapter 3); NCPHS, "The Belmont Report"	Nothing due, but work on Annotated Bibliography
Th 10/5	Reviewing the Literature; work on project in class	<i>Writing in Sociology</i> , Choosing and Using Sources (Ch 7)	Lab #3, Research Ethics due 10/8
Tu 10/10	Experimental Research	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Experiments (Chapter 7)	Annotated Bibliography due 10/10
Th 10/12	Writing an Academic Research Paper; work on project in class	<i>Writing in Sociology</i> , Writing About Your Original Research: Before You Have Data (Chapter 5)	Lab #4, Experimental Research due 10/15
Tu 10/17	Survey Research	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Surveys (Chapter 8)	Nothing due, but work on Outline of Research Proposal
Th 10/19	Research Design Workshop; work on project in class	<i>Writing in Sociology</i> , Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism (Chapter 8); ASA Style Handout	Lab #5, Survey Research due 10/22
Tu 10/24	Historical Research; guest speaker from Rauner Library	<b>Class meets in Rauner Library</b>	Outline of Research Proposal due 10/24
Th 10/26	Research Design Workshop; work on project in class	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Existing Data Analysis (Chapter 10)	Lab #6, Historical Research due 10/29
Tu 10/31	Field Research	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Field Research and In-Depth Interviews (Ch 9); Field Research Handouts	Nothing due, but prepare for Informal Research Presentation
Th 11/2	Informal Research Presentation and Peer Feedback		Peer Feedback due 11/2; Lab #7, Field Research due 11/5
Tu 11/7	In-Depth Interviews	In-Depth Interview Handouts	Nothing due, but work on Final Research Presentation
Th 11/9	Mixed Methods; work on final presentations in class	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> , Multiple Methods (Chapter 11); Small, "How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study"	Lab #8, In-Depth Interviews due 11/12
Tu 11/14	Final Research Presentations		Upload final presentation slides by 11:59 pm on 11/13
<b>Final Research Proposal Due Sunday, November 19 at 5:00 pm</b>			