

## Sociology 11: Research Methods

Fall 2019, Dartmouth College  
Tuesday/Thursday, 10:10-12:00  
X-hour: Wednesday 3:30-4:20  
Classroom: Carson 061

Professor: Dr. Kimberly B. Rogers  
E-mail: [kr Rogers@dartmouth.edu](mailto:kr Rogers@dartmouth.edu)  
Office: 308E Blunt Hall  
Phone: 603-646-8212

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:00-2:00 pm, or by appointment

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 that 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.

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 construct a scholarly research proposal that addresses a research question, reviews the existing literature, describes an appropriate methodology, and considers ethical issues associated with the research.

The books for this course are available for purchase at Wheelock Books. The required textbooks are on 2-hour reserve at Baker-Berry Library, and all other readings can be found 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 on the shelf in Baker-Berry (call number HM569.A54 2014).

Required books:

Dixon, Jeffrey C., Royce A. Singleton, Jr., and Bruce C. Straits. 2015. *The Process of Social Research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0199946754.

Smith-Lovin, Lynn and Cary Moskovitz. 2016. *Writing in Sociology: A Brief Guide*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0190203924.

Optional book:

American Sociological Association. 2014. *American Sociological Association Style Guide*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association. ISBN: 978-0912764214.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### *Class Participation*

Group work and class participation are central features of the course. You are expected to keep up with the reading and come to class prepared. Class participation will count for 10% of your final grade. Your participation grade will reflect your preparation for class, including the completion of assigned reading (around 80 pages per week) and active participation in class discussions and exercises. It will also reflect your adherence to the course policies laid out in this syllabus. Please review these policies carefully to ensure that you understand my expectations and how you will be graded. ***Chronic absences will affect your participation grade.*** We will not meet during X-hour unless it is necessary to reschedule a regular class meeting for this time. However, you may wish to meet with your classmates during this time to work on a lab assignment or your research proposal.

### *Lab Assignments*

One of the best ways to learn about the research process is to try out different data collection methods firsthand. Each week, you will complete a lab assignment that engages you in the practice of social research. We will begin these assignments in class and you will complete them outside of class before the deadline listed in the syllabus. Toward the beginning of the term, lab assignments will introduce you to the basic elements of research design. Afterward, these assignments will give you hands-on experience with different research methods. You will have the chance to work with a variety of different social science methodologies: experiments, surveys, archival research, field observation, and in-depth interviews. You will be given specific guidelines for each lab assignment that lay out my expectations for your work. Lab assignments are worth 40% of your final grade in the course. 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 different research methods. You will get a deeper understanding of the research process as you independently develop and propose a research design to answer a question of your choosing. We will be working with the [Dartmouth Center for Social Impact](#) to answer real research questions posed by local community partners, who need your help to develop a research design relevant to their work in the Upper Valley. 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, revisions, and improvements. Transformations are to be 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 proposal possible. Review the schedule below carefully, and plan ahead for major deadlines. You will identify your research question in Week 2, and do background research on your chosen community partner for Week 3. In Week 5, you will submit an annotated bibliography of 10 scholarly references. Assignments up to this point will be submitted individually. Your team will coauthor and submit a

full draft of your research proposal in Week 7, which you will exchange with another team for peer review in Week 8. Your team will present your research proposal to our community partners during the final class meeting of the term. Together, these assignments are worth 30% of your final grade in the course. Your team will submit the final version of your research proposal, which is worth 20% of your grade, during exam week. One-third of your grade on the research proposal draft, presentation to community partners, and final research proposal will be determined by peer evaluations of each team member's contributions to the assignment.

You are expected to use ASA style (5<sup>th</sup> edition) in your work. These style guidelines apply to your manuscript format, as well as your headings, citations, and references. The ASA style guide is listed as an optional book on the first page of this syllabus, and is available at the library for your reference. You can learn more about ASA style by visiting Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL) website: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/asa\\_style/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/asa_style/index.html).

### *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 proposal submitted throughout the term (30%), and your final research 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 the principles of academic and personal honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. Students share with faculty and staff the responsibility for promoting a climate of integrity. As citizens of the Dartmouth community, students are expected to adhere to these principles at all times, in both their academic and non-academic endeavors. All students should conduct themselves in accordance with the regulations set forth in the [student handbook](#), particularly those relating to the [academic honor principle](#). Cheating, plagiarism, use of the same work in multiple courses, and unauthorized collaboration will not be tolerated. Minor violations of the academic regulations may result in loss of credit or failure for a given piece of work or in the course. Major violations of these regulations may result in suspension or expulsion from the College.

### *Class Conduct*

Class participation is about thinking carefully, listening, and posing questions to others as much as it is about sharing your ideas. This requires us to be present, set aside distractions, and focus our attention on engaging with one another. With this goal in mind, *you are welcome to use laptops*

*and tablets in class, but only for note-taking or other class-related activities. No cell phones may be used in class. Violations of this policy will impact your participation grade.* The tone with which we engage one another is also extremely important; your comments in class should come from a place of mutual respect and understanding. Disrespectful behavior such as talking while others are talking, dominating the floor, or engaging in personal attacks will not be tolerated. You are expected to treat one another and me with respect at all times.

### ***Absences***

Attendance and participation are essential components of this course. Chronic absences will cause a significant loss of points from your grade, as will routinely showing up to class late or leaving early. You can miss up to three of our regular Tuesday/Thursday class meetings without penalty, no questions asked. ***Any more than three absences over the course of the term will cause you to lose a third of a letter grade from your final grade for each class missed (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+...).*** It is your responsibility to keep up with any material you miss because of an absence, including announced changes to the schedule. Class policies on late and missed work are outlined in more detail below. If you anticipate missing class meetings (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 and bring documentation of the expected conflicts.

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

Lots of unexpected things will come up over the course of the term. To make sure you don't wind up in a difficult position, plan ahead: start your assignments early and finish them well in advance of the deadline. 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. ***Graded assignments that come in late will lose one letter grade per day,*** including lab assignments and assignments related to your research proposal. ***Assignments that are 5 or more 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.

Extensions will only be given on graded assignments if they are missed because of extreme circumstances beyond your control, such as severe illness requiring a doctor's visit or hospitalization, death in the family, or college-excused events (which must be approved ahead of time). Generally not feeling well, oversleeping, forgetting about the deadline, having computer problems, or needing to help your friend or family member with something will not be considered extreme circumstances. If you believe you are eligible for an extension, ***it is your responsibility to notify me before missing the deadline.*** Students who have been granted accommodations by Student Accessibility Services should arrange to meet with me early in the term so we can plan ahead.

### ***Canvas and Course Assignments***

Canvas and email are important forms of communication for this class; be sure to check both regularly to stay informed. Readings and assignments that are not in the required textbooks will be posted on Canvas, which can be accessed at: <https://canvas.dartmouth.edu>. Canvas is also the main

forum by which most of your assignments will be submitted. If you have any difficulties accessing the site, or are unsure of how to use its necessary features, please contact me as soon as possible. Confusion about the use of Canvas is not a valid excuse for the late submission of assignments.

### *Re-Grading of Assignments*

If you believe there has been an error in the grading of 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 either up or down*. You have one week from the date the assignment is returned to you to request that it be re-graded.

### *Accommodations*

Students desiring 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 you've established your accommodations with SAS, we should arrange a private meeting early in the term to discuss how I can best support you in the course.

### *Student Wellness*

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 resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including your [undergraduate dean](#), [counseling services](#), and the [Student Wellness Center](#). 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

### Week 1: Asking Sociological Questions

- 9/17 *The Process of Social Research*, "Introduction" (Chapter 1)  
9/19 *The Process of Social Research*, "Science and Social Research" (Chapter 2)  
*Writing in Sociology*, "Sociologists as Writers" (Chapter 1)

### Week 2: Fundamentals of Research Design

- 9/24 *The Process of Social Research*, "Research Designs" (Chapter 4)  
**Select Research Question**  
9/26 *The Process of Social Research*, "Measurement" (Chapter 5)  
9/29 **Lab #1 – Measurement**

### Week 3: Beginning Your Research

- 10/1 *The Process of Social Research*, "Sampling" (Chapter 6)  
Small, "How Many Cases Do I Need?"  
**Background Research on Community Partner**  
10/3 *Writing in Sociology*, "Choosing and Using Sources" (Chapter 7)  
10/6 **Lab #2 – Sampling**

### Week 4: Ethics in Social Research

- 10/8 *Writing in Sociology*, "Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism" (Chapter 8)  
**(Work on Annotated Bibliography, Due Next Week)**  
10/10 *The Process of Social Research*, "Ethics and Politics of Research" (Chapter 3)  
Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, "The Belmont Report"  
Guest speaker: Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects  
10/13 **Lab #3 – Research Ethics**

### Week 5: Experiments

- 10/15 *The Process of Social Research*, "Experiments" (Chapter 7)  
Webster and Sell, "Why Do Experiments?"  
**Annotated Bibliography**  
10/17 *Writing in Sociology*, "Writing About Your Original Research: Before You Have Data"  
(Chapter 5)  
10/20 **Lab #4 – Experimental Research**

### Week 6: Surveys

- 10/22 *The Process of Social Research*, "Surveys" (Chapter 8)  
**(Work on Draft of Research Proposal, Due Next Week)**  
10/24 *Writing in Sociology*, "Style" (Chapter 9)  
10/27 **Lab #5 – Survey Research**

### **Week 7: Content Analysis and Historical Data**

- 10/29     *The Process of Social Research*, “Existing Data Analysis” (Chapter 10)  
          Guest speaker: Peter Carini, Dartmouth College Archivist  
          **Draft of Research Proposal**
- 10/31     Taylor, “Content Analysis and Gender Stereotypes in Children’s Books”
- 11/3       **Lab #6 – Historical Research**

### **Week 8: Field Research and In-Depth Interviews**

- 11/5       *The Process of Social Research*, “Field Research and Interviews” (Chapter 9)  
          **Peer Review**
- 11/7       “Advice to New Field Researchers” and “Example Field Notes”  
          *Writing in Sociology*, “A Few Last Things” (Chapter 10)
- 11/10      **Lab #7 – Field Research**

### **Week 9: Mixed Methods**

- 11/12      “Interview Questions, Probes, and Procedures”  
          “Example Interview Guide (Edin and Kefalas)”  
          **(Work on Research Presentation, Due Next Week)**
- 11/14      *The Process of Social Research*, “Multiple Methods” (Chapter 11)  
          Small, “How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study”
- 11/17      **Lab #8 – In-Depth Interviews**

### **Week 10: Course Wrap-Up**

- 11/19      **Research Presentations to Community Partners**

<b>**Final Research Proposal due Monday, November 25 at 3:00 pm**</b>
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