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 of social science research.

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 reviews the existing literature, proposes a novel research question, describes an appropriate methodology, and considers ethical issues associated with the research.

The following books are available for purchase at the Dartmouth Bookstore and Wheelock Books. They are also being held on 2-hour reserve at Baker-Berry Library. Additional readings are available on our course Canvas site: [http://canvas.dartmouth.edu](http://canvas.dartmouth.edu).

Required books:


Optional books:

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 100 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 grade in the course. X-hour attendance is optional, and will not count toward your participation grade in the course (unless we have rescheduled a regular class meeting for this time).

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. 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 and ways of communicating your findings to others. You will have the chance to work with a variety of social science methodologies: experiments, surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups, content analysis, and ethnography. We will begin these assignments in class and you will complete them outside of class before the deadline listed in the syllabus. 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.

Four lab assignments (Lab #4 – Lab #8) will require you to communicate your research findings to others. You will choose from four different options for doing so, but must use each at least once during the term: academic writing, op-ed writing, research brief, and oral commentary. Academic writing is intended for a scholarly audience, and focuses on the advancement of scientific knowledge around a particular issue. Sociologists also communicate their work to non-academic audiences as radio or television guests, expert witnesses in court cases, analysts of public policy, and consultants to organizations of various types. Op-ed writing applies research findings to real-world social issues with an engaging hook and minimal jargon. Research briefs (e.g., policy briefs, consulting reports) communicate research findings to a particular firm or organization, along with empirically-grounded recommendations for solving a specific problem. Oral commentaries will require you to submit an audio or video recording communicating your findings to an audience of your choosing (e.g., radio/television spot, expert witness). You can find more details about your lab assignments on our course Canvas site.

You may need additional resources to complete some of the labs. For instance, you will need audio recorders to complete in-depth interviews, and transcription software will make transcribing the interviews simpler. You will also need audio or video recorders on weeks you choose to submit
an oral commentary. Video and audio recorders can be borrowed from Jones Media Center, Express Scribe, which is free to download, will help you with transcriptions.

**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 a research proposal on a topic of your choosing. We will return to your proposal time and again to allow for new ideas, revisions, and improvements. This process will take time and effort; you will face challenges and moments of success as your project evolves. You are likely to find that your research question needs to be modified, certain variables need to be added, omitted, or altered, and other design and methodological changes need to be made. Transformations in your proposal are to be expected, and an indication that you are thinking carefully about the quality of your work.

You will develop this proposal incrementally throughout the term. We will hit the ground running so you have plenty of time to create the strongest work possible. Review the schedule below carefully, and plan ahead for major deadlines. You will identify your initial research question in Week 2, and submit an abstract with 10 references in Week 3. In Week 4, you will submit the first draft of your literature review, on which you will give and receive peer feedback in Week 5. You will submit a revision of this paper in Week 6 with a response letter to your reviewer. In Week 7, you will submit an outline of your full research proposal, and will give and receive peer review once again in Week 8. A revision of your outline is due in Week 9, with a second response letter to your reviewer. Together, these components are worth 30% of your final grade in the course. You will submit the final version of your research proposal, which is worth 20% of your grade, during exam week.

You are expected to use ASA style (5th 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 on 2-hour reserve at the library for your reference. You can learn more about ASA style by visiting Purdue’s Online Writing Lab (OWL) website: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/1/. I suggest reading about your chosen method in more depth as you develop your proposed design. A variety of supplemental texts are available on 2-hour reserve, which expand on each of the methods covered in the course. You can find more information about these books by visiting the Library Reserves page on our Canvas site.

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0-59.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

Speaking often does not necessarily mean you are present and engaged with your classmates. 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. To help us accomplish this goal, laptops and tablets may be used in class expressly for note-taking, and must be disconnected from the internet. No cell phones may be used in class. Violations of this policy will impact your final grade in the course. 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 semester 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+…). Your attendance of Wednesday x-hours is optional (i.e., you will not be penalized for missing them), but strongly encouraged. It is your responsibility to keep up with any material that 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 semester, and bring documentation of the expected conflicts.
**Late Work Policy**

Lots of unexpected things will come up over the course of the semester. 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 semester if you anticipate any circumstances that might affect your ability to get your work in on time. Graded assignments that come in late will be penalized one letter grade per day, including lab assignments and assignments related to your research proposal. 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 missed due to extreme circumstances beyond your control. For example: 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**. I will require written verification of the reason for your absence (e.g., a note from your undergraduate dean or your doctor). Failure to follow this policy will result in denial of an extension. Students who have been granted accommodations by Student Accessibility Services should arrange to meet with me early in the semester 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](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](mailto:Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu) at either 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 semester to discuss how I can best support you in the course.
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1: Asking Sociological Questions

Tuesday, January 5  
Review course syllabus
*The Process of Social Research*, “Science and Social Research” (Chapter 2)

Thursday, January 7  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Research Designs” (Chapter 4)

Due this week:  
Signed course policies

Week 2: Fundamentals of Research Design

Tuesday, January 12  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Measurement” (Chapter 5)  
Gladwell, “The Order of Things”

Thursday, January 14  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Sampling” (Chapter 6)  
Small, “How Many Cases Do I Need?”

Due this week:  
Lab #1 – Measurement  
Research question

Week 3: Beginning Your Research

Tuesday, January 19  
*The Craft of Research*, “From Topics to Questions” (Chapter 3)  
*The Craft of Research*, “From Questions to a Problem” (Chapter 4)

Thursday, January 21  
*The Craft of Research*, “From Problems to Sources” (Chapter 5)  
*The Craft of Research*, “Engaging Sources” (Chapter 6)  
Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, “Sources and Citations at Dartmouth”  
Guest speaker: Amy Witzel, Sociology Research Librarian

Due this week:  
Lab #2 – Sampling  
Abstract and 10 references

Week 4: Ethics in Social Research

Tuesday, January 26  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Ethics and Politics of Research” (Chapter 3)  
Guest speaker: Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects

Thursday, January 28  
Film: *Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Study*  
Bartlett, “Dartmouth and Stanford Apologize after a Political Science Experiment Gone Wrong”

Recommended reading:  
*The Craft of Research*, “Planning” (Chapter 12)  
*The Craft of Research*, “Drafting Your Report” (Chapter 13)

Due this week:  
First draft of literature review  
Lab #3 – Research Ethics
Week 5: Experiments

Tuesday, February 2  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Experiments” (Chapter 7)  
Zelditch, “Can You Really Study an Army in the Laboratory?”

Thursday, February 4  
*The Practice of Research*, “Experimentation” (Chapter 1)

Recommended reading:  
*The Craft of Research*, “Revising Organization and Argument” (Chapter 14)  
*The Craft of Research*, “Revising Style” (Chapter 17)

Due this week:  
Lab #4 – Experimental Research  
Peer Review #1 – Literature Review

Week 6: Surveys

Tuesday, February 9  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Surveys” (Chapter 8)  
Guest speaker: Professor Jason Houle

Thursday, February 11  
*The Practice of Research*, “Survey Research” (Chapter 2)

Due this week:  
Lab #5 – Survey Research  
Revised literature review and response letter to reviewers

Week 7: Content Analysis and Historical Data

Tuesday, February 16  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Existing Data Analysis” (Chapter 10)  
Guest speaker: Professor Marc Dixon

Extra Credit:  
Lecture by Jennifer Carlson, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto (4:30, location TBA)

Thursday, February 18  
*The Practice of Research*, “Historical Analysis” (Chapter 7)  
*The Practice of Research*, “Content Analysis” (Chapter 8)

Due this week:  
Lab #6 – Historical Research  
Outline of research proposal

Week 8: Field Research and In-Depth Interviews

Tuesday, February 23  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Field Research and Interviews” (Chapter 9)  
Guest speakers: Professor Emily Walton and Professor John Campbell

Thursday, February 25  
*The Practice of Research*, “Field Observation/Ethnography” (Chapter 4)  
*The Practice of Research*, “Field Interviewing” (Chapter 5)

Due this week:  
Lab #7 – Field Research  
Peer Review #2 – Proposal Outline

Week 9: Mixed Methods

Tuesday, March 1  
*The Process of Social Research*, “Multiple Methods” (Chapter 11)
Thursday, March 3  
*The Practice of Research, “Multiple Methods/Mixed Methods”* (Chapter 9)  
Small, “How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study”

**Due this week:**  
Lab #8 – In-Depth Interviews  
Revised proposal outline and response letter to reviewers

**Week 10: Course Wrap-Up**

Tuesday, March 8  
Research proposal workshop (bring draft to class)

**Final Research Proposal due Saturday, March 12 at 3:00 pm**