

Data Collection and Analysis
Sociology 213 (Fall 2023) - 4 credits
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Lecture: T/Th 8:30-9:20a, Holdsworth 203

Instructor:

Dr./Prof. Pachucki
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Danielle McCarthy	Salomi Jacob
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Section A: Friday 905-955a Machmer W22;
Section B: Friday 1010-1100a Machmer W22;
Section C: Friday 1220-110p Machmer W22;
Section D: Friday 125-215p Machmer W22

What this class is about: Our field is the study of society and associated patterns of social phenomena. It will be argued that Sociology is also, deceptively, *among the most difficult of sciences*. One reason for this is that unlike some physical sciences where humans have, over hundreds of years, formulated reasonable approximations of fundamental laws related to regularities in nature (think: **Gravity!** the **Pythagorean Theorem!** **$E = mc^2!$**), Sociology is comparatively young, though, and human beings are elements in what we term complex systems.

These systems – and the elements that constitute them – often behave in regular ways, but also unpredictably and have consequences that only emerge when a certain set of conditions is just so. This makes the search for ‘fundamental laws’ in social science notoriously difficult. Indeed, perhaps a fool’s errand.

But we’re not fools! Humanity has made it this far, and although life in the US in 2023 is comparatively better and easier for most of us than for folks during the prior several centuries (in terms of average life expectancy, average freedoms, etc.), it’s still hard to connect why A *causes* B. There are usually dozens of *plausible*, if not thousands of *possible* reasons why $A \rightarrow B$. A fundamental assumption in this course is that we can learn something valuable by understanding human actions, intentions, attitudes, values, variation in attributes, and spatial patterning of human movement. To learn this, one set of tools that we use are theories of causality to understand *social mechanisms of action*. How is that we decide that A *causes* B? What evidence can help us to evaluate this? What are the most appropriate research methods to use, and what are the best kinds of data to collect?

These questions are part of what this course is about. By the end of the term, my hope for you is that you'll have a good answer to the following questions: (1) What are some useful ways (as well as unhelpful ways) to study the social world?, and (2) What are the *limits* to what we can know about social phenomena?

Your main job as a member of this class is to be relentlessly curious about these types of questions. An equally important goal is to continue to develop skills *that will transfer beyond this course*: a) evaluating the quality of evidence on scientific claims – whether in the press or on social media; b) collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; and c) writing and reflecting about approaches to research.

The course format is a mix of lecture, group-based learning in discussion sections, and practical application through data analysis exercises. You will design your own research project in which you use (provided) existing survey data, or alternately survey/interview a sample of people of your own so that you can provide new evidence related to a research question, use that evidence to test propositions, then communicate your results.

Grading: Please remember that we're evaluating your performance in class, not your worth as a human being. It's easy to forget this sometimes. Weekly reading memos, in-class quizzes, and research assignments will be evaluated on a 5-point scale (0=missing, 1/low-4/high). Exams and the final research project are on a 100-point scale. Appeals to your grade are welcome (we are all fallible humans subject to making mistakes) but appeals must be done in-person during my or your TAs' office hours in conversation, not over email or before/after class; bring justification for the correction being requested. If you request a re-grade be advised that there is a possibility we may revise your grade upward or downward.

The following weights will apply to graded material: 25% class & section participation and attendance; 20% in-class exams; 15% reading memos; 40% research project. Your final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

A: 93-100, A-: 90-92.9, B+: 87-89.9, B: 83-86.9; B-: 80-82.9; C+: 77-79.9; C: 73-76.9; C-: 70-72.9; D+: 67-69.9, D: 60-66.9, F: 0-59.9

Prerequisites. You are expected to come to class and section having read the material so we can talk about it. Some of this material will (intentionally!) challenge you. However, know that the amount of reading and writing for this course are appropriate to a 4-credit course. You might be especially challenged if you haven't yet taken an 100-level Sociology course.

Technology: I have a strong preference for no screens at lectures. This means computers, phones, tablets, and other kinds of screens should be put away. Our sessions together are designed as interactive and discussion-based. Taking notes, asking questions, and reviewing notes in preparation for exams are the best predictors of *deep learning* in college coursework. We're happy to point you towards numerous pieces of research that show this to be the case.

Brief check-in. Every student in the class is required to sign up for a 10-minute office hour meeting with your TA or Prof. Pachucki during the first 2 weeks. This is a moderately large class – but we'll all get to know each other. You'll learn that we take our jobs seriously. It helps us if we know more about your interests in the course material, and if there are ways that we can help you learn. (Pro tip: *it helps you too*. It's easier for professors who know their students to write letters of recommendation for them for a job or scholarship opportunity. Think ahead.)

Readings. There is only 1 required textbook. The remaining materials are research articles that will be posted to Canvas. You can purchase any version (print or e-book) you'd like, from wherever you'd like, and print out the articles/chapters or not as you wish. We'll put all the material on reserve at Du Bois as well.

Do keep in mind if you purchase the e-book or download course readings for your screen at home, that no screens are allowed in class. We encourage everyone to keep a notebook with their reading notes and reflections handy in lectures. Staying on top of the readings and engaging in class will help you get the most out of class.

• ORDER THE TEXTBOOK EARLY FROM YOUR PREFERRED BOOKSELLER SO THAT YOU DON'T FALL BEHIND!

Required text(s):

- *The Art & Science of Social Research, 2nd edition* (W.W. Norton 2020)
- Research articles/chapters posted to Canvas (either 1 long, or 2 short per week) – organized into a coursepack .pdf for you to print wherever you wish.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

What we expect of you:

Active attendance (25%). Showing up to lectures (50% of this grade) and discussion section (the other 50%) are both mandatory. We'll be giving a 5-question quiz on either Tues/Thurs each week as a means of regular evaluation so that you know whether you're getting the material. However, life happens. Each student is allowed one absence from a lecture (lowest quiz will be dropped), and one absence from a discussion, no reason necessary. Outside of these absences, get in touch if you have extenuating circumstances, and we'll find a solution.

Research project & presentation (40%). This will unfold in four parts over the term. Part 1: Identifying a research question (due Fr. 10/6, 2p). Part 2: Choosing a research design (due Fr. 11/3, 2p). Part 3: Sampling frame & evidence (due Mon, 11/20). Part 4: Presentation of preliminary results (in-section the last few weeks of class). Final written version (6-8 pages double-spaced) due Wed, 12/13, 5p).

Short reading memos (15%). Each week, you have a set of readings that touches on a particular theme. For either Tuesday or Thursday (but not both!) your task is to write a short (250-300-word) response statement that summarizes an important idea/ideas in a chapter/article(s) and offers some of your original thoughts and reactions to it/them. What struck you as surprising? What challenged your previous thinking on the topic? Do you disagree with the author(s)? Does this connect to ideas you learned elsewhere? You have a lot of flexibility here, by design. Memos must be uploaded to Canvas prior to the class session about which you're writing to receive credit; your TA will not accept emailed memos.

Exams (20%). a) First short exam (10%). This 50m in-class exam on Thurs, 10/19 will be multiple-choice and short-answer Qs intended to test your grasp of key ideas from the 1st part of the term. b) The second in-class exam (10%) is Thurs 12/7 & will cover Week 8 onward.

What you can expect from us (professor and TAs):

To help co-create a constructive learning environment. This means being knowledgeable, prepared, and willing to puzzle through questions prompted by the material. It means helping us to take stock of where we've been each week, and where we're headed the following week. It means being as responsive to your concerns as we can reasonably be.

To be available to you outside of class. We'll take a poll as to the best times for Prof. Pachucki & your TA's office hours and we'll set times according to what works best (majority %) for your schedules. *This is because we want these office hours to be helpful for you.* For Prof. Pachucki, you can email, call (office landline: 413-545-7526), zoom video if sick/out of town (<https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/j/9443309761>), or meet in his office. You can expect a response to email within 24h. He checks email 1x/day during the week; and in office M-F 9-5p.

To be transparent and clear about how you are being evaluated during the term. You should know how you're doing in the class. This syllabus gives you an overview of how your grade is calculated. We will be providing additional grading rubrics for response memos and research project assignments during the semester. You can check your grade anytime on the Canvas website at week's end, or email the TA. We will also post a grade calculator spreadsheet in the "Class documents" folder on Canvas so you can forecast what your grade will be if you were to get a [X] grade on assignment [Y].

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Class overview: How do we know what we know? (w/o Sept 4)

Tues, Sept. 5: come to class having read syllabus & reviewed Canvas page!

Thurs, Sept 7:

- Chapter 1 *Art & Science of Social Research (A&S)* – Introduction
- Hume, David. 1740. Abstract of "A Treatise of Human Nature" (Canvas)

Week 2: Linking Theory & Research (w/o Sept 11)

Tues, Sept 12: Chapter 2 A&S – Research Foundations

Thurs, Sept 14:

- Popper, Karl R. 1963. "Science as Falsification." (Canvas)
- Pearl, Judea & Dana Mackenzie. 2018. "From buccaneers to guinea pigs: The genesis of causal inference." Chapter 2, *The Book of Why: The New Science of Cause & Effect*. (Canvas)

Week 3: Ethical issues and Human Subjects (w/o Sept 18)

Tues, Sept 19: Chapter 3 A&S – Ethical Issues

Thurs, Sept 21:

- Manning, Kimberly D. 2020. "More than Medical Mistrust." *The Lancet*, Vol. 396. 1481-2.
- Hennell, Kath, Mark Limmer, and Maria Piacentini. 2020. "Ethical dilemmas using social media in qualitative social research: A case study of online participant observation." *Sociological research online* 25(3): 473-489.

Week 4: Building blocks of research (w/o Sept 25)

Tues, Sept 26:

- Chapter 4 A&S – Hypotheses, Operationalization, Measurement
- Lieberman, S. and Lynn, F.B., 2002. "Barking up the wrong branch: Scientific alternatives to the current model of sociological science." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28(1), pp.1-19. (Canvas)

Thurs, Sept 28: Chapter 5 A&S – Reliability and Validity

Week 5: Identifying a Research Question (w/o October 2)

Tuesday 10/3: Chapter 6 A&S – Sampling strategies

Recorded (asynchronous) lecture Tuesday 10/3; no class Thurs 10/5; Friday sections as usual!

***** *Research Project Part 1 (Identifying a research Q) due Fr, 10/6 to Canvas by 2p* *****

Week 6: Research approaches – Survey methods (w/o October 9)

Tues, Oct. 10: Chapter 7 A&S – Survey Research

Thurs, Oct 12:

- Thomas, Reuben J., 2020. "Online exogamy reconsidered: Estimating the Internet's effects on racial, educational, religious, political and age assortative mating." *Social Forces*, 98(3), pp.1257-1286.

Optional: Mann, Markus and Schleifer, Cyrus., 2020. "Love the science, hate the scientists: Conservative identity protects belief in science and undermines trust in scientists." *Social Forces*, 99(1), pp.305-332.

Week 7: Research approaches – Experimental research (w/o Oct .16)

Tues, Oct. 17:

- Chapter 8 A&S – Experimental Research
- Pager, D., 2003. The mark of a criminal record. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(5), pp.937-975. (Canvas)

Thurs, Oct 19: Exam 1

Week 8: Research approaches - ethnography (w/o Oct. 23)

Tues, Oct. 24:

- Chapter 10 A&S – Ethnography
- Geertz, C., [1973] 2008. "Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture." In *The Cultural Geography Reader* (pp. 41-51). Routledge. (Canvas)

Thurs, Oct. 26:

- Small, M.L., 2009. "How many cases do I need?' On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research." *Ethnography*, 10(1), pp.5-38. (Canvas)

Week 9: Research approaches – in-depth interviewing (w/o Oct. 30) –

Tues, Oct. 31: Chapter 11 A&S – In-depth interviewing

Thurs, Nov. 1:

- Wingfield, Adia Harvey, and Koji Chavez. 2020. "Getting in, getting hired, getting sideways looks: Organizational hierarchy and perceptions of racial discrimination." *American Sociological Review* 85(1): 31-57.

Optional:

- Sweet, Paige L. 2019. "The sociology of gaslighting." *American Sociological Review* 84(5): 851-875.
- Lamont, Michèle, and Ann Swidler. 2014. "Methodological pluralism and the possibilities and limits of interviewing." *Qualitative Sociology* 37(2): 153-171.

***** Research Project Part 2 (Choosing a Research Design) due Fr, 11/3 to Canvas by 2p *****

Week 10: Analyzing & presenting results (w/o November 6)

Tues, Nov. 7: Chapter 12 A&S – Materials-based methods

Thurs, Nov. 9: Chapter 14 A&S – Univariate/bivariate analysis of quantitative data

Week 11: Analyzing & presenting results (w/o November 13)

Tues, Nov. 14: Chapter 17 A&S – Analysis of qualitative data (chapter on Canvas)

Thurs, Nov. 16: Chapter 14 A&S – Communicating findings

In-section "flash" presentations, Part 1:

- Your presentation order will be determined by randomized selection.
- Students who aren't presenting will be giving targeted feedback to the presenter to improve their research project – 3 minutes!

Section 1: 7 presentations

Section 2: 7 presentations

Section 3: 7 presentations

Section 4: 7 presentations

***** Research Project Part 3 (Sampling Frame/Evidence) due Friday, 11/17 to Canvas by 2p *****

Week 12: Thanksgiving week! No class (w/o November 20)

Week 13: An intentional circling back to *social mechanisms, social processes, and causality* so that these important concepts are on your mind while you're in the last stages of your research and starting to write up your results (w/o Nov. 27)

Tues, Nov 28: Hedstrom, P. and Bearman, P., 2009. "What is analytical sociology all about? An introductory essay." *The Oxford handbook of analytical sociology*, pp.3-24. (Canvas)

Thurs, Nov. 30: Abend, Gabriel. "Making Things Possible." *Sociological Methods & Research* (2020). (Canvas)

In-section "flash" presentations, Part 2:

- Your presentation order will be determined by randomized selection.
- Students who aren't presenting will be giving targeted feedback to the presenter to improve their research project – 3 minutes!

Section 1: 7 presentations

Section 2: 7 presentations

Section 3: 7 presentations

Section 4: 7 presentations

Week 14: Concluding thoughts (w/o December 4)

Tues, Dec. 5: Review / Thurs, Dec. 7: In-class exam 2

In-section "flash" presentations, Part 2:

- Your presentation order will be determined by randomized selection.
- Students who aren't presenting will be giving targeted feedback to the presenter to improve their research project – 3 minutes!

Section 1: 7 presentations

Section 2: 7 presentations

Section 3: 7 presentations

Section 4: 7 presentations

***** *Final research projects (written version) due Wednesday, December 13, 5p* *****

Accommodation Statement

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. For further information, please visit Disability Services (<https://www.umass.edu/disability/>)

Academic Honesty Statement

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, and Relationship Violence at UMass

As a faculty member I have a responsibility to all students to provide resources and assistance to anyone who wishes to disclose potential sexual misconduct. According to Title IX UMass guidelines, 'regular faculty' such as myself are not mandated reporters. This means that anything you wish to report to me will be kept private – the intent of this policy is to allow students to come to most (non-administrative) faculty with concerns and questions, and to talk openly and confidentially, so that we can help you.

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds, the University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students, free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and retaliation. This includes interactions in person or online through digital platforms and social media. Title IX also protects against discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, or related conditions, including recovery. There are resources here on campus to support you. A summary of the available Title IX resources (confidential and non-confidential) can be found at the following link: <https://www.umass.edu/titleix/resources>. You do not need to make a formal report to access them. If you need immediate support, you are not alone. Free and confidential support is available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week / 365 days a year at the SASA Hotline 413-545-0800.