

**Sociology 311: Section 001**  
**Methods of Sociological Inquiry**  
**Colorado State University**  
**Spring 2018**

**Professor:** Orestes P. Hastings ([Pat.Hastings@colostate.edu](mailto:Pat.Hastings@colostate.edu))

**Office Hours:** Tue 9:15-10:30am, Thu 1:45-3pm, and by appointment in Clark B266

**GTA:** Nefratiri Weeks ([Nefratiri.Weeks@colostate.edu](mailto:Nefratiri.Weeks@colostate.edu))

**GTA Office Hours:** Wednesday 9am-12pm and by appointment in Clark A008A

**Lecture:** Tuesday/Thursday 8-9:15am in Clark C250

**Canvas Website:** <https://colostate.instructure.com/courses/59030>

### Overview

This course is designed to introduce you to the methodological tools deployed by sociologists to conduct empirically grounded and theoretically engaged research. The course will cover the basic elements of research design, the role of theory in empirical research, the construction of sociological arguments, the ethics involved with human subjects research, and the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data and results. Methodologically, this course will introduce you to the use of ethnography, interviews, surveys, experiments, comparative/historical methods, and social network analysis. The assignments will provide some hands-on experience “doing research” that will further your understanding of these methods.

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### Learning Goals

- Understand how sociological questions can be answered with data and research
- Be able to formulate research questions and evaluate research designs
- Know the basics of a number of methodological approaches and understand their different strengths and weaknesses
- Recognize the many challenges of conducting sociological research
- Understand the ethical considerations involved in doing human subjects research
- Develop skills for reading and critically thinking about empirical research

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### Evaluation

Your grade will be based on:

- In-class exercises and reading quizzes (10%)
- Participation (5%)

Snapshots at [jasonlove.com](http://jasonlove.com)



"I love our lunches out here, but I always get the feeling that we're being watched."

- Mini-Project 1: Elements of Research (10%)
- Mini-Project 2: Survey (15%)
- Mini-Project 3: In-depth Interview (15%)
- Exam 1 (15%)
- Exam 2 (15%)
- (Final) Exam 3 (15%)

*In-class exercises and reading quizzes (10%)*

The readings are critical to your success in this class. **You will be expected to complete the readings before the class to which they are assigned.** We will discuss the readings together. In class, I will also present additional material and we will do some group work. Further, we will discuss and sometimes work on the assignments. To get something out of this course, you need to do the readings and show up to class! To encourage you in this, I will have (at least) 12 in-class exercises or quizzes, some of which will be based on the readings. Your best 10 will each be worth 1% of your final grade. **There will be no make-ups unless your absence has been excused ahead of time or you have a documentable emergency.**

*Participation (5%)*

Beyond just showing up, learning occurs the best when it is interactive. Please be active in group discussion, ask questions in class, and answer questions I may ask! All of these things will positively contribute to your participation grade.

*Research projects*

There will be three mini-projects. These projects will give you the opportunity to put into practice the ideas and tools that you will be reading about and discussing in class. As the semester progresses, more information will be given about each project when it is assigned. Some portion of class will also be devoted to working on these assignments, both individually and collaboratively. Each project will be due in class on the date specified in the Course Outline. A short description of each project is below:

*Mini-Project 1: Elements of Research (10%)*

I will provide you with a published article. Write a short paper identifying the research question(s), hypotheses, unit of analysis, dependent variable, and key dependent variables. Justify your answers.

*Mini-Project 2: Survey (15%)*

Design a questionnaire that might be used in a survey to assess people's attitudes about a chosen topic. Collect at least 20 responses (via online, paper, or both). Write a short paper justifying your survey questionnaire (e.g., open vs closed-ended questions, question wording, and question order), presenting your results, and reflecting on the data collection process. Include your questionnaire as an appendix.

*Mini-Project 3: In-depth Interview (15%)*

Design an interview guide to collection information about a particular topic. Using an your interview guide, conduct an in-depth interview with one person of your choosing. Record the interview and transcribe it. Write a short paper that summarizes your findings and reflects on the interview process. Include both your interview guide and the transcript as appendices.

### Exams (45%)

The exams will focus on evaluating your understanding of the main ideas and concepts, not how well you can memorize facts. **The exams will be cumulative, but weighted towards new material.** A 3x5 note card (front and back) will be permitted. There will be three exams, each worth 15%.

### Final Grades

You will be graded on an A-F, +/- system, which will be awarded using the percentages in the table at right (fractions of a percent will be rounded *up* to the nearest whole number). If you have any issues or concerns with your grades, contact me as soon as possible. Incompletes will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Letter Grade	Percent Range
A+	97%-100%
A	93%-96%
A-	90%-92%
B+	87%-89%
B	83%-86%
B-	80%-82%
C+	77%-79%
C	70%-76%
D	60%-69%
F	Below 60%

### Late Work and Excused Absences

Assignments are due in class. Unexcused late work will be reduced by 5% for each 24-hour period it is late, for up to 120 hours. For example, if an assignment is due at 12:30pm on Tuesday, there would be a 5% deduction if it is turned in on Tuesday at 2pm or Wednesday at 10am, a 10% deduction if turned in on Wednesday at 6pm, a 25% deduction if turned in Saturday at 6pm, and no credit if turned in Sunday after 12:30pm.

I understand that unfortunately personal and family emergencies do happen. Please contact me if something does come up, and we will work towards finding an appropriate solution. If you are going to be at a University sponsored event or need accommodation to observe an established religious holiday, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make adequate arrangements.

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### Readings

There is one required book for this course:

- Carr, Deborah, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, and Mary C. Waters. 2018. *The Art and Science of Social Research*. W. W. Norton. (ISBN: 9780393644791)

The remaining assigned readings will be posted on the course website. Again, I remind you that **you are expected to complete the readings before class**. I do not anticipate that you will have mastered the readings on your own before class; instead, we'll collectively make sense of them together during class. **You should bring the reading(s) with you to the class they are due along with your notes.** Although I understand that electronic copies of the readings are convenient, **I strongly recommend that you print out the readings and bring those to class.**

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### Other Important Matters

#### Laptops/Tablets

Although research is not entirely conclusive (we will discuss this at some point in class!), there is quite a bit of evidence suggesting most students learn better without laptops (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html>). I

encourage you to take notes by hand. However, you may use a laptop for class purposes (accessing readings, group work, etc). You must never use your laptop/tablet for non-class purposes during class. Doing so will negatively affect your participation grade.

#### *No Phones*

The material we will cover in this class require your full engagement. Turn off and put away your phone when class starts. Using your phone in class will negatively affect your participation grade.

#### *In-Class Decorum*

Please come to class on time and be ready to engage the material we are covering in class. Colorado State University has stated five Principles of the Community: inclusion, integrity, respect, service and social justice (<http://diversity.colostate.edu/principles-of-community/>). Your conduct in this class should adhere to these to help us generate an open, tolerant, and respectful learning environment that we can all succeed in.

#### *Time Outside of Class*

This is a 3-credit class. Accordingly (and based on federal guidelines), you should plan to spend 2 hours outside of class for each hour of classroom time. If you find yourself consistently spending more than 6 hours outside of class per week on the assigned readings, projects, preparing for exams, etc, let me know.

#### *Office hours*

I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours. I am happy to discuss course material, the assignments, your sociological interests, or anything else that would be useful to you. I am happy to schedule additional meetings if the listed office hours do not work for you.

#### *Ethical Concerns in Sociological Research*

All (future) social scientists should be aware of their ethical and professional obligations. Although your assigned projects for this course do not constitute “Human Subjects Research,” you should obviously ensure that no harm is done through them. We will discuss research ethics throughout the semester, including in the context of your projects.

#### *Academic Integrity*

The course will adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Colorado State University General Catalog (<http://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/policies/students-responsibilities/>) and the Student Conduct Code (<https://tilt.colostate.edu/integrity/knowTheCode/>). Do your own work. Don’t cheat. Violations will be addressed through the appropriate University mechanisms.

#### *Resources for Disabled Students*

If you have a diagnosed learning or physical disability, which may require special accommodations, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester. The university’s Resources for Disabled Students (<http://rds.colostate.edu/>) can also help facilitate your individual needs. I will work with you and the RDS to make sure that any individual needs are appropriately accommodated.

#### *Support*

Any student who may be the victim of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking or retaliation is encouraged to report to CSU through one or more of the following resources:

- Emergency Response 911

- Deputy Title IX Coordinator/Office of Support and Safety Assessment (970) 491-1350
- Colorado State University Police Department (non-emergency) (970) 491-6425

For counseling support and assistance, please see the CSU Health Network, which includes a variety of counseling services that can be accessed at: <http://health.colostate.edu/>

And, the Sexual Assault Victim Assistance Team is a confidential student resource that does not have a reporting requirement and that can be of great help to students who have experienced sexual assault. The web address is <http://www.wgac.colostate.edu/need-help-support>.

Need Help? CSU is a community that cares for you. If you are struggling with drugs or alcohol and/or experiencing depression, anxiety, overwhelming stress or thoughts of hurting yourself or others please know there is help available. Counseling Services has trained professionals who can help. Contact 970-491-6053 or go to <http://health.colostate.edu>. If you are concerned about a friend or peer, tell someone by calling 970-491-1350 to discuss your concerns with a professional who can discreetly connect the distressed individual with the proper resources (<http://supportandsafety.colostate.edu/tellsomeone>). Rams take care of Rams. Reach out and ask for help if you or someone you know is having a difficult time.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

In addition to the topics and readings listed below, we will also be regularly discussing the assignments and your ideas. If there are changes to this schedule, you will receive adequate notice.

#	Date	Topic(s)	Readings Due	Assignments Due
1	1/16	Introduction, Expectations, & Goals; The Sociological Perspective		
2	1/18	Types of Social Science Research; Unit of Analysis	ASSR pages 3-31	
3	1/23	Research Questions & Research Goals	Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families," <i>American Sociological Review</i>	
4	1/25	Theory & the Scientific Method; Inductive & Deductive approaches	ASSR 33-65	
5	1/30	Sociological Paradigms; Elements of Theory; Constructing Hypotheses	Pager, Devah. 2016. "Are Firms That Discriminate More Likely to Go Out of Business?" <i>Sociological Science</i>	
6	2/1	Conceptualization & Operationalization; Types of Variables	ASSR 101-115	
7	2/6	More on Operationalization; the Ecological Fallacy; Measurement	ASSR 116-131	
8	2/8	Sampling	<i>Skim</i> : ASSR 157-191	
9	2/13	Catch-up & Synthesis		
10	2/15	Exam 1		EXAM!
11	2/20	Survey Research; Modes of Survey Administration	ASSR 193-214	
12	2/22	More on Survey Research; Types of Questions	ASSR 214-233	
13	2/27	Analyzing survey research	<u>Optional to skim</u> : ASSR 461-531 (Ch 14 & 15)	DUE: Mini-Project #1: Elements of Research
14	3/1	Experiments; Laboratory Experiments	ASSR 235-255	
15	3/6	Field and Natural Experiments	Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>	
16	3/8	Ethnography I	ASSR 305-339	
Spring Break! No class March 13 & 15				

17	3/20	Ethnography II	Emerson et al. <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i> pp. 48-52 (Tentative: Selection from <i>Sidewalk</i> . To be confirmed.)	
18	3/22	Ethnography Exercise		
19	3/27	Catch-up & Synthesis		Turn in field notes from previous class period
20	3/29	Exam 2		EXAM!
21	4/3	In-Depth Interviews	ASSR 341-375	
22	4/5	Analyzing Qualitative Data	<i>Skim</i> : ASSR 535-575	DUE: Mini-Project #2: Survey
23	4/10	Even more on interviews	Rivera, Lauren. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." <i>American Sociological Review</i>	
24	4/12	Saying vs Doing	Jerolmack, Colin and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk Is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." <i>Sociological Methods &amp; Research</i>  <i>Skim</i> : Vaisey, Stephen. 2014. "The "Attitudinal Fallacy" is a Fallacy: Why We Need Many Methods to Study Culture." <i>Sociological Methods &amp; Research</i>	
25	4/17	Material-based methods; Secondary data	ASSR 377-397	
26	4/19	Historical & Comparative Sociology; Content Analysis	ASSR 397-421	
27	4/24	Social Network analysis	<i>Skim</i> : ASSR 429-461 <a href="https://www.citylab.com/life/2017/06/the-strange-power-of-weak-ties/532131/">https://www.citylab.com/life/2017/06/the-strange-power-of-weak-ties/532131/</a>	
28	4/26	NO CLASS (work on interview mini-project)		
29	5/1	Research Ethics	ASSR 67-99	DUE: Mini-project #3: Interview
30	5/3	Wrapping up & Synthesis		
	5/10	Final Exam (6:20-8:20pm)		FINAL!