

**Soc 380: Social Research Methods**  
**CRN: 34393**  
**Spring 2019**

**Lecture**

Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:20pm  
Location: 243 Wohlers Hall

**Labs**

Friday: 11:00-11:50am (CRN: 34390)  
Location: Nevada Building Computer Lab

Friday: 2:00-2:50pm (CRN: 34385)  
Location: Nevada Building Computer Lab

*Professor:* Tom VanHeuvelen  
*Office:* 3092 Lincoln Hall  
*Office Hours:* 11:00am-12:00pm T/Th

*Email:* tvanheuv@illinois.edu  
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*Lab Instructor:* Matthew Schneider  
*Office:* Lincoln Hall 3064  
*Office Hours:* Th., 3:30-4:30pm

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**Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce you to the major types of research methods and methodologies that sociologists employ in their empirical studies of social life. We will overview the ways that sociologists plan their research and how they gather, analyze, make sense of, and present their evidence about society. To this end, we will cover the range of processes involved with translating an idea into an empirical study—such as finding and using sociology literature, planning a research study, and issues of conceptualization, measurement, sampling, and identification—as well as the variety of methods employed by sociologists—including survey research, experiments, ethnography, interviewing, and historical comparison. By the end of this course, you will have developed the tools necessary to effectively critique and engage with research done by sociologists, and you will have been exposed to the variety of methods you can employ to answer your own research questions. Ultimately, this course is designed to provide you access to the broad conversation in sociology about social reality, and to provide you the toolkit to begin your contribution to it.

**Course Objectives**

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the basic principles of quantitative and qualitative methods used by sociologists
- Choose an appropriate methodology to answer your own research question
- Evaluate the quality of social science research based on their methodological choices
- Search the sociological literature, develop hypotheses, and develop a research plan to answer a research question

## **Required Texts and materials**

Schutt, Russell K. *Investigating the Social World. The Processes and Practice of Research.* 9<sup>th</sup> edition. Sage Publications, Inc.

I have put a copy of the required text on reserve in the undergraduate library. Affordable versions of the text are available to rent or buy from third party websites (e.g. amazon.com). You can purchase the less expensive 8<sup>th</sup> edition to use instead. It is your responsibility to align page numbers across book editions.

There are additional required readings available on the Soc380 Moodle website, <https://learn.illinois.edu>. Please contact me immediately if you are unable to access the course Moodle website or if readings are not posted.

You will need an *I-Clicker* for this course. Bring the I-Clicker to every lecture and lab session. You must register your I-Clicker on the course Moodle website by the end of the second week of class.

I-Clicker support is provided by the campus Technology Services Help Desk. If you are experiencing difficulties with your I-Clicker, e-mail, or call the Technology Services Help Desk (<https://techservices.illinois.edu/get-help/help-desk>) or visit the I-clicker support site (<http://support.iclicker.com/>).

## **Evaluation**

### ***Class participation***

20% of your final grade reflects your participation during lecture and discussion. Class participation in lecture and lab will be assessed primarily by I-Clicker activities. I-Clicker activities will be included in all scheduled lectures, except Exam days. Each daily attendance is worth 7.25 points. We will also discuss studies that highlight the weekly topic covered. You will be expected to participate in these discussions and occasionally submit in-class written materials for full attendance points for that day. I will not maintain a second set of participation documentation for students who forget their I-Clicker, who did not set their I-Clicker to the correct frequency, or for students whose batteries died in class. We will establish our I-Clicker routines during the first two weeks without these sessions counting towards your participation grade. It is your responsibility to contact technical support if you notice any problems with your I-Clicker.

You can miss up to **five** lecture/discussion sessions without penalty for your participation grade. You do not need to inform me of the reason for these **five** absences. After these **five** absences, you will not be able to make up class participation points except for university-sponsored absences. I will begin counting class participation for the course grade at the beginning of week 3.

You are expected to attend lectures, participate in class discussions, have completed the required readings prior to class, and be engaged.

### **Exams**

There will be two exams in this class. Exams will cover assigned readings, lectures, labs, and in-class discussion. Exams will include a combination of closed- and open-ended questions. The second exam will mostly be non-cumulative. However, you may be expected to know major concepts covered in the course for the second exam. We will discuss the details of the second exam closer to the date of the exam. The second exam must be taken during the scheduled time.

Please note that although this course has a scheduled time during finals week, we will not be conducting any course activity during that time. The last scheduled activity for this course is the second exam.

<b>Exam</b>	<b>Date</b>
Exam 1	Mar 7 (Th)
Exam 2	Apr 30 (T)

An optional alternative to the second exam is a 12-15 page **research paper**. In this paper, you will develop a topic from your lab assignments into a research proposal, putting emphasis on methodology. More information will be posted onto Moodle in the first week of class. If you choose this option, you must contact me in the first four weeks of class. Choices are final and cannot be changed. Students who have an A in the class and write a truly exceptional research proposal will be given an A+. There is no other way to get an A+ in the course. The research paper will be due on the date of the second exam. Students who write a research proposal will not take the second exam.

### **Paper**

One paper is due for this course. The specific requirements of the papers will be placed on Moodle. The paper due date is listed below.

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>
Paper Assignment #1	Friday, February 15

### **Labs**

You will attend one of the two lab sessions available for this course (dates and locations listed at top of the syllabus).

You are expected to attend that lab that you are registered for. If you are not sure which lab this is, please get in touch with the TA immediately. If you have a scheduling conflict and need to attend the other lab, you must get in touch with the TA prior to the start of both labs.

Lab attendance is included as part of the course's overall attendance policy. Labs have three goals: (1) to follow-up and develop course materials (2) to do actual, hand-on applications of social research (3) draw connections to other sociology courses you have taken, or plan to take.

There will be **five** lab assignments due throughout the semester, as well as a variety of in-lab activities. Lab assignments are due at the **beginning** of lab sessions. You will submit **both** a physical copy to the TA and electronically on Moodle. Your assignment will be considered late until you fully follow the procedures for turning in lab assignments. Further submission details for specific lab assignments will be included on assignment sheets on Moodle. The assignment due dates are listed below.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Date</b>
Lab Assignment #1	Feb 1 (F)
Lab Assignment #2	Mar 1 (F)
Lab Assignment #3	Mar 15 (F)
Lab Assignment #4	Apr 5 (F)
Lab Assignment #5	Apr 25 (Th)

In total, there are 1,000 points available over the course of the semester. Points are distributed as follows:

<b>Final grade calculation</b>		
	Percent of grade	
Class / lab participation	20%	(200 points)
Lab assignments	32.5%	(325 points)
Paper 1	12.5%	(125 points)
Exam 1	17.5%	(175 points)
Exam 2 / Final paper alternative	17.5%	(175 points)
<b>Total</b>	100%	(1,000 points)

Letter grades will be assigned to the following numeric scores:

<b>Final Score</b>	<b>Letter grade</b>
930-1,000	A
900-929.9	A-
870-899.9	B+
830-869.9	B
800-829.9	B-
770-799.9	C+
730-769.9	C
700-729.9	C-
670-699.9	D+
630-669.9	D
600-629.9	D-
0-599.9	F

## **Course Policies**

### **Readings**

Please complete the assigned reading prior to the class. The assigned readings provide the foundation for lectures, discussions, and in-class activities. You are responsible for materials in the textbook and readings even if they are not covered in lecture.

## **Attendance Policy**

I expect you to attend class and lab, to have completed listed readings in advance of the day they are listed, and to be active participants in the classroom. Please come to class on time and do not leave until class has ended.

You may miss up to **5** class sessions, including both lecture and lab. It is not necessary to provide a reason for these absences. After these five missed class sessions, points will be deducted from the attendance/participation grade, for any reason. The only exception to this rule is if you miss class for a university-sanctioned event. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student.

If you need to miss class for university-sanctioned events, such as religious holidays or sporting events, you must notify me within the first two weeks of class. I will make special arrangements with you to make up any activities in a way fair to all students. As with any absence, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student.

## **Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to abide by the University of Illinois' code of academic and personal misconduct (<http://studentcode.illinois.edu/>). You are expected to turn in your own work. I will follow the procedures and sanctions outlined in the student code of any instance of student misconduct, including plagiarism.

## **Accommodations**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the University of Illinois seeks to provide reasonable accommodations so that students with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of college life. It is the student's responsibility to contact Student Disability Services ([www.disability.illinois.edu](http://www.disability.illinois.edu), 217.333.4603) and the instructor about any needed accommodations. Requests for accommodations should include university documentation. Please get in contact with me about accommodations as early as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of class.

## **Late Policies**

Any assignment turned in late will immediately receive a **10% penalty**. An additional 10% penalty will be added every 24 hours that the assignment is not turned in. I generally do not grant extensions for assignments or exams. In unusual situations, students must contact me prior to the due assignment or exam date. Students will need to punctually provide documentation.

## **Incompletes**

Incompletes will not be given except in highly unusual and documented circumstances.

## **Decorum**

Your input, attitudes, and behavior are crucial for how this course will go. It is very important that you treat your peers, your instructor, your teaching assistant, and yourself with respect. In our discussions, we will make an important distinction: we can disagree with ideas and arguments, but we will not disagree with the *people* verbalizing them. Methodology is a difficult topic. If you have a question about a concept or topic, it is very likely that many of your peers do as well!

Part of respect is being present in class, both lectures and labs. That means that laptops, cellphones, and all electronic devices are to be turned off and silenced during lectures. I may consider you absent if you are frequently checking your electronic devices.

## **Electronic Devices**

Cellphones are to be turned off and silenced during lectures. Of course, I realize that emergencies and extenuating circumstances happen. If you need your phone on, please get in contact with me **before** the scheduled class. If you need to use an additional electronic device as part of a special accommodation, you must get in contact with me and provide documentation as early in the course as possible. The exception to the above policy is during times when we discuss exemplar readings. At these times, you can use electronic devices to review the article being discussed.

Laptops and electronic devices are not allowed during class. If you disagree with this policy, you are allowed to write a **500-word** argument in support of your use of an electronic device. This must be submitted to me via email by **January 24**, the Friday of the second week of class. If I agree with your argument, then you will be allowed to use a laptop in class. In this case, you must email me your notes 15 minutes after the end of every class session. I will review your notes to ensure their content. If I view your notes as insufficient, I will revoke your laptop usage and the default class policy will apply to you again.

## **Email**

Please begin email subject lines to me and the TA with SOC380 so that we can easily sort emails for this course. Emails without this subject line will not be read.

I am happy to correspond with you via email or in person if you have questions, thoughts, or concerns about the course or its materials. I will do my best to respond to your email in a timely manner. If I have not responded to you within 24 hours, please simply resend your email and ensure that it is properly titled. I will not respond to email after 6:00pm. I do not respond to emails on the weekend.

Please note: the TA I will not reply to email requests for information that you can get from the course syllabus or Moodle announcements. If I do not reply to your email within 24 hours, please ensure that your request cannot be answered by reviewing course materials.

Do not use any other messaging systems to contact us. Contact the TA and me using the email addresses provided at the top of the syllabus.

## **Schedule Modification**

I reserve the right to modify the schedule during the semester to accommodate unanticipated events and developments.

## **Summary of assignment due dates**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Date</b>
Lab Assignment #1	Feb 1 (F)
Writing Assignment	Feb 15 (F)
Lab Assignment #2	Mar 1 (F)
Exam #1	Mar 7 (Th)
Lab Assignment #3	Mar 15 (F)
Lab Assignment #4	Apr 5 (F)
Lab Assignment #5	Apr 25 (Th)
Exam #2	Apr 30 (T)

Tentative course schedule for SOC 380  
Please complete readings before the listed date  
@: From Schutt's *Investigating the Social World*  
\* Reading on Moodle  
!! Indicates a due assignment

### **Week 1: Introduction, foundations for social research**

- T, Jan 15 No readings  
Th, Jan 17 @ Ch. 1: "Science, Society, and Social Research" (pp. 6-22)  
\* Shakya. "Facebook"

### **Week 2: The process of social research**

- T, Jan 22 @ Ch. 2: "The Process and Problems of Social Research" (pp. 30-36, 49-61)  
Th, Jan 24 @ Ch. 4: "Conceptualization and Measurement" (pp. 104-115)  
\* Chokshi. "Trump Voters"

### **Week 3: Conceptualization and measurement**

- T, Jan 29 @ Ch. 4: "Conceptualization and Measurement" (pp. 115-121, 125-141)  
Th, Jan 31 \* Harris and Sims. "Who is Multiracial? Assessing the Complexity of Lived Race"  
F, Feb 1 (lab) !! **Lab Assignment 1 Due**

### **Week 4: Sampling and Generalizability**

- T, Feb 5 @ Ch. 5: "Sampling and Generalizability" (pp. 149-165, 168-176)  
Th, Feb 7 \* Snowden. "The Road to Good Counsel Hill"  
\* Western and Pettit. "Incarceration and Social Inequality"

### **Week 5: Causality**

- T, Feb 12 @ Ch. 6: "Research Design and Causation" (pp. 188-199, 200-212)  
Th, Feb 14 \* Quadlin. "The Marks of a Female Record."  
F, Feb 15 !! **Paper Assignment 1 Due**

### **Week 6: Surveys**

- T, Feb 19 @ Ch. 8: "Survey Research" (pp. 255-279)  
Th, Feb 21 \* Powell et al. "Who Counts as Family."

### **Week 7: Experiments**

- T, Feb 26 @ Ch. 7: "Experiments" (pp. 222-245)  
Th, Feb 28 \* Pager and Quillian. "Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus What They Do."  
F, Mar 1 !! **Lab Assignment 2 Due**

### **Week 8: Catchup, Review, Exam**

- T, Mar 5 No class  
Th, Mar 7 !! **Exam 1**  
F, Mar 8 No lab

**Week 9: Unobtrusive measures, secondary data, comparative and historical**

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| T, Mar 12  | @ Ch. 15: "Historical and Comparative Research and Content Analysis" (pp. 553-573) |
|            | @ Ch. 14: "Secondary Data Analysis and Big Data" (pp. 522, 534-538)                |
| Th, Mar 14 | * Eidlin, "Class versus special interests"   |
| F, Mar 15  | <b>!! Lab Assignment #3 Due</b>  |

**Week 10: Spring Break – No Class**

- |            |          |
|------------|----------|
| T, Mar 19  | No class |
| Th, Mar 21 | No class |

**Week 11: Basics of quantitative data analysis**

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|------------|---|
| T, Mar 26  | @ Ch. 9: "Quantitative Data Analysis" (pp. 316-321, 326-353)          |
| Th, Mar 28 | * Lim and Putman. "Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction." |

**Week 12: Introduction to qualitative research**

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|-----------|---|
| T, Apr 2  | * Becker "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research"   |
| Th, Apr 4 | @ Ch. 10: "Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating, Listening" (pp. 364-396, 399-400) |
| F, Apr 5  | <b>!! Lab Assignment #4 Due</b>   |

**Week 13: Interviewing**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| T, Apr 9   | @ Ch. 11: "Qualitative Data Analysis" (pp. 415-437, 438-439)                              |
| Th, Apr 11 | * Calarco. "I need help!" Social Class and Children's Help-Seeking in Elementary School." |

**Week 14: Participant observation**

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| T, Apr 16  | * Blee. "Inside Organized Racism."                              |
| Th, Apr 18 | * Khan and Jerolmack. "Saying Meritocracy and Doing Privilege." |

**Week 15: Mixed methods**

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|------------|--|
| T, Apr 23  | @ Ch. 15: "Mixed Methods" (all)  |
| Th, Apr 25 | * McCabe. "Connecting in College: How Friendship Networks Matter for Academic and Social Success." |
|            | <b>!! Lab Assignment #5 Due (in lecture)</b>   |
| F, Apr 26  | No lab   |

**Week 16: Exam**

- |           |                  |
|-----------|------------------|
| T, Apr 30 | <b>!! Exam 2</b> |
|-----------|------------------|