Because of [sociology’s] complex and contradictory intellectual heritage, it is impossible to expect consensus within the field; the best that can be hoped for is a creative tension between different paradigms of inquiry.


Welcome to the world of research methods! Popular thought holds that research methodology is difficult and dull. I beg to differ, and in this course I hope to relay to you my passion about research design and issues surrounding research practice. I think it is one of the most creative components of scholarship, one in which thoughts and ideas are translated into workable plans. Every research question can be addressed in a variety of ways, so there is a lot of room for researcher discretion. In this course we will learn about the craft of social science research through reading, discussion, presentations, and classroom exercises. You will be asked to demonstrate this knowledge throughout the course by critiquing particular aspects of methodology (internal validity, sampling, and measurement) in journal articles recently published in leading sociology journals. At the end of the course, your final assignment will be to write a research proposal on a topic of your choosing or write a more encompassing critique of a published article that I assign.

**Course Reading**

You and your fellow students will get much more out of this course if you do your best to thoroughly absorb the readings assigned for each class before coming to class. This will allow you to participate fully and ensure lively discussion, debate, and fun. Many readings for the course can be found in these books:


All additional readings are available through D2L. Please bring readings to class.

**Student-led Classes (SLC)**
Throughout the semester, we will have student-led classes on research practice (including professional and ethical issues in sociology) on the following dates:
- Thursday, February 6th – Distance between Researcher and Subject(s)
- Thursday, March 27th – Transparency & Disclosure
- Thursday, April 10th – Peer Review

**Important Due Dates**
- Thursday, February 27th – Internal Validity Application Paper Due
- Tuesday, March 25th – External Validity Application Paper Due
- Tuesday, April 22nd – Measurement Application Paper Due
- Tuesday, May 13th – Final paper/proposal due at 10am

**Grading**
Final grades will be determined as follows:
- Preparation and Participation: 20%
- Critical Perspective Presentation 5%
- Student-led class: 10%
- Application Papers: 45% (15% each)
- Final paper or proposal: 20%

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS**

Thursday, January 16th – Introduction

Tuesday, January 21st – Overview
- Singleton and Straights, Chapter 2, "The Nature of Science"
- King, Keohane, and Verba, pp. 7-9 (section 1.1.2)
Thursday, January 23rd – Theoretical Framing, Significance, and Reviews of Literature
Segments (front end only) of application paper articles:


Internal Validity

Tuesday, January 28th – Causal Reasoning and Inference
Singleton and Straights, 3rd: 65-85; 4th: 43-64; 5th: 79-104

Thursday, January 30th – Experimental Designs
Tuesday, February 4th – Field Experiments
Singleton and Straights, 3rd: 201-206; 4th: 178-182; 5th: 220-226

Thursday, February 6th – SLC: Distance between Researcher and Subject(s)

Tuesday, February 11th – Quasi-experimental Designs (Observational Studies)
King, Keohane, and Verba, pp. 168-207

Thursday, February 13th – Qualitative Research
King, Keohane, and Verba, pp. 34-74; 208-228

Tuesday, February 18th – Selectivity
King, Keohane, and Verba, pp. 115-139

Thursday, February 20th – no class

Tuesday, February 25th – Mechanisms
Thursday, February 27th – Internal Validity Application Paper Due


External Validity

Tuesday, March 4th – Sampling: Overview and Rationale
Singleton and Straights, 3rd: 135-141; 4th: 111-118; 5th: 150-158

Thursday, March 6th – Probability Sampling Procedures
Singleton and Straights, 3rd: 141-172; 4th: 118-147; 5th: 158-188

Tuesday, March 11th – Sample Selectivity, Response & Coverage
King, Keohane, and Verba, Chapter 4 (review pp. 114-139, read 139-149)

Thursday, March 13th – Non-probability Sampling and Case Selection

~ SPRING BREAK, ENJOY! ~

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Tuesday, March 25th – External Validity Application Paper Due

Thursday, March 27th – SLC: Transparency & Disclosure

**Concepts & Measures**

Tuesday, April 1st – Measurement: Overview
Singleton and Straights, 3rd: 99-113; 4th: 76-90; 5th: 115-130

Thursday, April 3rd – Questionnaire Design

Tuesday, April 8th – Researcher Influence and Design Effects
Singleton and Straights, 3rd: 194-201; 4th: 171-178; 5th: 213-220

Thursday, April 10th – SLC: Peer Review

Tuesday, April 15th – Validity and Reliability
Singleton and Straights, 3rd: 113-129; 4th: 90-107; 5th: 130-147
King, Keohane, and Verba, pp. 150-168
Thursday, April 17th – Qualitative Measurement

Tuesday, April 22nd – Measurement Application Paper Due

Thursday, April 24th – no class

Mixing Methods

Tuesday, April 29th – Inherent Tensions and Perceived Challenges

Embarking on your own Research

Thursday, May 1st – Developing Good Research Questions
King, Keohane, and Verba, pp. 12-19
Booth et al. chapters 3 & 4

Tuesday, May 6th – Claims and Evidence
Booth et al. chp 7-11 (pp. 103-169)