

Syllabus Spring 2011  
**Sociology 3301-002**  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00am-12:15pm  
Lecture Location: Ketchum, 301  
Lab Location: Claire, 111

Instructor: Jenn Roark, MSW  
Office: Ketchum 414 (accessed only through west side staircase)  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-11 and Thursdays 12:15-1:15, and by appointment  
Contact Info: [Jennifer.Roark@colorado.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Roark@colorado.edu)

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“Every year since 1950, the number of American children gunned down has doubled” (An unnamed journal article, 1995). Regarding this quote, Sociologist Joel Best writes, “This quotation is my nomination for a dubious distinction: I think it may be the worst-that is, the most inaccurate-social statistic ever” (p.2).

Both quotes derive from *Damned Lies and Statistics: untangling numbers from the media, politicians, and activists* (1995).

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

To understand life sociologically, researchers, teachers, students, and practitioners use various methods to collect, analyze, and disseminate information. Much of this occurs in the form of quantitative methods and specifically survey research. This course will travel through the quantitative inquiry, collection, analysis, and dissemination process. Students will learn what constitutes solid research methods (i.e., research design, ethical considerations, sampling, and instrumentation), how to productively administer instruments, which statistics to correctly apply to their data, and how to interpret and re-present the information in efficient research reports. Students will be required to perform all of these steps and present the material to the class.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. Understand the research process listed above.
2. Be able to apply course knowledge to real world applications.
3. Make research accessible to the general population
4. Foster critical thinking skills and writing skills.
5. Not to be too boring!

## **TEACHING PHILOSOPHY**

I am firm believer that every student has the ability to receive an A in this class. Some students will have to work harder at this than others. It is my responsibility to help foster an environment that is conducive to learning, while challenging students to push the boundaries of their thinking. I make every attempt to be available to students and accommodate students, but I also set clear guidelines and expectations of my students. Much of my philosophy is grounded in a feminist social work background where self-determination and facilitating real change is the key to learning.

## **TEXTS**

Required:

Patten, Mildred L. 2009. *Understanding Research Methods: an overview of the essentials*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Glendale, CA: Pycszak Publishing.

Patten, Mildred L. 2011. *Questionnaire Research: a practical guide*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Glendale, CA: Pycszak Publishing.

Various articles posted on CU Learn

## **CU LEARN**

I will consistently use CU Learn as a tool for this course. All readings not assigned in the Patten books will be posted on CU Learn, as well as grades, and any other pertinent course information.

It is your responsibility to check CU Learn often. If you are having problems downloading an article or assignment, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate or myself for help in a timely manner.

## **COMMUNICATION**

I use email as the preferred method of communication. I will frequently email updates and other important course announcements. You are required to check your colorado.edu account regularly. If you use another email server (e.g., gmail, hotmail, yahoo, etc.), you can have your culink account forwarded to that email address. If you are unfamiliar with how to do this, please visit ITS website or call the help desk.

## **CLASS RULES**

*Class arrival and departure:* Arrive on time and do not leave early without prior permission from instructor. In the event you are late, please sneak in quietly and do not disrupt the class.

*Cell phones:* No use of cell phones (i.e., no texting, no talking, no surfing the net). Cell phones must be on vibrate or silence. If I notice you using your cell phone during lecture, class discussions, or class activities, you may be asked to leave the classroom and it may adversely affect your final grade.

*Laptops:* Laptops may not be used in this class. There may be opportunities for you to use a laptop during the class time, but you will be notified of laptop approved days.

*Disruptive Behavior:* Disruptive students in the academic setting hinder the educational process. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. “Disruption,” as applied to the academic setting, means behavior that a reasonable faculty member would view as interfering with normal academic functions. Examples include, but are not limited to: persistently speaking without being recognized or interrupting other speakers; behavior that distracts the class from the subject matter or discussion; or in extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior or personal insults, or refusal to comply with faculty direction. Other information about this policy can be obtained at:  
<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html>

*Respectful Discussions:* It is a priority that classroom discussion be held in a manner that is respectful and one that fosters further exploration of the topic. At no time during the discussions are students allowed to ask other students about their personal experiences. Enthusiastic discussion and debate is essential and encouraged. Insensitive or mean-spirited comments (especially those based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, ideas, or beliefs) will not be tolerated. It is my hope that this will not happen, but in the event that a student is acting disrespectful, it is my responsibility to ask the student to stop, and if the behavior continues, it is my responsibility to ask the student to leave. If a student is asked to leave based on disrespectful behavior, I will comply with the university’s policy and the student may be asked to meet with me personally before being allowed back in the classroom. For the university’s policy on disruptive behavior, please see:  
<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html>

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE**

Attendance and class participation inextricably are linked. Although you are not specifically penalized for missing class, excessive absences will affect your grade in numerous ways (i.e., participation points, the ability to understand course materials, in-class assignments, etc.). If you are unable to attend a class, it is strongly recommended that you contact a classmate for course material, as my notes are not provided online. In the event that there are major life events that affect your ability to attend class, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to discuss your situation.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

If I determine that you have violated CU’s academic integrity policy (see below), you will automatically fail the class. It is your responsibility to learn how to prevent plagiarism and submit sole authored work. If you do not understand how to cite properly, please see either myself or the writing center for further clarification.

*All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, and aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html>.*

## **DISABILITIES**

I make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>.

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at: <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html>

## **OTHER OBLIGATIONS**

Please let me know **in writing, at least two weeks in advance** of any religious observations and/or athletic obligations that will conflict with assignment due dates, in order to make appropriate accommodations.

## GRADED ASSIGNMENT VALUE

Rough draft of literature review	5%
Survey Instrument and Consent form	10%
Final Project (Paper, Dataset and Codebook)	45%
Homework	15%
Quizzes	20%
Participation	5%

## GRADE PERCENTAGE

A	>94	C+	78-79.9	D-	60-63.9
A-	90-93.9	C	74-77.9	F	<59.9
B+	88-89.9	C-	70-73.9		
B	84-87.9	D+	68-69.9		
B-	80-83.9	D	64-67.9		

## GRADE CONTESTING

If you wish to contest a grade, you may do so 24 hours after the returned grade. Please follow this process when contesting a grade:

1. Bring original documentation (i.e., tests, papers, etc.)
2. In writing, describe how your response or work answers the question or fulfills the assignment requirement.

Failure to follow these directions or incomplete contestations will not be considered. I reserve the right to either grade up or grade down.

***I will under no circumstances discuss grades via email.*** You must attend office hours to discuss your grades.

## CLASS CONTRACT

By staying enrolled in this class, you agree to the terms laid out in this syllabus. You also agree to the fact, I reserve the right to make any and all changes to classroom rules, course obligations, and reading schedules as I deem necessary. If you do not agree to this, you should consider dropping this class.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Research Statement**

All research done at the university level must be approved by the IRB (a board comprised of various members from the university). As a student researcher, you are required to complete the student research module on <http://www.citiprogram.org> and print out a copy of the completion certificate. In addition to the required research module, you must submit to me an electronic copy of your research statement on CULearn. The assignment must include: 1) your name; 2) your email; 3) your phone number; 4) project title; and 5) project description. The research statement does not have to be perfect; it simply must be a general idea about what you would like to conduct research on during the semester.

### **Literature Review**

As a part of your final project, you will be required to write a literature review. This assignment is a rough draft of your final literature review to be included in your final project. This is an exercise to get you started on the research process. Specific details regarding this assignment will be posted in a separate document.

### **Consent Form**

All research performed in an institutional setting requires participants to sign a consent form. You will need to create a consent form for your participants. There is a template on CU Learn from the CU IRB's website. Use this as a starting point and change it to reflect your study.

### **Survey Instrument Assignment**

As a part of your final project, you will design and implement your own survey. This instrument must have at least 10 questions, but no more than 20 questions (unless I give you special permission to ask more). Included with your survey instrument must be a consent form that will be given to your participants in conjunction with your survey.

### **Codebook**

Every data should have a codebook that allows other users to understand: 1) the variable's name; 2) the survey question; 3) how the variable is coded; and 4) in some cases, the frequencies of the dataset. Along with your final project, you will submit a copy of your codebook.

### **Dataset**

To store your data, you will be required to create a dataset, which will be formatted appropriately (i.e., variables labeled and variables coded). You will submit this as a part of your final project.

### **Final Project**

The final project for this course is essentially a final manuscript regarding your original research. Therefore, it will include these sections: literature review, methods, results, and discussion. It will require you to investigate a research topic, create a survey, collect and manage data, analyze data, and present the results. Specific details regarding this assignment will be posted in a separate document.

**Final Presentation**

It is quite possible that in the future, you will be required to collect and analyze data and report your findings to the public. However, many stakeholders do not want to read a lengthy manuscript, rather they want something that highlights the important findings from relevant literature and the current research project. You be required to present a product or “output” in the form of a brochure, fact sheet, or any similar project that must be orally presented to the class.

## PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Please note: This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. With ample notice, all changes will be posted to CU Learn.

### WEEK 1: *Introduction to the class and Introduction to survey methods*

T Jan 11: Introduction

R Jan 13: The Scientific Tradition

- Reading: UR: Topic 1
- Homework #1: UR T1: Question 10 & 12

### WEEK 2: *Stages of Social Research, Research Questions, and Literature Reviews*

T Jan 18: Introduction to Stages of Social Research & Formation of the Research Problem

- Reading: UR Topic 7, 13, 14,
- Homework #2: UR T7 (1-8 & 13); T13 (1 & 8 or 9); T14 (7)

R Jan 20: **Quiz #1: Scientific Tradition** and Literature Review

- NOTE: You may bring your laptop for class use.
- Reading: UR Topic 16, 17, & 18

### WEEK 3: *Research Preparation & Elements of Research*

T Jan 25: Research Preparation

- Reading: UR Topic 9 & 12
- Homework #3: IRB student ethics certificate (this certificate is mandatory) and one peer-reviewed article

R Jan 27: **Quiz #2 Formation of the Research Problem, RESEARCH STATEMENT DUE** and Elements of Research

- Reading: UR Topic 5 & 6
- Homework #4: UR T5 (13); T6 (12)

### WEEK 4: *Research Design*

T Feb 1: Experimental & Non-experimental designs

- Reading: UR 2, 3, 4, 37, 41, & 42
- Homework #5: UR T2 (1-4, 8-9, & 11); T3 (1-5 & 10); T4 (11); T37 (2, 3, & 9); T41 (1, 2, & 8); T42 (1-7)

R Feb 3: **Quiz #3 Research Preparation & Elements of Research** and Experimental & Non-experimental designs (continued)

WEEK 5: *Measurement*

- T Feb 8: **LITERATURE REVIEW DUE** and Conceptualization, Operationalization, Reliability, and Validity
- No readings or homework (Literature Review Due)
- R Feb 10: Conceptualization, Operationalization, Reliability, and Validity (continued)
- Reading: UR Topic 8, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
  - Homework #6: T8 (1-7 & 13); T27 (2, 3, 6, & 8); T30 (Understand the table on page 70); T31 (1-7)

WEEK 6: *Constructing the Survey*

- T Feb 15: **Quiz #4: Experimental and Non-experimental designs**
- No Readings or Homework
- R Feb 17: Writing items for a survey
- Reading: QS Chapter 2-4

WEEK 7: *Constructing the Survey*

- T Feb 22: **Quiz #5: Measurement** and Writing items for a survey
- No Readings or Homework
- R Feb 24: **Rough Draft of your survey due in class** and Workshop your survey
- Reading: QS Chapter 6-7

WEEK 8: *Finalizing the Survey and Sampling*

- T Mar 1: **FINAL DRAFT OF SURVEY AND CONSENT FORM DUE** and Sampling
- R Mar 3: Sampling
- Reading: UR Topic 20-26
  - Homework #7: T20 (1-7); T21 (12); T22 (9); T23 (3-5 & 9); T25 (1-3); T26 (5 & 7-9)

WEEK 9: *Administering the Survey and Collecting data*

- T Mar 8: Administering the instrument
- Readings and Homework TBD
- R Mar 10: **Quiz #6: Sampling** and Creating a dataset
- Readings and Homework TBD

WEEK 10: *Data Management*

T Mar 15: Creating a codebook and data management

- Readings TBD

R Mar 17: **Quiz #7 Surveys** and Data entry and errors in the data

- Readings and Homework #8 TBD

WEEK 11: SPRING BREAK

WEEK 12: *Data Analysis*

T Mar 29: Deciding the appropriate statistic for your data

- Reading: UR Topics 43, 46, 47, 50, & 53
- Homework #9: T43 (11 &12); T46 (2-7); T47 (4-7); T50 (1-9); T53 (1-10)

R Mar 31: **Quiz #8 Data Entry and Codebooks** and Performing the data analysis (outputs)

- Readings TBD

WEEK 13: *Writing up the Results*

T Apr 5: **Quiz #9 Data Analysis** and Writing the methods section and describing the data

- Readings: UR Topics 73-75; QS Chapter 13
- Homework #10: T73 (8); T74 (8); T75 (1, 3, 4, & 8); QS Ch. 13 (4-7, 9, & 10)

R Apr 7: Describing the data

- Readings: QS Chapters 9-11
- Homework #11: Ch. 9 (2 & 4); Ch. 10 (1, 2, 9, 10-12); Ch. 11 (1, 4, 5, 6,

WEEK 14: *Writing up the results and Data dissemination*

T Apr 12: Writing the discussion section

- Readings: UR Topic 76
- Homework #10: T76 (3-5 & 8)

R Apr 14: **Quiz #10 Describing the Data**

WEEK 15: *Presentations*

T Apr 19: Student presentations

R Apr 21: Student presentations

WEEK 16: *Presentations*

T Apr 26: Student presentations

R Apr 28: Class wrap-up and closing

**May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1:30pm – 4:00pm, Paper Due**