

SOCI 100-910: Introduction to Sociological Research

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Introduction

The goal of this course is to give you a basic understanding of the two most common research methods used in the social sciences: qualitative and quantitative. The best way to learn how to do research is to do research, so this course is very hands-on: you will conduct a small research project using each method. There will be relatively little assigned reading, as most of the work will be gathering, analyzing, and presenting data. Instead of a standard textbook, we will use a shorter book by a leading sociologist (Ragin) that presents different methods as an organized whole. For the quantitative section, we will use a free software program called R to help us. The assigned quantitative textbook (Navarro) has instructions on how to install it, and uses it throughout to explain concepts and methods. While it may seem daunting at first, in my experience using software directly to learn quantitative methods is easier, more fun, and more useful because you can directly apply what you have learned to real problems. This course satisfies the College quantitative data analysis requirement.

Required Books

- These is on reserve at Van Pelt and should be available at the Penn Book Center.
 - RAGIN, C.C. and AMOROSO, L.M. *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method*. SAGE Publications, 2010, Sociology for a New Century Series, ISBN 9781412960182
- Download this from the link below
 - NAVARRO, DANIEL *Learning Statistics with R: A tutorial for psychology students and other beginners*. 2014 (URL: <http://learningstatisticswithr.com>)

Course Requirements and Grading

- two research projects, 50% of grade each.
- there is no participation or attendance requirement, but, not attending and not asking questions when something is unclear is an easy way to get a poor grade.

Instructor

- Alexander Jerneck, 121 McNeil
- office hours: Wednesdays, 3:20pm - 5:20pm, or by appointment.
- email: ajerneck@sas.upenn.edu (checked once every 1-2 days).

Research Project Details

Projects can be done individually or in collaboration with other students. All students collaborating on a project get the same grade for that project. Make sure to discuss your project ideas and groups with me first. All projects should feature a research question, a literature review, a motivation and description of the methods used, a presentation of findings, and a discussion of limitations. Part of the project requirement is to figure out, through discussions in class, and by reviewing some relevant literature, an interesting topic and question. Each project will also be presented to the class before the final due date so that you can incorporate class feedback into your final report. Of course, my expectations on the projects take into account the very limited time you have to do them: you should simply try to do the best you can within the constraints we have.

The class before each project is due, we will have roundtable presentations of the drafts. The more finished your draft is by this time, the better feedback you can get, and the better your final report will be.

The best way to structure the project reports is to find a recent article in *The American Sociological Review* that uses a similar method (ethnography, interviews, or any regression). Then try to make a mini-version of that paper.

Project format details

Both the qualitative and quantitative project should be done as a report using the RStudio program. They should be written as R markdown reports, which allow you to mix text, tables and figures in a reproducible way. The reading "getting-started-with-R.pdf" will help you get started with R markdown. Total wordcount should be 3000 +/- 500 words. Reports should include an introduction, a short literature review based on at least one peer-reviewed sociology article, a methods section, a results section, and a discussion. Citations should be in MLA format: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/>. Projects will be graded on organization, style, correctness of methods, interestingness of topic and conclusions, whether the data supports the conclusions drawn, whether the data supports alternative conclusions not drawn, how detailed the data is, and shown awareness of limitations.

Course outline

The course is organized so that we start with qualitative methods (interviews and ethnography) then finish with quantitative (statistical tests of difference between groups, regression).

Navarro intersperses text with R commands. I highly recommend that you follow along by actually executing the R commands in RStudio (you can have a separate project for it). The best way is probably to first skim the chapter to get a sense of what it is about (there is a summary at the end), then read through, executing the commands.

Date	Method	Topic	Readings	Due
May 28	Qualitative	Introduction		
Jun 2	Qualitative	Data Gathering	Ragin vii-108 Navarro, 3.1-3.4	
Jun 4	Qualitative	Data Analysis	Ragin 108-134 getting-started-with-R	
Jun 9	Qualitative	Roundtables	Ragin 135-162	Draft 1
Jun 11	Quantitative	Introduction	Ragin 163-189	Project 1
Jun 16	Quantitative	Descriptive	Navarro ch. 5-6	
Jun 18	Quantitative	Theory	Navarro ch. 7, ch. 9	
Jun 23	Quantitative	Theory	Navarro ch. 10-11	
Jun 25	Quantitative	Regression	Navarro ch. 15	
Jun 30	Quantitative	Roundtables	work on your project	Draft 2
Jul 2	Quantitative	Conclusion	Ragin 189-200	Project 2