

Professor: Brenden Beck, PhD (Brenden.Beck@ucdenver.edu)
Class location and time: North 1207, Mondays 5:00pm – 7:30pm
Office hours: Wednesdays 2:15-3:15pm or by appointment
Office: 1380 Lawrence Street, Suite 420

SOCY 5024: Research Methods I, University of Colorado Denver, Fall 2021

Course Description

In this course, we will begin to master the research methods that can reveal and change the social world. We will develop analytic and descriptive skills to become better scholars, news consumers, and advocates. Research is critical to many careers, even those where we are not working as research scientists. This course will help us understand how knowledge is created and allow us to generate new information. To get the most out of this course, ask “How can I use this?” of every method and topic we cover.

Course Objectives

Through this course, you will:

- Detail the role of research and the value of evidence in understanding the social world.
- Evaluate and apply a variety of social research methods in a range of professional contexts.
- Critically assess research reports and research-based media claims.
- Demonstrate an understanding of research and professional ethics.

Requirements and Grading

20% of total grade – Discussion contributions

As with any seminar, our class time will involve lots of discussion. There are no exams, so your active participation in class will be how I assess your grasp of the material. To be an active discussant, you'll need to come to class with all the readings completed and annotated. There will be about 100 pages of reading per class. I will frequently start discussions by asking you to share the main idea of a reading and/or a question you still have for the author, so it would be a good idea to write these down as part of your annotation. The question could be something you didn't understand, something you want to discuss further, or a critique you have. To earn an “A” in this area you will need to be an active participant and be ready when called on. If you are not comfortable speaking extemporaneously, don't worry, I will give you plenty of chances to write your responses before sharing them. Discussions will be harder when we're wearing masks, so let's be sure to speak loudly and ask for clarification if we can't hear someone.

20% – Presentation on a sociological debate

Once during the semester you will present the different sides of a sociological debate. You will choose the debate from a list I provide. You will read three or more articles weighing in on the debate and then produce a 10-15 minute presentation, with slides, to the class. I'll provide further instructions on the first day of class.

20% – Weekly exercises

Before most classes, you will have a homework assignment to complete like finding research articles, writing down how you might use a method, or completing an ethics training. The exercises are listed on the syllabus and I will elaborate on them the week before they are due.

40% – Research proposal and presentation (40%)

The largest portion of your grade will be to write and present a proposal for a research project. You will propose three methods to answer three closely related research questions, and you will spend extra space on the method you think is best. The proposal should be 8-15 pages and the presentation should be 10-15 minutes. Many of our homework and class assignments will be useful starting points, and you are welcome to incorporate them in your proposal. I will provide a detailed instructions sheet and a rubric closer to the due date. The presentations will be in class on December 6th and the paper is due via Canvas December 10th by 5pm.

Letter grades are the unrounded percentages and follow the typical A for 93% or above, A- for 90% to 92.9%, B+ for 87% to 89.9%, etc., with the minus and plus cut-offs at the 3s and 7s.

Required texts

Please buy Carr et al. (2021), the full citation of which is below. All other readings will be posted as PDFs to our class Canvas page. Make sure to buy the second edition of Carr et al. I slightly recommend you buy the paperback (about \$111 online), but there is also an e-version (\$45). I apologize for this expense, but it really is the best book, and all the other readings will be zero cost. The first two chapters of Carr et al. will be provided as PDFs for the first week in case it takes a while to order the book, but you will be expected to have the book in time to do the readings for September 13th.

Carr, Deborah, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, and Mary C. Waters. 2021. *The Art and Science of Social Research*. WW Norton & Company, 2nd edition.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of any kind will result in you failing the course. For more information, review the definition of academic dishonesty [here](#) and the college's procedure for handling academic dishonesty [here](#). I will be using plagiarism detection software for your research proposals.

Student Support and Students with Disabilities

See the link below if you need any career, academic, or mental health counseling

https://clas.ucdenver.edu/faculty-staff/sites/default/files/attached-files/student_services_and_calendar.pdf

If you have a disability and require accommodations in our class, register with the Disability Resource Center (their info is in that link above), and let me know early in the semester so we can work together to provide a supportive learning environment.

Attendance

As with any seminar, your attendance and participation will be vital to your getting the most out of the class. Each student can miss one class without penalty, no excuse needed. If you are going to miss more than one, please email me, and unexcused absences will result in a lower discussion grade. Whether the absence is excused or not, make sure to coordinate with a fellow student to learn what you missed.

Covid-19 Protocols

I hope everyone will get a Covid vaccine, as this is the best way to protect ourselves and our communities from the disease. As an extra precaution, CU Denver is requiring we wear masks when indoors, at least for the start of the semester. If you are giving a presentation and can stand at least 10 feet from other people, you may remove your mask.

Course Schedule

August 23rd – Introduction

August 30th – Asking Research Questions and Theorizing

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 1: The Art and Science of Social Research." [Closely read the section on choosing a question, pp. 22-23 & 26. The PDF of the first two chapters is on Canvas, but you'll need the book by next class.]

Luker, Kristin. 2009. "Salsa Dancing? In the Social Sciences?" *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Harvard University Press. [You can skim this chapter, but make sure to grasp what "The Damnation of the Ten Thousand Index Cards" is.]

Luker, Kristin. 2009. "Chapter 4: What Is This a Case of Anyway?" *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Harvard University Press.

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 2: Research Foundations: Linking Sociological Theory to Research."

Optional: Calarco, Jessica. 2018. "Grad School's Hidden Curriculum." *Scatterplot*.
<https://scatter.wordpress.com/2018/07/24/guest-post-grad-schools-hidden-curriculum/>
[Calarco also has a book, *A Field Guide to Grad School*.]

Exercise 1: Drawing on the readings, write three research questions you would like to answer with your research proposal. Post them to the Canvas discussion board before class.

Exercise 2: Email Brenden (Brenden.Beck@ucdenver.edu) your top two or three choices for the debate you'd like to study and present. Also let him know if there are any dates you anticipate not being able to present.

September 6th – Labor Day, no class

September 13th – Choosing a Method, Building an Argument, and Evaluating Others' Research

Luker, Kristin. 2009. "What's It All About?" *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Harvard University Press. [This is a history of quant and qual methods and a critique of each]

Krippner, Greta. Undated. "Making a Sociological Argument"
<https://dept.writing.wisc.edu/wac/making-a-sociological-argument-orienting-students-to-a-new-field/>

Freese, Jeremy, Brian Powell, and Lala Carr Steelman. 1999. "Rebel Without Cause or Effect: Birth Order and Social Attitudes," *American Sociological Review* 64: 207-231. [Krippner references this article in her piece, so refer to it as you read the Krippner, but you don't have to read it thoroughly.]

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 5: Evaluating Research: Reliability and Validity."

Optional: Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14(3): 227-249.

Exercise 1: Identify two books or articles that make you want to be a sociologist. Post citations to these "north star" texts to the Canvas discussion page before class. At least one should be an article from a top sociology journal or a book by a sociologist. Come prepared to talk about why these texts speak to you, what methods they use, and who the authors are. Throughout the semester we'll return to our north star texts to see how they applied the concepts we're learning.

Exercise 2: Use the data collection app that Dr. Sullivan introduced to us last class.

September 20th – Research Ethics and Causality

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 3: Ethical Issues in Social Science Research."

American Sociological Association. 2018. *Code of Ethics*. [Be ready to answer: What is "informed consent?" Can sociologists deceive research subjects? If another scholar asks for your data, should you provide it to them?]

Bartlett, Tom. 2015. "The Unraveling of Michael LaCour." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. June 2nd.

American Sociological Association. Undated. "Quick Tips for ASA Style."

Corbetta, Piergiorgio. Excerpt from "Chapter 4: Causality and Experimentation." pp. 88-94.

Freese, Jeremy and J. Alex Kevern. 2013. "Types of causes." Pp. 27-41 in *Handbook of Causal Analysis for Social Research*, edited by S.L. Morgan. Springer Netherlands. [This reading might be difficult. Take your time and work to understand the difference between counterfactual causes, Granger causes, and causes determined by manipulation. You can skip the "Causal Importance" section.]

Exercise: Complete the IRB training (details via separate document).

Optional: Winship, Christopher, and Stephen L. Morgan. 1999. "The Estimation of Causal Effects from Observational Data." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25(1): 659-706.

Debate presenter(s): _____

September 27th – Conceptualization and Measurement

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 4: From Concepts to Models: Hypotheses, Operationalization, and Measurement."

Lauritsen, Janet L., Maribeth L. Rezey, and Karen Heimer. 2016. "When Choice of Data Matters: Analyses of US Crime Trends, 1973–2012." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 32(3): 335-355. [How does our measure of crime change our understanding of it?]

Zapatka, Kasey and Brenden Beck. "Does Demand Lead Supply? Gentrifiers and Developers in the Sequence of Gentrification." *Urban Studies* 58(11): 2348-2368. [How do the authors turn the three theories into measures? Are those measures a good fit for the concepts?]

Exercise: Using research databases, find at least six articles, books, or book chapters from high-quality sources that address your research question. Complete a search log describing which terms you searched. You can use the Luker search log on p. 242 and the one Brenden presented in class as models. Post search log and an ASA-formatted bibliography of the six sources to Canvas at least an hour before class.

Optional: Van Hook, Jennifer, Jennifer E. Glick and Frank D. Bean. 1999. "Public Assistance Receipts Among Immigrants and Natives: How the Unit of Analysis Affects Research Findings." *Demography* 36(1): 111-120.

Debate presenter(s): _____

October 4th – Sampling and Survey Research

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 6: Sampling Strategies."

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 7: Survey Research."

McCall, Leslie, and Fiona Chin. 2013. "Does Knowledge of Inequality Affect Beliefs about Inequality?" Presentation to the *Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.*

Small, Mario. 2009. "'How Many Cases Do I Need?' On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research." *Ethnography* 10(1): 5-38.

Calarco, Jessica. Undated. "Academic Article Outline."

Exercise: Choose a sociological article or book chapter (it can be your north star article or an article you found last week) and write an outline of how it is organized. You might use the article's headings to structure your outline. Include a short description of each of these elements (if they appear): the frame, research question, hypotheses, literature review, data, methods, findings, and conclusions. Review Luker ch. 4 if you need a

refresher on frames. Roughly how many words and sources does the text use? Post your outline to the Canvas discussion page at least an hour before class.

Debate presenter(s): _____

October 11th – Ethnography

Guest: Dr. Esther Sullivan.

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 10: Ethnography."

Sullivan, Esther. 2018. "Methodological Appendix" from *Manufactured Insecurity*.

Contreras, Randol. 2012. "Getting the Shit" from *The Stick-up Kids*.

Luker. 2008. "Reviewing the Literature." Pp 76-98 from *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*.

Optional: Edin & Jencks. 1992. "Welfare" from *Rethinking Social Policy*.

Exercise 1: Identify an *Annual Review* piece and two ASA sections that overlap with your research and post them to Canvas at least an hour before class. Then, draw a "daisy" with the subfields of your research as described by Luker on p. 98 and include a picture of your daisy in the same Canvas post.

Exercise 2: If you were to use ethnography to answer your research question, what would your field site be? Who would be some key informants? Would you be a complete participant, participant observer, observer, or covert observer? What is a challenge you foresee encountering? You do not need to post this to Canvas, but come ready to discuss it.

Debate presenter(s): _____

October 18th – In-depth Interviewing and Focus Groups

Guest: Dr. Edelina Burciaga.

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 11: In-Depth Interviewing."

Burciaga, Edelina and Aaron Malone. 2021. "Intensified Liminal Legality: The Impact of the DACA Rescission for Undocumented Young Adults in Colorado." *Law & Social Inquiry*. Online First.

Exercise: If you were to use in-depth interviews to address your research question, what would your sample be? Write down the sample and three questions, prompts, or probes you would use to address your research question. You do not need to post your answers Canvas, but come ready to discuss them.

Optional: Morgan, David L. 1996. "Focus groups." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:129-152.

Debate presenter(s): _____

October 25th – Univariate and Bivariate Analysis of Quantitative Data

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 13: Univariate and Bivariate Analysis of Quantitative Data."

Kliff, Sarah. 2014. "The Mystery of the Falling Teen Birth Rate." *Vox*, January 21st.

Exercise: Use Social Explorer to look at change in one Denver neighborhood.

Debate presenter(s): _____

November 1st –Multivariate Quantitative Methods and Experiments

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 16: Multivariate and Advanced Quantitative Methods." [This chapter is a PDF.]

Sharkey, Patrick, Gerard Torrats-Espinosa, and Delaram Takyar. 2017. "Community and the crime decline: The causal effect of local nonprofits on violent crime." *American Sociological Review* 82(6): 1214-1240.

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 8: Experimental Research."

Choose **one** of the following to read and come prepared to explain it to the rest of the class:

Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5): 937-975.

McCall, Leslie, Derek Burk, Marie Laperrière, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2017. "Exposure to Rising Inequality Shapes Americans' Opportunity Beliefs and Policy Support." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114(36): 9593-9598.

Besbris, Max, Jacob William Faber, Peter Rich, and Patrick Sharkey. 2015. "Effect of Neighborhood Stigma on Economic Transactions." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112(16): 4994-4998.

Gaddis, S. Michael, and Nicholas DiRago. 2021 "Audit Studies of Housing in the United States: Established, Emerging, and Future Research" in *The Sociology of Housing* edited by B.J. McCabe and Eva Rosen.

Exercise: If you were to use multivariate analysis to address your research question, what kind of data would you use? Briefly google around to see if such datasets are out there or if you would have to collect your own data. What would your sample be? What are at least three variables you would analyze? Post your answers to Canvas at least an hour before class.

Debate presenter(s): _____

November 8th – Evaluation Research and Writing Tips

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 9: Evaluation Research."

Basu, Sanjay, Ankita Meghani, & Arjumand Siddiqi. 2017. "Evaluating the Health Impact of Large- Scale Public Policy Changes: Classical and Novel Approaches." *Annual Review of Public Health* 38:351-370.

Khan, Shamus. 2019. "Habits, Canvases, and Conversations: How I Think about Publishing." *Sociologica* 13(1): 21-27.

Williams, Joseph M. 2006. "Understanding the Principles of Clarity" from *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 9th edition. Pp 33-39.

Exercise: Review the basic parts of speech so you can identify, in written sentences, nouns, verbs, and objects. You do not need to post anything.

Optional: Mensh, Brett & Kording, Konrad. 2017. "Ten Simple Rules for Structuring Papers." *PLoS Computational Biology* 13(9). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1005619>

Optional: Zuckerman, Ezra. 2008. "Tips for Article Writers." <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/shared/ods/documents?PublicationDocumentID=7627>

Optional: *Sociologica* issue on publication strategies: <https://sociologica.unibo.it/issue/view/788>

Debate presenter(s): _____

November 15th – Mixed Methods

Small, Mario Luis. 2011. "How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature," *Annual Review of Sociology* 37: 57-86.

Fong, Kelley and Sarah Faude. 2018. "Timing Is Everything: Late Registration and Stratified Access to School Choice." *Sociology of Education* 91(3): 242-262.

Lauren Rivera and András Tilcsik. 2016. "Class Advantage, Commitment Penalty: The Gendered Effect of Social Class Signals in an Elite Labor Market," *American Sociological Review* 81(6): 1097-1131.

Matthew Desmond. 2012. "Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty," *American Journal of Sociology* 118(1): 88-133.

Small, Mario Luis, Erin M. Jacobs, and Rebekah Peeples Massengill. 2008. "Why Organizational Ties Matter for Neighborhood Effects: Resource Access through Childcare Centers." *Social Forces* 87(1): 387-414.

Exercise: Complete the subject and verb writing exercises Brenden handed out last class.

Debate presenter(s): _____

November 22nd – Thanksgiving break, no class

November 29th – Spatial methods and reproducibility

Baller, Robert D., and Kelly K. Richardson. 2002 "Social Integration, Imitation, and the Geographic Patterning of Suicide." *American Sociological Review* 67(6): 873-888.

Logan, John R. 2012. "Making a place for space: Spatial thinking in social science." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 507-524.

Dominus, Susan. 2017. "When the Revolution Came for Amy Cuddy." *The New York Times Magazine*.

Exercise: None. Finish work on your research proposal and presentation.

Optional: Beck, Brenden. 2020. "Policing Gentrification: Stops and Low-Level Arrests during Demographic Change and Real Estate Reinvestment." *City & Community* 19(1): 245-272.

Debate presenter(s): _____

December 6th – Research Proposal Presentations

December 10th – Research proposal due by 5pm via Canvas.