

Course Syllabus

Sociological Research Methods (SOC 3020, Section 01), Fall 2021, Prof. Jeff Seymour
Updated 9/7/2021

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Sociological Research Methods (SOC 3020, Section 01), 4 Credits Sociology Department - Carthage College

Course and Professor Information

When: Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays; 10:30 a.m. to 11:35 a.m.

Course Location: Hedberg Library 470 217A.

Website for Schedule, Assignments, Grades, Readings, etc.: [Schoolology](https://lms.carthage.edu) [lms.carthage.edu].

Instructor: Prof. Jeff Seymour, Ph.D. (he/him/his).

Email or iMessage: jseymour@carthage.edu.

Office: Lentz Hall 426. Please note that I'd prefer all our *one-on-one* interactions to be virtual.

Virtual Office Hours: Click [link](#) to schedule an appointment.

Book an appointment with Prof. Seymour with your Carthage Gmail account to have a conversation about anything related to academics, advising, or Carthage. Soon after you book your slot I'll manually add a video chat invite that will sync with your Google Calendar.

Mondays & Wednesdays: 3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Tuesdays & Thursdays: 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Statement of Inclusive Learning

I strive to be welcoming, honest, and fair. Your success is important to me and the Carthage community. If aspects of this course prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can learn to improve my teaching. I encourage you to make an office hours appointment or [email me](#) at any time--day or night--and I should be able to respond within 24 hours on weekdays. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

Carthage seeks to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers due to a disability (e.g., mental health, learning disorders, and/or chronic medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations for disabilities, you also need to register with the [Director of Learning Accessibility Services](#), Diane Schowalter (contact her at dschowalter1@carthage.edu or 262-551-5802). Additionally, please contact me or any other trusted Carthage faculty or staff member if you lack financial resources to meet your basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, transportation, technology, textbooks); we'll try to help you as best we can.

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There are also other resources on campus available for all students, including the [Brainard Writing Center](#), [Peer Tutoring](#), [Academic Coaching](#), and the [Center for Student Success](#) for academic support; the [Health and Counseling Center](#) for free and confidential help for your physical, mental, and emotional well-being (including [After Hours / Crisis Care](#)); [Equity and Inclusion](#) for a directory of diversity-related resources including information on our [Bias Education Response Team](#); [Title IX Coordinators](#) for concerns about sex discrimination or sexual violence; the [Aspire Program](#) for vocational needs; and the [Big Red Book Fund](#) and [Luther's Lunchbox](#) for students facing financial and/or food insecurity.

Course Description

Official catalog description: This seminar covers the sociological methods of research, including their relation to social theory. It examines the main types of research designs, research ethics, the writing of reports, and the evaluation of research information.

Additional notes specific to this section: Think of this seminar as a topical “workshop” that is designed to challenge you to not only “think like a sociologist,” but to act like one too. This seminar is built on four necessary and interactive activities: learning, seeing, doing, and discussing.

- 1) Learn: identify the building blocks of sociological research by learning principles of empirical data collection and analysis.
- 2) See: observe and evaluate these principles in action as we examine published examples of social science research.
- 3) Do: actively engage in core aspects of the research process--both individually and as learning teams--so that we might gain an understanding of the unique challenges and promises that can accompany social research.
- 4) Discuss: live out a “learning community” in which we collaborate in forming questions and seeking answers, thus helping us become better sociologists, researchers, co-workers, and stewards of information.

Course Prerequisites

SOC 1000 (Introduction to Sociology) should be taken before you enroll in this course.

Course Learning Objectives

As a result of this course, you should be able to:

- 1) Actively engage in basic techniques of data collection and analysis as individuals and in teams, including surveys, interviews, content analysis, and basic statistical analyses.
- 2) Evaluate the validity, generalizability, and ethics of published empirical research.
- 3) Gain confidence in your ability to ask, justify, and begin to answer sociologically relevant research questions.

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- 4) Identify yourself not just as a student who takes sociology courses, but as an emerging sociologist equipped with desirable skills for success in multiple contexts.
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Required Text

In addition to required supplemental readings posted on our Schoology page as PDFs, the required text below is available to purchase or rent at the campus [bookstore](#).

Gordon, L. E. (2019 / 2020). *Real research: Research methods sociology students can use* (2nd ed.). Sage. [ISBN: 9781544339689].

Important Notes about Required Texts:

- 1) College is expensive. Contact me as soon as possible if you have financial difficulty acquiring this required text and we'll try to find a solution.
 - 2) The Carthage Bookstore will [match prices](#) of Amazon, bn.com, and other sellers on hard copies of "new, used, and used rentals." See [here](#) for details.
 - 3) For book rentals from the Carthage Bookstore, note that "[Normal use of highlighting and writing](#)" is allowed. However, the bookstore can refuse to accept your rental at the end of the term if there is "excessive" highlighting, writing or other markings.
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Methods of Evaluation

This course does *not* use a "point system." Instead, we'll use "weighted grades" that make some course categories worth more than others. Additionally, there is "equal weighting" for each assignment *within* each course category listed below (i.e., even though Quiz 1 might have 20 questions and Quiz 2 might have 15 questions, both quizzes are worth the same proportion of your final grade). You can learn more about the "weighted grades" system and "equal weighting" [here](#).

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Course Component	Weight	Note
In-class Exercises / Activities	15%	Two lowest scores dropped
Out-of-class Preparation / Application	30%	Two lowest scores dropped
3 x Mini Research Project Posters	20%	Re-do(s) encouraged
7 x Quizzes	20%	Lowest score dropped
Project Proposal	10%	
Directed Learning Independent Project	5%	

1) In-class Exercises / Activities

- We'll often have in-class exercises or in-class writings. These are usually graded as "satisfactory" (+100) or "unsatisfactory" (+0) based on attendance and good faith effort.
- Aside from officially excused absences you *must* be in class to have a chance to earn these points. However, every student is allowed to miss two in-class exercises with no impact on their final grade.

2) Out-of-class Preparation / Application

- This isn't the type of class where you're regularly meant to be exposed to new information during in-class "lecture." Instead, you're challenged to engage with assigned material and independently learn on your own *before* coming to class. For nearly every class period you'll be asked to do some assessment related to our course content that will prepare you for that day's topic (i.e., pre-class work) or extend what we've discussed in a previous class (i.e., post-class work). This might mean taking a short reading assessment before class, written reflection on key ideas from assigned texts, completing an online simulation, etc.
- Unless otherwise announced, these assessments will be completed on Schoology.
- Assessments on Schoology are untimed, "open-book," and due one hour before class begins.
- When these assessments are in "quiz" form with right/wrong answers, you'll almost always have **two** chances to select the correct responses before the due date. This essentially means you're allowed to "retake" an online assessment on Schoology after your first submission.
- If you miss class, check Schoology to see what is due for the next class period.
- Your **two** lowest scores will be dropped when computing your final grade.

3) Mini Research Project Posters

- There are three writing assignments in poster format related to data collection and analysis for three different research methods: interviewing, surveys, and content analysis. Prompts and templates for these posters are posted on Schoology about a week before their due dates.
- Mini Research Project Posters must always be submitted to Schoology by 10 p.m. on the

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assigned due date.

- You'll have the opportunity to increase your letter grade on each poster by up to 10 percentage points if you make significant improvements from your original submission.

4) Quizzes

- There are seven quizzes on chapters in Gordon's text. You'll complete these quizzes online outside of class time and can use your own notes (but, you can't use Gordon's text).
- Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.
- Quizzes include both multiple-choice questions and shorter writing responses.

5) Project Proposal

- You'll propose a feasible research project that uses one of the following methods: interviewing, surveys, secondary data analysis, or content analysis
- This assignment will be compiled in chunks throughout the semester and is due at the semester's end.
- The final research proposal will be graded on an A to F scale. Any required drafts of various components (e.g., topic, question, "so what," literature review, methods outline) turned in during the semester will be graded "satisfactory" (+100), "needs a bit of effort yet" (+80), or "unsatisfactory" (+0).

6) Directed Learning Independent Project

- I will provide a list of smaller projects you could do on your own that relate to our course content and your individual academic or professional interests. This is meant to allow you to extend or more deeply apply content related to our course that we won't have time to cover as an entire class.
- This assignment is due at the semester's end.

Course Policies

Academic Discourse Expectations

Borrowed from [Evelyn Alsutany](#): "Each student is encouraged to take an active part in class discussions and activities. Honest and respectful dialogue is expected. Disagreement and challenging of ideas in a supportive and sensitive manner is encouraged. Hostility and disrespectful behavior is not acceptable. Just as we expect others to listen attentively to our own views, we must reciprocate and listen to others when they speak, especially when we disagree with them."

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Grades

Grades are updated on Schoology. Midterm grades are only reported for students with low performance (i.e., grades of “D” or “F”). Your final grade is calculated with [weighted](#) means of each course component’s mean score resulting in a letter grade:

A+	Not awarded	B+	87 - 89.99	C+	77 -79.99	D+	67 - 69.99	F	0 - 59.99
A	93 - 100	B	83 - 86.99	C	73 - 76.99	D	63 - 66.99		
A-	90 - 92.990	B-	80 - 82.99	C-	70 - 72.99	D-	60 - 62.99		

Borderline final grades that fall within one tenth of the next level will be adjusted upward to the next level (e.g., 92.90 becomes an “A”) if you fulfill both criteria: 1) Turn in *all* assignments on time with no extensions, and 2) Have perfect attendance (i.e., no unexcused absences beyond your two personal days).

[Incomplete grades](#) are generally only given in exceptional cases of illness or other uncontrollable factors and must be approved by me before final exam week.

Late/Make-up Work

If you know you cannot make a particular deadline, contact me beforehand and we’ll discuss if an alternative deadline is appropriate. Otherwise, see the policies on late/make-up work below:

Course Component	Late/Make-up Work Course Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Out-of-class Preparation / Application• Quizzes• Mini Research Project Posters	Marked down 10% for each 24-hour period after the due date. Assignments that are 10 days late will receive 0%. All missing assignments before the last day of the semester will be 0%.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-class Exercises / Activities	No late or make-up work is accepted. Aside from officially excused absences and your two “personal days,” you must be in class to earn these points.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research Proposal• Directed Learning Independent Project	These must be submitted to Schoology by the end of the semester. Late assignments will receive no credit.

“Extension Bank” for Late Work

All students will experience circumstances outside class that make it difficult to turn in assigned work on time. Because of this, I’ve created an “Extension Bank” that you can “withdraw” from throughout the semester. With “no-questions-asked,” you have up to five days to use for extensions.

Visit [this link](#) before the assigned due date if you want extra time to complete an assignment. You can use these five days however you choose; for example, you might use two days extension on a Mini Research Project Poster, two days extension on a different Mini Research

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Project Poster, and one day extension on a Quiz. Do note that these extensions shouldn't be used for in-class assignments.

Disputed Grades

Contact me in writing if you feel you have been incorrectly awarded a particular grade to begin a conversation regarding your grades. Include a paragraph describing:

- 1) How your work fulfills the assignment's expectations,
- 2) What specific components of your work are deserving of a higher grade,
- 3) What text and page numbers you based your original work on, and
- 4) What you believe your modified grade should be.

Attendance

Although this semester presents continued challenges to consistent attendance, I still hope you will attend every class session when you're healthy enough to do so.

Q: Prof. Seymour, do you have an attendance policy?

A: I keep daily attendance records and I encourage you to attend every class. First, I think our class is better when we have a wider range of voices, skills, and experiences. Second, being present is the only way you can earn credit for in-class exercises. Third, accumulating a significant and unusual number of absences (i.e., 9 or more) will result in automatic failure of this course. It's also almost always a sign that something else is happening in your life, and we should figure out a way for you to get any help you might need. A written warning will be issued to you and your advisor before a failing grade is given for excessive absences.

Q: What about "excused" absences that won't count against me? Is that a thing?

A: Yes, there are three categories of "excused" absences in this course. Email me with as much notice as possible if you'll miss class for one of these three reasons:

- 1) Documented health issue confirmed by a medical professional or the Dean of Students' Office. Note: this does not include events such as scheduling a routine visit to your dentist/doctor during regular class hours.
- 2) Death in the immediate family confirmed by the Dean of Students' Office.
- 3) Required participation at an official Carthage event as a member of a Carthage organization or athletic team confirmed by your coach or advisor.

To keep my records straight, your absence will not be marked as "excused" until *after* all appropriate documents are shared with me.

Q: What if I have a bad cold or stomach ache and don't go to the doctor? Or, what if I accidentally sleep in? Or, if my car runs out of gas? Or, if my family surprises me with a cruise vacation?

A: Yes, life happens. I do try to account for this in my grading criteria in a way that addresses this as simply and fairly as possible. Each student is given **two** unexcused absences with no penalties for missing any in-class exercises. Think of these as "personal days." No need to notify me when you're taking a "personal day." Note that "personal days" are different from

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assignment extensions; you're still expected to complete all assignments on their original due dates.

Accommodations for Religious Observances

Provide me with a written request within the first three weeks of class to better accommodate any course conflicts with specific religious observances.

Extra Credit

There will be no opportunities for extra credit. Our grading policies are already quite flexible.

Academic Honesty

I will follow the [Academic Honesty Guidelines](#) in Carthage's Community Code. The following acts are never acceptable: plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized cooperative work, false citation, unauthorized resubmission of your work prepared for a separate class, false data, and submitting work prepared by others. Penalties for academic dishonesty can include warnings, point deductions, failure of assignments, failure of the course, or dismissal from the college. These penalties are dependent on the extent of the violation, history of violations, and instructor discretion.

A portion of this class will rely on the honor system. For example, if you're asked to take a quiz without consulting our assigned text it's impossible for me to enforce this policy. However, I trust you to make ethical decisions.

The most common forms of academic dishonesty seem to be the intentional use of uncited information from Google searches and the use of online paraphrase tools in writing assignments. Both are easily detectable through programs like [CopyLeaks](#). You should avoid these techniques and instead do the following: 1) Rely on the information in your assigned materials instead of turning to Google, and 2) Be transparent in where you get your information by acknowledging the inclusion of someone else's ideas or words with an appropriate citation and reference even if you don't use direct quotations. A major goal of this course is for you to *interact with* others' ideas and words, *not* to simply repeat others' words and ideas.

The American Psychological Association (APA) citation method is **required** for this class (see <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/> for an overview), but any citation method that gives credit to the original authors is sufficient.

Masks On Campus

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Carthage College has adopted a policy requiring masks to be worn by all individuals in all buildings. Masks must be worn at all times in the classroom, laboratory, studio spaces, hallways, bathrooms, and during in-person meetings. The face covering must conform to CDC guidelines and must cover both the nose and mouth at all times. Note that bandanas, neck gaiters, and masks with exhalation or external valves are not acceptable and are not sufficient for protection of others or yourself. Acceptable masks tie behind the head or loop behind the ears, fit snugly over the nose and chin, and can include cloth masks, medical/surgical masks, and N95s or KN95s. Eating and/or drinking are prohibited while in the classroom (because those activities interfere with consistent mask wearing).

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Any student who refuses to wear a mask or consistently forgets one will be dismissed from the class and not be given an opportunity to make up missed work. The student will also be referred to the Dean of Students, as outlined by the process on Carthage's Stay Safe website.

Stay Safe Guidelines: <https://www.carthage.edu/carthage-covid-19/stay-safe-carthage/>

Technology

We'll frequently use your laptop computers in class. If you do not have a reliable laptop please let me know as soon as possible. Please be "present" in class and keep your smartphone activities to a minimum. When you're using your computer for class try to focus on the academic task at hand.

Although not required, when at all possible I encourage you to take notes by hand. Recent research demonstrates that when compared to taking notes by hand, students' in-class laptop use typically presents "a significant distraction to both users and fellow students" ([Fried, 2008, p. 906](#)) and tends to lead to shallower understanding of conceptual issues discussed in class ([Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014](#)). Additionally, in-class text messaging can significantly impair classroom comprehension and retention, so much that "on average, students who text during class can decrease their initial learning from a B level (i.e., 81.11%) to a D level (i.e., 66.78%)" ([Gingerich & Lineweaver, 2013, p. 49](#)). As a social scientist I'm eager to make decisions based on empirical evidence, and although it doesn't really seem possible at this moment in time, we should also consider the empirical evidence that suggests [the best way to take notes isn't on your laptop](#).

Course Schedule

Our course schedule will *only* be updated on Schoology. The "Calendar" link on Schoology seems to be the clearest way to present assignments and other important information about scheduling.

I encourage you to embrace both patience and grace within the uncertainty that this semester will inevitably bring. Just know that I value each one of you as students, and I feel not only obligated but privileged to be here for you as best I can.