

SOC 3020

Sociological Research I

Spring I (2016)

Instructor: Rick Matthews
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Required Texts:

Russell K. Schutt: *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research (8th Edition)*. Sage.

Course Objectives: After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the relationship between sociological theory and the practice of research.
- Actively take part in basic techniques of data collection and analysis, including surveys, interviews, content analysis, field experiments, ethnography, and simple multiple regression.
- Develop an appreciation for ethically sound analyses of empirical evidence.
- Engage in methodologically informed critiques of research by published authors and your peers.
- Create a comprehensive research proposal to examine a topic of sociological relevance and personal interest.

Academic Dishonesty:

Cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Such conduct may result in a failing grade for this course. You must abide by the College Academic Honesty Guidelines discussed in the Student Community Code which can be found at: <http://www.carthage.edu/campuslife/code>

Statement on Learning Disabilities:

If you have a disability that affects your learning, please see me during the first week of class to discuss support and accommodations. You will also need to meet with Diane Schowalter in the Advising Center (x5802) and provide her with documentation, if you have not already done so.

Attendance:

Attendance for this class is required. Since this class only meets once a week for seven weeks, attendance is critical for your success in the class.

You are responsible for everything that transpires in class, including assignments, changes in the course schedule, etc. Missing class without an excuse from the College on the day we have an in-class writing assignment will result in a grade of zero for that assignment if you do not have any “freebies” left (see below, in-class writing).

Extra Credit:

There are no opportunities for extra credit in this course.

Classroom Conduct:

I expect students to conduct themselves in a professional manner. This means not talking to classmates during class, making sure your cell phone is turned off before coming to class, not text messaging during class, etc. If your behavior is disruptive or distracting to either me or someone else in the class, I will ask you to leave. Such an absence will affect your course grade (see above, attendance).

Grading:

Letter grades will be assigned using the following percentage scale:

A = 94% - 100%	B- = 80% - 82%	D+ = 67% - 69%
A- = 90% - 93%	C+ = 77% - 79%	D = 63% - 66%
B+ = 87% - 89%	C = 73% - 76%	D- = 60% - 62%
B = 83% - 86%	C- = 70% - 72%	F = 59% or less

Finally, I encourage you to keep the original copies of all your work in this course. This is important if you have any concerns about your grade at the end of the semester. I will not make grade changes without proof of the assignment.

Assignments

Late work acceptance policy: Any assignment that is turned in past the deadline will automatically lose one letter grade. All late assignments must be turned in prior to the start of the last class period of the semester (6:00 p.m. on week 7). Please note: falling behind with assignments will have a cumulative effect in that it will likely be harder for you to understand the course material. If you begin falling behind, please talk to me about your progress in the course.

Quizzes: 20% of overall course grade. There are 16 quizzes in this course that must be completed prior to class. The two lowest quiz scores will be dropped from your final grade.

Outside of class mini-projects: 20% of overall course grade. There are seven mini-projects for this course. Each mini-project must be submitted through eLearning prior to class on the day it is due. The lowest min-project grade will be dropped from your final grade. Please note: in order for you to get the most out of these assignments, it is important for you to complete the assigned readings before you begin them.

In class writing: 10% of overall course grade. Each of these assignments will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. The purpose of these assignments is to spark class discussion, and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Either you are present and participate through these writing assignments or you do not. Throughout the semester, you get one “freebie,” which means if you were not present on the day we did an in class writing assignment, your grade of zero will be thrown out. After the “freebie,” the only way to make up one of these assignments is with an excuse from the College (i.e., a doctor’s excuse, participation in an athletic event, etc.).

Research proposal: 50% of overall course grade. The research proposal is the final project for the course. It is broken down into several parts, each of which are listed below:

- Literature review matrix (10%)
- Annotated bibliography with 8 sources (10%)
- Literature review (10%)
- Final research proposal (20%)

I will provide instructions and handouts for each of the parts of the literature review on our eLearning site (under the handouts tab).

We will spend time in class each week working on various parts of the research proposal, so please bring a laptop with you to each class.

Course Schedule

Because this course is in an accelerated format, you will be expected to spend time outside of class working on projects, completing assignments, and preparing for the workshop portion of our class meetings. The workshop portion of our class time represents a “flipped” model of course instruction. Rather than using all of our class time to deliver course content, I will work with you to develop your project, answer questions, and help you to develop your confidence in doing social research. In flipping the class, though, I will expect you to do work independently before coming to class.

In order to get the most out of our class time together, it is important that you:

- Do all the assigned readings and assignments before coming to class.
- Come to class with any questions you might have.
- Come to class with your laptop, textbook, and other supporting materials to work in the workshop portion of class.

Below, I provide specific instructions for each week. Please read these instructions carefully.

Questions? If you have questions at any point during the semester, do not hesitate to contact me. I check my email several times a day. Likewise, if I need to communicate with the class, I will send an email. Please be sure to check your Carthage email at least once a day while taking this class.

Week 1

Work to be done outside of class, prior to class meeting:

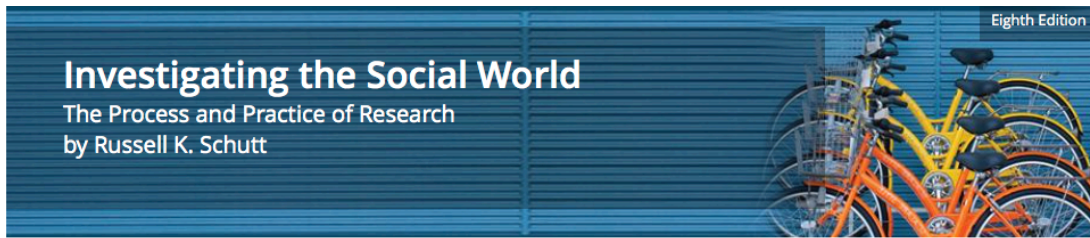
Reading: Schutt chapters 1, 2, & 3

Quizzes: Take online quizzes for chapter 1, 2, & 3.

<https://edge.sagepub.com/schutt8e>

When you get to the webpage above, you'll see the screen below. Under Student Resources, select the chapter quiz you'd like to complete.

You have the option to get immediate feedback, or summarized feedback—the choice is yours.



Student Resources

General Resources

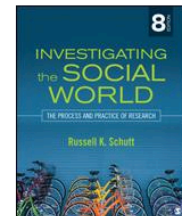
1. Science, Society, and Social Research >
2. The Process and Problems of Social Research >
3. Research Ethics and Research Proposals >
4. Conceptualization and Measurement >
5. Sampling and Generalizability >
6. Research Design and Causation >
7. Experiments >

Investigating the Social World

The Process and Practice of Research

Welcome to the SAGE edge site for *Investigating the Social World*, Eighth Edition.

The SAGE edge site for *Investigating the Social World* by Russell K. Schutt offers a robust online environment you can access anytime, anywhere, and features an impressive array of free tools and resources to keep you on the cutting edge of your learning experience.



Author: Russell K. Schutt
Pub Date: September 2014

Buy the book

Once you have completed the quiz, click on “report.” Be sure to enter my email address: rmatthews@carthage.edu and **INCLUDE YOUR OWN EMAIL ADDRESS AS ADDITIONAL RECIPIENT**. This second step is critical because it will allow me to see who submitted the quiz. This will also give you a record of your quiz. I will receive a copy of your quiz results as an email attachment.

If I do not receive your quizzes by 6:00 p.m. on the day they are due, you will lose one letter grade from each of those quiz scores once they have been completed.

Homework for research proposal: Please come to class tonight with at least two topics for your research proposal. Also, be sure to bring your laptop and the textbook.

Mini-project #1 (How do you think the world is organized?)

Positivist researchers believe the world has some underlying order of relationships, while interpretivist researchers believe the world is socially constructed. This project will give you a small taste of each philosophy.

Part 1:

1. Choose a social science topic that interests you. Common topics (such as politics, sports, personal hobbies, etc.) are better for this project.
2. Use the internet to find at least 10 sources of information on this topic. (These can be news articles, scientific journals, popular YouTube videos, informative websites, or anything else that provides helpful information on your topic.)

3. As you compile these sources, make a list of the common patterns, regularities, themes, shared information, etc. that are discussed. Record the frequency with which each of these patterns occurs.

Part 2:

1. Come up with at least 5 interview questions related to your chosen topic, and conduct brief interviews with at least 2 people you know. (These should be very brief and informal. You can interview family, friends, classmates, etc.)
2. As you interview people about your chosen topic, try to find out why each person has his/her opinions. It's more important here to find out *why* each person has his/her personal opinions, rather than *what* those opinions actually are. (e.g., *why* a person likes one football team more than another, rather than *which* football team they like.) Be sure to keep in mind the uniqueness of each person, and briefly try to find out *why* they have developed their opinions.
3. Note: You can use information from Part 1 to form your interview questions, OR you can conduct the interviews first and use the information gained from them to find related Internet sources.

Part 3:

1. Write a short paper (1-2 pages) that briefly summarizes the topic you chose for this project and what you found (from both Part 1 and 2 above). Please discuss which approach you believe helped you understand the topic more. Be sure to mention whether your research contributed more to basic science or to applied research.
2. As you write the paper, keep in mind which part of the project you did first. Did you do the interviews first, or the internet research? Did you use information from one in structuring the other? Do you think it would be easier to start with one and then move to another? Would you approach researching another topic in the same order again, or would you change?
3. Also, discuss whether you preferred the quantitative or qualitative approach to researching your topic. Do you think the personal interviews gave you a better understanding of the social world, or did the internet research give you more information to use in your interviews? Do you think it's better to use both approaches, or do you prefer one over the other? Why?

Once you have written your paper, submit it to me through the eLearning site (under Assignments, Mini-project 1). Your paper is due before the first class meeting. If I do not receive your paper by 6:00 p.m. that day, you will lose one letter grade for this assignment.

What we'll be doing in class, Week 1

We will spend the first hour of class tonight discussing the readings, and your mini-project.

Workshop: The last 2 hours of class we will work on selecting a topic for your research proposal, finding sources, and how to read research articles.

Week 2

Work to be done outside of class, prior to class meeting

Reading: Schutt, chapters 4, 5, & 6

Quiz: Take the online quizzes for chapters 4, 5, & 6

<https://edge.sagepub.com/schutt8e>

Homework for research proposal: Find 8 refereed journal articles related to the topic you are interested in researching. Note: you do not need to print the articles, you can save them electronically.

Mini project # 2 (Mixed methods and validity)

This project allows you to compare the validity of self-reports and actual behavior.

1. Find a copy of the state driving regulations that define a complete stop and print a copy of it.
2. Pick five people you know (family, friends, or co-workers) and let them read the legal definition of complete stop you printed out.
3. Once that person has read the legal definition of a complete stop, ask each one the following questions:
4.
 - How often do you come to a complete stop when you reach a stop sign?
 always sometimes never
 - How often do you believe others come to a complete stop?
 always sometimes never
5. After you have had five people answer your questions, locate an intersection controlled by a stop sign that you can observe safely and inconspicuously (from a porch, a café table, or a front yard). For the first ten cars that pass by, record whether or not the car came to a complete stop.
6. Write a brief (1-2 page) report to present the findings of your study. Be sure to include both the responses from the people you interviewed, as well as your observational findings. Your report should consider the validity of each procedure and answer the question: Are self-reports a good indicator of this driving behavior?

Once you have written your paper, submit it to me through the eLearning site (under Assignments, Mini-project 2). Your paper is due before our second class meeting. If I

do not receive your paper by 6:00 p.m. that day, you will lose one letter grade for this assignment.

Homework for research proposal: Bring to class your topic and 8 refereed journal articles that you've read. Your articles can be either electronic files or hardcopies.

What we'll be doing in class, Week 2

We will spend the first 1½ hours of class discussing the readings, quizzes, and min-project.

Workshop: We will work on the literature review matrix in class tonight. Be sure that you have your journal articles and your laptop.

Week 3

Work to be done outside of class, prior to class meeting

Reading: Schutt, chapters 7 & 8

Quiz: Take online quizzes for chapters 7 & 8

<https://edge.sagepub.com/schutt8e>

Mini project #3 (Evaluating the Milgram Experiment)

This project relates to the experiment conducted by Stanley Milgram on obedience to authority. Watch the video at the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9l_puxcrlM

Once you've watched the video, write an essay (1 to 2 pages) in which you answer each of the following questions.

1. In your own words, describe the experiment.
2. What type of experimental, quasi-experimental, or non-experimental design was used? Be sure to explain your answer.
3. What were some of the main findings of the experiment? Do you find them to be valid? Are the findings generalizable? Be sure to explain your answer.
4. Did the Milgram Experiment violate any ethical issues in experimental research? Be sure to explain your answer.

Once you have written your paper, submit it to me through the eLearning site (under Assignments, Mini-project 3). Your paper is due before our third class meeting. If I do

not receive your paper by 6:00 p.m. that day, you will lose one letter grade on this assignment.

Homework for research proposal: Literature review matrix is due by 6:00 p.m. Please submit your file through eLearning (under Assignments, Literature Review Matrix). If I do not receive your matrix by 6:00 p.m. on the third day of class, you will lose one letter grade for this assignment.

What we'll be doing in class, Week 3

We will discuss the readings and mini-projects for the first 1½ hours of class tonight.

Workshop: Tonight, we will begin working on the annotated bibliography assignment.

Week 4

Work to be done outside of class, prior to class meeting

Reading: Schutt, chapters 9 & 10

Quiz: Take online quizzes for chapters 9 & 10

<https://edge.sagepub.com/schutt8e>

Mini project #4: Interviewing—preliminary steps

In this project, you will conduct three key informant interviews.

1. Select a topic of interest that you know a little about but would like to explore further. It's not a good idea to choose a topic for which you are already an expert.
2. Do some preliminary investigation on the topic so that you have some idea of what are salient issues. Develop a list of at least ten key points that you would like more information about. Write specific questions about each point and think about non-directive probes that could be used. Run a mock interview on a friend.
3. Once you have left the interview, jot down your impressions of the interview, including your own thoughts and feelings. This should be free-form, stream-of-consciousness writing, but should be as thorough as possible.
4. Modify your interview schedule (list of questions) based on the first interview.
5. Write a brief essay (1 to 2 pages) about what you learned from the process of interviewing. Was it as easy as you thought? What were the most difficult parts of the process? If you decide to interview people in the future, what will you do differently?

Once you have written your paper, submit it to me through the eLearning site (under Assignments, Mini-project 4). Your paper is due before our fourth class meeting. If I do not receive your paper by 6:00 p.m. that day, you will lose one letter grade for this assignment.

Homework for research proposal: Annotated bibliography is due. Please submit your file through eLearning (under Assignments, Annotated Bibliography). If I do not receive your Annotated Bibliography by 6:00 p.m. on the fourth day of class, you will lose one letter grade on this assignment.

What we'll be doing in class, Week 4

We will discuss the readings and mini-projects for the first hour of class tonight.

Workshop: We will spend the last 2 hours of class writing the literature review. I will cover topics like organization, integrating source material, and citing in APA.

Week 5

Work to be done outside of class, prior to class meeting

Reading: Schutt, chapters 11, & 12

Quiz: Take online quizzes for chapters 11, & 12

<https://edge.sagepub.com/schutt8e>

Mini project #5: Social Behavior in Public Places

For this project, you will conduct a short observational study of social behavior in a public place.

1. Select a public setting with a large number of people that is open to the public and where you can hang around without appearing too conspicuous. Use discretion when choosing your public place. For example, you do not want to pick a place where your presence will be obvious: e.g., the indoor play area at McDonald's. Public settings with many people, like parks or sporting events, work well. Go to the setting only to conduct this assignment—not because you have business or social plans there.
2. Plan to spend about 20 minutes conducting your study. Allow at least that much time soon afterward to write up your notes (and, of course, more time than that to write the paper). Prepare a tentative plan for observing, emphasizing phenomena that are of most interest to you and that you believe will be most helpful in understanding social behavior at this location. Consider observing the frequency and type of interactions between people, and so on. You should observe

- nonverbal cues and body language, exits and entrances, spatial arrangements of people, and so on. Also review mentally from your previous experiences in this type of setting to help you decide how to focus your formal observational experience.
3. While you are observing, take brief notes as unobtrusively as possible. Depending on the setting, you might want to go outside or to another area to unobtrusively jot down a few notes.
 4. Write up your notes in as much detail as possible (try to record all that you observed) soon after leaving the setting (but do not try to record everything “while it is happening,” because you’ll miss too much!) Record what you observed as accurately as possible. Be sure to include in your notes a description of the place that you observed and of the types of people in the setting. Try to focus on the situation, the types of people in it, and how they interact, not on particular individuals or socially irrelevant activities (such as the color of clothes worn). You may try to infer characteristics such as social class and mood from what you observe about people, but be sure and cite the evidence for your inferences. For example, you might notice that everyone in the setting is dressed in shorts and t-shirts. What might you infer from that? If you make an inference, be sure you provide some evidence or detail that supports it (e.g., shorts and t-shirts as an indicator of casualness).
 5. You may wish to count the number of activities, persons of different types, and so on. If anyone asks you what you are doing, you should mention that you are observing people’s behavior for a class assignment.
 6. Begin your research report by identifying the issue(s) that you studied in the setting. In a methods section, describe the setting and draw a map of it. Report briefly on how your “study” developed: how you entered the setting, what you first noticed in the setting, how you felt in the setting, what you did during the observational period, and what impact you seemed to have on the setting. Present your findings, identifying the different types of behavior and types of interactions and/or groups you observed. Note the frequency of occurrence of these behaviors, how their occurrence varied, and who engaged in which behaviors. Try to identify the similarities and differences between people and groups engaged in different behaviors.
 7. Analyze your observations by writing a short essay (2-3 pages). (Please note: this is the paper that you will submit to me through eLearning for this min-project, see below). What have you learned about social behavior in this setting? Are differences in social status or other characteristics important in influencing behavior in this type of setting? In your conclusions, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your study and explain how generalizable you believe your findings are. What general conclusions about social relations or human behavior can you draw from your study? How effective was your methodology? What hypotheses and methods would you suggest for future research? Note any influence that your own orientation toward or role in the setting may have had on your observations and interpretations.

Please bring your notes and other materials you wrote for parts 1-8 above to class.

Once you have written your paper, submit it to me through the eLearning site (under Assignments, Mini-project 5). Your paper is due before our fifth class meeting. If I do not receive your paper by 6:00 p.m. that day, you will lose one letter grade for this assignment.

Homework for research proposal: Rough draft of your literature review is due. Please submit your file through eLearning (under Assignments, Rough draft of literature review). If I do not receive your Rough draft of your literature review by 6:00 p.m. on the day of our fifth class meeting, you will lose one letter grade on the final grade of your literature review assignment (which is due next week).

What we'll be doing in class, Week 5

We will discuss the readings and mini-projects for the first 1½ hours of class tonight.

Workshop: We will spend the last 1½ hours of class developing a research a question and proposing a method (or methods) to answer it.

Week 6

Work to be done outside of class, prior to class meeting

Reading: Schutt, chapters 13 & 14

Quiz: Take online quiz for chapters 13 & 14

<https://edge.sagepub.com/schutt8e>

Mini project #6: Content Analysis: Gender and Advertising

1. Select a popular magazine that you have in your possession.
2. Count the number of advertisements (not classified advertisements) in the magazine. Assign each advertisement a unique code (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
3. Code all advertisements using the following coding scheme. Each ad should have a single code (e.g., A, Ciii, Dii2, Eiv).

Coding Scheme:

- a. No people shown in ad
- b. Body part or parts shown, not face
 - i. Gender indeterminate
 - ii. Apparently male
 - iii. Apparently female
- c. Single face shown

- i. Gender indeterminate
 - ii. Male
 - iii. Female
 - d. Two faces shown
 - i. Gender indeterminate
 - ii. One male and
 - 1. one person, gender indeterminate
 - 2. one male
 - 3. one female
 - iii. Two females
 - iv. One female and one person, gender indeterminate
 - e. Three or faces shown
 - i. Gender indeterminate
 - ii. All male
 - iii. All female
 - iv. Mixed male and female
 - 1. Same number of males and females
 - 2. More male than female
 - 3. More female than male
- 4. Count the number of ads that fall into each coding category.
- 5. Write a brief report (1 to 2 pages) in which you present the totals for each category and suggest any patterns you might see in the data.

Once you have written your paper, submit it to me through the eLearning site (under Assignments, Mini-project 6). Your paper is due before our sixth class meeting. If I do not receive your paper by 6:00 p.m. that day, you will lose one letter grade for this assignment.

Homework for research proposal: Final copy of literature review is due. Please submit your file through eLearning (under Assignments, Literature Review). If I do not receive your literature review by 6:00 p.m. on the sixth day our class meets, you will lose one letter grade on this assignment.

Also, please bring to class your proposed research question and ideas about the method(s) you might use to answer it.

What we'll be doing in class, Week 6

We will discuss the readings and mini-projects for the first 1½ hours of class tonight.

Workshop: We will spend the last 1½ hours of class fine tuning your research proposal, and putting it all together.

Week 7

Work to be done outside of class, prior to class meeting

Reading: Schutt, chapters 15 & 16

Quiz: Take online quizzes for chapters 15 & 16

<https://edge.sagepub.com/schutt8e>

Mini project #7: Revising your research proposal, Reverse Outlining

This project requires you to look at your final draft of your research proposal.

1. Not including the conclusion, read the last paragraph of your paper.
2. Write the basic idea in this paragraph in one sentence or less. If there is more than one basic idea in the paragraph, split it.
3. Proceed to the paragraph that precedes it and write its basic idea in one sentence or less.
4. Repeat Step 3 until you have reached the introduction to your paper.
5. Read the statements in reverse order, so that you begin with the beginning of the paper and end with the end.
6. Highlight any paragraphs that are irrelevant or redundant.
7. Match this outline with your intended outline. If they don't match, you've got some revising to do (but don't we all!)

Once you have completed this process and made revisions to your research proposal, write a short report (1-2 pages) that answers the following questions: What were the biggest challenges in writing your research proposal this semester? What do you wish you would have known before you started your project? What would you change about it? What are the most important things you learned while writing your proposal? Is this project something that you might want to develop further for your senior thesis? Why or why not?

Once you have written your report, submit it to me through the eLearning site (under Assignments, Mini-project 7). If I do not receive your paper by 6:00 p.m. on the day of our seventh class meeting, you will lose one letter grade for this assignment.

What we'll be doing in class, Week 7

We will discuss the readings and mini-projects for the first part of class tonight, and then wrap up the course by talking about future projects you might want to consider.