

Sociology 310

Introduction to Research Methods

Tuesday and Thursday, 2:30 pm-4:00 pm
Auditorium B, Angell Hall

Instructor: Professor Yu Xie.

Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs): Rebecca Karb, Na Na Lee, and Susan Lee-Rife
Semester: Winter 2008.

Labs:

- Lab 1 (Section 002): Rebecca Karb, 9-10 Friday, 4128 LSA
- Lab 2 (Section 003): Susan Lee-Rife, 10-11 Friday, 4128 LSA
- Lab 3 (Section 004): Susan Lee-Rife, 11-12, Friday, 4128 LSA
- Lab 4 (Section 005): Na Na Lee 9-10, Friday, 3242 LSA
- Lab 5 (Section 006): Rebecca Karb, 10-11, Friday, 3242 LSA
- Lab 6 (Section 007): Na Na Lee, 11-12, Friday, 3242 LSA

Offices:

- Yu Xie: 2074 ISR
- Rebecca Karb: 3224 LSA
- Na Na Lee: 3253 LSA
- Susan Lee-Rife: 2112 ISR

Office Hours:

- Yu Xie: 10-12 Wednesday or by appointment.
- Rebecca Karb: Monday 1-3
- Na Na Lee: Thursday 12-2
- Susan Lee-Rife: Tuesday 12:15 - 2:15

E-Mail addresses for instructors:

- Yu Xie: yuxie@umich.edu.
- Rebecca Karb: rakarb@umich.edu
- Na Na Lee: naleigh@umich.edu
- Susan Lee-Rife: susanml@umich.edu

Home Page: Ctools. Some material is posted on my personal website:
<http://personal.psc.isr.umich.edu/yuxie-web/soc310/>

Required Textbooks:

- (1) Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 11th edition (hereafter Babbie);
- (2) A course pack on the course webpage.

Objective: This course teaches the basic research methods used by social scientists: observation, survey, experimentation, and statistics. It demonstrates the logic (as well as the “illogic”) of reasoning in social science. Substantial emphasis of the course will be placed on writing research papers. Your research projects will be based either on existing data that are available on the internet or on new data that you will collect yourselves. No late work is to be accepted except under extreme circumstances. There will be no incompletes.

Course Requirements: From the second class onward, a certain amount of reading is required for each class. Please complete the assigned reading before each class (“soft” requirement). Lectures will be given with the assumption that you have read the required readings and therefore will not go over basic materials that are adequately covered by the assigned readings. Valuable class time is reserved for critical analysis, synthesis, and discussion. “Hard” course requirements consist of four parts: exercises, exams, group discussions, and a research paper. You are required to use a Qwizdom clicker in all classes.

- (1) Exercises: There will be four exercises, each 3 pages long. The first two exercises involve the development of theoretical models and the conceptualization of research designs. The third and fourth exercises are reports of quantitative analyses of secondary data through the internet. Each exercise will be graded on a scale of 0-10.
- (2) Exams: There will be two in-class, closed-book exams. Each exam will be graded on a scale of 0-15.
- (3) Classroom participation: You will be asked to participate in class through a Qwizdom clicker. While some of the class activities are graded, others are not. Both participation itself and performance are taken into account to earn credit toward the grade. Classroom participation is graded on a scale of 0-22 for the whole semester.
- (4) Paper: There will be a research paper assignment. The expected length is about 10 pages, double spaced. The paper will be a mini-project that you conduct either in collaboration with 3-4 other students (up to 5 students in a group) or entirely on your own. Group option is available only for students who wish to collect own data. If you choose the team option, you are still required to write your own paper. There is no restriction concerning the topic, method, or data source for the paper. This is a perfect occasion in which to exercise your academic freedom. The work is also graded on a scale of 0-20.

Grading: The overall grade will be the weighted average of eleven components: (1) four exercises (7% each), (2) two exams (15% each), class participation (22%), and (4) a research paper (20%).

Computing: Most of your computation for analyzing secondary data will be performed interactively on the internet through the World Wide Web (WWW).

Course Outline

Week 1

- Class 1 (Thursday, 1/3)
Topic: Introduction.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 1, pp.1-14.

Week 2

- Class 2 (Tuesday, 1/8)
Topic: Relation of social science to natural science.
Xie (2007)
- Class 3 (Thursday, 1/10)
[Exercise 1 is assigned]
Topic: Central tendencies and empirical regularities
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 1, pp.15-27.

Week 3

- Class 4 (Tuesday, 1/15)
Topic: In defense of empirical sociology
Goldthorpe (2001)
Xie (2005)
- Class 5 (Thursday, 1/17)
[Exercise 1 is due]
Topic: Theory and research.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 2.

Week 4

- Class 6 (Tuesday, 1/22)
Topic: Causal Inference.
Reading: Panel on Methods for Assessing Discrimination (2004).
- Class 7 (Thursday, 1/24)
Topic: Evidence.
Reading: Lieberman (1992)
[Tim Lambert's comments on the Duncan-Lott exchange](#) (current)

Week 5

- Class 8 (Tuesday, 1/29)
Topic: Basics of research design, I.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 4, pp.87-99;
Blumstein and Benedict (1999).
- Class 9 (Thursday, 1/31)
[Exercise 2 is assigned]
Topic: Basics of research design, II.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 4, pp.99-115;

Week 6

- Class 10 (Tuesday, 2/5)
Topic: Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 5;
- Class 11 (Thursday, 2/7)
[Exercise 2 is due]
Topic: Sampling theory I -- basics.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 7, pp.180-202.

Week 7

Class 12 (Tuesday, 2/12)

Topic: Sampling theory II -- applications.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 7, pp. 202-217.

Class 13 (Thursday, 2/14)

Topic: Survey research.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 9.

Week 8

Class 14 (Tuesday, 2/19)

Topic: Review
Reading: Review

Class 15 (Thursday, 2/21)

Topic: **Exam One**
Reading: None.

Week 9

Class 16 (Tuesday, 3/4)

Topic: How to ask questions
Reading: Schwarz (1999)

Class 17 (Thursday, 3/6)

[Exercise 3 is assigned]
Topic: Examples: Inter-racial friendship and happiness
Reading: Tom Smith (2002);
Kahneman, Krueger, Schhade, Schwarz, and Stone (2006)
Topic: Case Study: Kinsey report and GSS data
Reading: John Bancroft (2006) ;
Xie (2008)

Week 10

Class 18 (Tuesday, 3/11)

Topic: Index and scale construction.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 6.
Hauser (1994)

Class 19 (Thursday, 3/13)

[**Exercise 3 is due**]
[Paper is assigned]
Topic: Experiments and quasi-experiments
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 8.

Week 11

Class 20 (Tuesday, 3/18)

Topic: Evaluation research.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 12;

Class 21 (Thursday, 3/20)

Topic: Interpreting quantitative data, I
Reading: Babbie, Chapters 14.
Kovar (2000).

Week 12

Class 22 (Tuesday, 3/25)

Topic: Interpreting quantitative data, II
Reading: Babbie, Chapters 15-16.

Class 23 (Thursday, 3/27)

[Exercise 4 is assigned]
Topic: Demographic Methods
Reading: Ryder (1965)

Week 13

Class 24: (Tuesday, 4/1)

Topic: Qualitative Methods
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 10

Class 25 (Thursday, 4/3)

[Exercise 4 is due]
Topic: Historical Methods
Reading: Sewell (1996)

Week 14

Class 26 (Tuesday, 4/8)

Topic: Ethics of Research.
Reading: Babbie, Chapter 3.

Class 27 (Thursday, 4/10)

Topic: Meeting with Instructor and GSI
Reading: None.

Exam Two is on Friday, April 18, 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm.

Research Paper is due at the time of the exam.

Course Pack Reading List

- Bancroft, John. 2006. "Alfred Kinsey's work 50 years on." [An abbreviated version of the introduction to the "Female Volume" for Sociology 310]
- Blumstein, A. and J. Benedict. 1999. "Criminal Violence of NFL Players Compared to the General Population." *Chance* 12(3): 12-15.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. 2001. "Causation, Statistics, and Sociology." *European Sociological Review* 17(1):1-20.
- Hauser, R. M. 1994. "Measuring Socioeconomic-Status in Studies of Child-Development." *Child Development* 65(6):1541-45.
- Kahneman, Daniel, Alan B. Krueger, David Schkade, Norbert Schwarz, and Arthur A. Stone. 2006. "Would You Be Happier if You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion." *Science* 312:1908-1910.
- Kovar, M. G. 2000. "Four Million Adolescents Smoke: Or Do They?" *Chance* 13(2): 10-14.
- [Tim Lambert's comments on the Duncan-Lott exchange](http://timlambert.org/2002/10/lottduncancomments/)
(<http://timlambert.org/2002/10/lottduncancomments/>)
- Lieberson, Stanley. 1992. "Einstein, Renoir, and Greeley: Some Thoughts about Evidence in Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 57: 1-15.
- Panel on Methods for Assessing Discrimination. 2004. *Measuring Racial Discrimination*, Chapter 5 "Causal Inference and the Assessment of Racial Discrimination" (pp. 77-89). Washington DC: The National Academies Press.
- Ryder, N. B. 1965. "The Cohort As a Concept in the Study of Social-Change." *American Sociological Review* 30(6):843-61.
- Schwarz, Norbert. 1999. "Self-Reports." *American Psychologists*.
- Sewell, William. 1996. "Three Temporalities: Towards an Eventful Sociology." Pp.245-280 in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, edited by Terrence J. McDonald. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Smith, Tom. 2002. "Measuring Inter-racial Friendships." *Social Science Research* 31(4);576- 593.
- Xie, Yu. 2005. "Methodological Contradictions of Contemporary Sociology." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 44: 506-511.
- Xie, Yu. 2007. "Otis Dudley Duncan's Legacy: the Demographic Approach to Quantitative Reasoning in Social Science." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 25:141-156.
- Xie, Yu. 2008. *A Layperson's Tools for Analyzing Data from the General Social Surveys (GSS): Unleashing the Power of the Internet*. Population Studies Center, University of Michigan.