

Professor Juan Manuel Pedroza
Summer 2024: Mon Wed 01:00-04:30pm (J BASKIN ENGR 165)

Student Hours: Wed 12:00-1:00pm (Science Library) Or email me: j.pedroza@ucsc.edu
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SOC 3A: The Evaluation of Evidence

The Evaluation of Evidence provides an overview of social science research methodologies. Understanding these methodologies is essential for conducting social research and is also beneficial for understanding how knowledge about the social world is proposed, produced, analyzed, and disseminated. After completing this course, you will be familiar with the major types of research methodologies and which types of research questions and data are best suited to each method. Training in research methods is essential for social scientists, but can be useful for everyone whether or not you plan for a career in research.

Sociology 3A provides a general overview of common research methodologies used in social science research. A research method is a way of collecting and analyzing information about social phenomena to answer a particular question. Increasingly, researchers use multiple methods and multiple kinds of data or evidence to answer research questions.

Our focus will be on understanding these basic principles of research. The purpose of the textbook is to provide you with a basic, foundational understanding of concepts, principles, and research design. The supplemental readings available in Canvas are designed to enhance your understanding of methods with real-world examples and illustrate exemplary models of research practices and research design. Because this class operates on a condensed time scale in the summer, we will be using our class time as combined lecture and workshop time so that you are able to develop an effective research proposal in five weeks.

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Learning outcomes

After completing this course, you will be familiar with:

1. major types of research methods
2. types of data you would use for each
3. strengths and limitations of different research methods
4. how to critically examine research encountered in the real world

Plan for the course and course materials

Each week, the course will combine (a) an introduction to methods concepts and examples with (b) in-class discussion and activities. Students will have multiple opportunities to reflect and engage with others in the class on how to evaluate evidence. The course readings include a textbook as well supplemental readings relevant to each topic we will cover and discuss in class.

All course readings are available online or via UCSC library: you do not have to purchase a course reader or any books for the course.

The textbook is available online:

- Sheppard, Valerie A. *An Introduction to Research Methods in Sociology*. New Westminster, BC: Justice Institute of British Columbia. Available online from: <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/researchmethods>

In addition to the textbook, we will also cover exemplary articles that employ a research method.

With the exception of the first day, you are expected to read the materials ahead of class. We will be doing group activities and discussions based on these readings.

Given the potentially contentious nature of the course material, students are expected to engage with each other in a respectful manner. Students are not expected to agree on all topics, but we must all commit to gaining a critical and constructive understanding of the material.

In order to remain engaged, please turn cell phones off (or on airplane mode) and use laptops/tablets responsibly.

Course grading

Everyone in this course is expected to participate, come to class prepared, and to commit to understanding the issues presented in the readings. Students are not expected to memorize and repeat the material. Instead, the assignments help ensure students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate critical thinking skills.

Each student is expected to dedicate **15 hours per week** to course activities. Final grades will be comprised of assessments in the following areas:

Area	% of overall grade
Participation	10%
Think like a researcher - reading responses	30%
Participation - group discussion	15%
Draft research proposal	20%
Final research proposal	25%

Participation – course: Regular participation in the course (options for participation: in class, office hours, or Canvas) accounts for 10% of your grade.

Think like a researcher – reading responses: All readings are available either as an UCSC library electronic resource or as publicly-available readings online (see URLs below). Students submit a total of **four** reading responses. Reading responses account for 30% of the final grade, and your lowest-graded response is dropped from your final grade.

Reading responses are due **BEFORE** we discuss readings in class, on **Sunday by 5pm**.

Participation – group discussion: Between week 2 and week 4, students will sign up (in groups of 2 students) to present two journal articles that use a method covered in this course. The presentation will cover the main findings, the methods used, and similarities/differences between the two articles (i.e., whether the results or methods are comparable or not, and why). The assignment represents 15% of your grade.

Research proposal: During week 4, students will sign up to present an individual research proposal.

In general, an “A” paper will cover your proposal – with clear organization and no typos. Papers with unclear questions, lack of organization, limited use of citations, and excessive typos will be evaluated accordingly.

Academic integrity

The UCSC Sociology Department values original critical thinking and authentic writing, independent and collaborative learning, and the multiple ways that students’ diverse backgrounds and experiences shape their own sociological imagination. See the department website for information on [academic integrity](#).

Students should be aware that we will be especially vigilant in responding to academic dishonesty and plagiarism in this class. Students must properly cite sources of all work that is not their own. A good rule of thumb is that anything more than three consecutive words from another source should include a citation to source. Consult the faculty or teaching assistant in case of uncertainty. Students should be aware that penalties for plagiarism are outlined in [The](#)

[Navigator](#) and the [UCSC Student Policies and Regulations Handbook](#). No mercy will be shown in this class toward plagiarism. When in doubt, ask.

Disability Resource Center (DRC) accommodations

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the DRC to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) Office by calling (831) 502-2273. In addition, Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide confidential, counseling support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office, (831) 459-2462. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCSC Police Department, (831) 459-2231 extension 1. For emergencies, call 911.

Week-by-week overview: Please refer to the table for overview of course assignments.

Week	Topic	Reading response (Due Sunday before we meet in person)	Student-led discussions	Research Proposal
1	Introduction to class and research methods	.	.	.
2	Ethics and developing a research question	1	A	.
3	Measurement and literature reviews	2	B	.
4	Quantitative methods	3	C	Draft
5	Qualitative methods	4	.	Final

Course Readings

Week 1: Introduction to class and research methods

Monday: Introduction to the class

Wednesday: Introduction to research methods

- Sheppard (sections 01-07)
- Collins, Randall. 1994. "Why the Social Sciences Won't Become High-Consensus, Rapid-Discovery Science." *Sociological Forum*, 9(2), 155–177.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01476360>

Week 2: Ethics and developing a research question

Monday: Ethics in research

- Sheppard (sections 08-14)
- American Sociological Association, "The Role of Ethics and Its Basic Tools,"
<http://www.asanet.org/socialization-community-sociologists>
- The Conversation, "Human Experiments: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,"
<http://theconversation.com/human-experiments-the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-39876>

Wednesday: Developing a research question

- Sheppard (sections 15-20)
- Mullaney, Thomas S., and Christopher G. Rea. 2022. *Where research begins: Choosing a research project that matters to you (and the world)*. The University of Chicago Press.
 - Read chapter 01 "[Questions](#)" available as an e-book via UCSC library

Week 3: Measurement and literature reviews

Monday: Measurement and Unit of Analysis

- Sheppard (sections 21-27)
- Smith, Robin James, and Paul Atkinson. 2016. "Method and Measurement in Sociology, fifty years on." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 19(1), pp.99-110.
<https://doi-org.oca.ucsc.edu/10.1080/13645579.2015.1068010>

Wednesday: Literature Review

- Sheppard (sections 28-32)
- Pacheco-Vega, Raul. "How to undertake a literature review."
<http://www.raulpacheco.org/2017/04/how-to-undertake-a-literature-review>
 - Recommended, see also summaries about how to think about and conduct reviews of relevant research: <http://www.raulpacheco.org/resources/literature-reviews>

Week 4: Quantitative methods

Monday: Data Collection Strategies & Sampling Techniques

- Sheppard (sections 33-42)
- MacPherson-Krutsy, Carson. 2020. “3 questions to ask yourself next time you see a graph, chart or map.” *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/3-questions-to-askyourself-next-time-you-see-a-graph-chart-or-map-141348>
- Samson, Frank L. 2013. “Multiple Group Threat and Malleable White Attitudes Towards Academic Merit.” *Du Bois Review*, 10(1), 233–260. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X1300012X>

Wednesday: Data Collection Methods for Surveys & Regression Analysis

- Sheppard (sections 43-53)
- Explaining regression analysis, <http://news.mit.edu/2010/explained-reg-analysis-0316>
- Khan Academy, “Causation and Correlation” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROpbdO-gRUo>

Week 5: Qualitative methods

Monday: Qualitative Data Collection & Analysis Methods

- Sheppard (sections 54-60)
- Abend, Petre, C., & Sauder, Michael. 2013. “Styles of Causal Thought: An Empirical Investigation.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 119(3), 602–654. <https://doi.org/10.1086/675892>

Wednesday: Field Research & Ethnography

- Sheppard (sections 66-72)
- Small, Mario Luis. 2009. “‘How many cases do I need?’ On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research.” *Ethnography*, 10(1), 5–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138108099586>
- Alonso Bejarano, Carolina, Lucia López Juárez, Mirian A. Mijangos García, Daniel M. Goldstein. 2019. *Decolonizing ethnography: Undocumented immigrants and new directions in social science*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478004547>
 - Read “[Introduction](#)”