

SOCIOLOGY 265: DASA RESEARCH DESIGN

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Department of Sociology
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<https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/32920>

Course Description and Objectives

This course covers the fundamentals of social science research design. The course will cover themes that include the following: (1) the formation of research questions and testable hypotheses; (2) the relationship between theory and empirical research; (3) issues of measurement and sampling; (4) the choice of appropriate data collection methods and analytic techniques; (5) causal inference; (6) assessment and critique of research; and (7) research proposal writing. Emphasis is placed on principles that are applicable in all kinds of research, including ethnography, qualitative interviewing, content analysis, survey research, and demographic analysis. Course requirements will include weekly written assignments, active participation in class discussions (including a week where you present course material to the class), a final research proposal, and a final exam.

Required Materials and Readings

All readings are listed below. You will need to purchase Royce A. Singleton and Bruce C. Straits' *Approaches to Social Research* (Sixth Edition, from Oxford University Press). All other readings are available on the course website. You are responsible for completing all readings prior to each week's class. It is advisable to do the readings in the order listed on the syllabus. You are also responsible for bringing each week's readings to class so that you can actively engage with the material and your notes on the material. Please note that any changes to the readings will be announced in class and updated on the syllabus. The version of the syllabus on the website is always the most recent and takes precedence over any previous versions.

Course Requirements

The course is organized (mostly) as a seminar. I expect students to attend class each week, to be fully prepared, and to participate in class discussion. I will usually provide a lecture at the beginning of class, but much of the course will consist of student discussion and exchanges focused on the readings. Course grades will be based on the following three requirements:

(1) Weekly assignments (30% of final grade)

Most weeks will require a short assignment. Though the assignments are brief, they will require a fair amount of thought and preparation. I expect you to edit these assignments carefully so that they are organized, thoughtful, and concise. Assignments should be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. the Sunday prior to class. Late assignments will be penalized.

(2) Class participation (20% of final grade)

This grade reflects the quantity and quality of participation in class discussions. Students should read the assigned articles and chapters carefully – in *advance* of class – so that they come to class with insightful comments and questions. Students who read materials that are not on the syllabus but that are germane to the discussion should feel free to contribute this knowledge to the discussion. The class will benefit from the specialized knowledge of all participants.

(3) Research proposal (20% of final grade)

All students are responsible for writing a five-page (double-spaced) research proposal for this course. Research proposals should include the following: What is the research question? Why is this research question important? What are the relevant theories that speak to the research question? What prior empirical work has been done on this topic? What are your contributions to this literature? What data and methods will you use to answer this research question? You are not required to collect data or conduct analysis for this course, but you must propose to collect and/or analyze data that is appropriate for your research question. Whatever you do in this class should be useful for your graduate school experience more broadly. We will periodically discuss these projects in class. The research proposal will be due to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, March 7.

(4) Final exam (30% of final grade)

The final exam is cumulative. The exam will take place in Canvas. It will be open-book and open-note, and will cover the course readings, lectures, and videos. The final exam will be available for you to begin at 9 a.m. on Monday, March 15, 2021. It will be due by 11:59 p.m. that day. You can take as long as you need to complete the exam, as it is not timed, but I advise budgeting two hours to complete the exam.

Grading Scheme

This course uses the standard UCI grading scheme.

A+	100 %	to 96.5%
A	< 96.5 %	to 93.5%
A-	< 93.5 %	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 86.5%
B	< 86.5 %	to 83.5%
B-	< 83.5 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 76.5%
C	< 76.5 %	to 73.5%
C-	< 73.5 %	to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 %	to 66.5%
D	< 66.5 %	to 63.5%
D-	< 63.5 %	to 60.0%
F	< 60.0 %	to 0.0%

Academic Honesty

I take academic honesty extremely seriously. The learning environment at the University of California, Irvine is based on honesty and integrity. Sustaining this environment requires all participants recognize the importance of maintaining the highest ethical standards. It is critical that all student work be the sole work of each individual student. The exams and quizzes you take in this course are to be taken by you and you alone, without assistance. You may not print exams or quizzes, and you are to take them without assistance from other people, printed materials, the Internet, your cell phone, or through any other method one might use to gather information. Doing so constitutes academic dishonesty. Anyone caught cheating or engaged in actions that in any way violate the university policy on academic honesty will receive an F in the course. There are no exceptions to this rule, and I will never look the other way. Remaining in the course assumes that you understand what academic honesty is, in all its varied forms, and pledge not to engage in any type of dishonest conduct (which includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and collusion). You, the student, are required to know and understand the relevant policies regarding academic dishonesty. To this end, you are required to carefully read the information found by following the link below. Additionally, all participants in the course are also bound by the University of California Code of Conduct. The relevant link is also below.

[UCI's Academic Senate Policy on Academic Dishonesty](#)
[The University of California Code of Conduct](#)

Physical and Emotional Wellbeing

Your professors want you to thrive at UCI, and we believe that your physical and emotional wellbeing are the pathways to getting there. We encourage you to do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this quarter by eating well, exercising, getting educated about the effects of illicit drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help.

- If you are interested in what you can do to promote wellness in yourself and others, visit the Center for Student Wellness & Health Promotion (studentwellness.uci.edu; (949) 824-9355). This office, along with many other offices at UCI, can point you to campus resources that promote physical activity, good nutrition, and stress management.
- For other issues, consider reaching out to the Counseling Center (counseling.uci.edu; (949) 824-6457). There are professionals there who can help with feelings of anxiety and depression, and who can provide guidance and support on a variety of concerns.
- Last, if you are concerned about a life-threatening situation, we encourage you to contact the UCI Police Department at 9-1-1.

Additional Course Policies

Email: I frequently use email to communicate with students. You are responsible for checking your email and the course website for updates and announcements.

Contacting Me: Email is the best way to reach me. Please allow 24 hours for a response (and longer if you email over the weekend), but you will generally hear back from me much sooner than that.

Netiquette for Remote Learning: Netiquette covers both common courtesies online and the informal “rules of the road” of cyberspace. Please always treat me and your fellow students with respect.

Grading: If you disagree with a grade you received, you may submit a written request for a review of the assignment. Written requests will be accepted during the seven-day period after

you receive the graded assignment. Written requests must include your argument for why you think you should have received a different grade. Please note that grade reviews may result in your grade being changed either up or down.

Course Changes: Any changes to requirements, readings, or other structural aspects of the class will be announced on Canvas. Also, changes to the course structure or policies will be updated on the syllabus, which will be posted to the course website. The version of the syllabus on the website is always the most recent and takes precedence over any previous versions.

Technology: I always recommend that you have any computer work that you are doing saved in two places. USB flash drives, as well as computer hard drives, sometimes fail. I will not extend a deadline because your computer crashed or was stolen, so please have a backup copy saved somewhere—in an email to yourself, on a flash drive or external hard drive, or using an online backup service (e.g., Google Drive). If you are not already in the habit of backing up your work, it's a good practice that will save you much stress.

Students with Disabilities: If you need support or assistance because of a disability, you may be eligible for accommodations or services through UCI's Disability Service Center (DSC). Please contact the DSC directly at (949) 824-7494 or TDD (949) 824-6272. You can also visit the DSC's website: <http://www.disability.uci.edu>. The DSC will work with your instructor to make any necessary accommodations. Please note that it is your responsibility to initiate this process with the DSC.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Matters: Unless otherwise indicated, all materials presented and used in the course (except for materials from the textbook and journal articles) are the instructor's own original material and intellectual property. It is an infringement to reproduce and distribute *any* materials from this course. Course materials can only be used for each student's own personal educational enrichment. Any course materials sold or distributed to others could constitute an unauthorized derivative work and expose students to individual copyright infringement actions by the instructor. Therefore, no course material may be distributed to individuals not enrolled as students in the course during the current quarter for any reason. Course materials include, but are not limited to, lecture slides, video recordings, handouts, exams, and quizzes.

Finally, according to section 102.23 of the UC policy on Student Conduct and Discipline, a student may face disciplinary action for preparing, selling, or distributing course lecture notes for any commercial purpose (whether or not the student took the notes). You should be aware of this policy, not only for this class, but for all classes you may take in the University of California system.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction

Readings

Singleton and Straits (Chapter 1)

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2003. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3 (From Topics to Questions).

Week 2: Theorizing and Developing Research Questions

Readings

Singleton and Straits (Chapters 2, 3, and 4)

Assignment

Identify a scholarly article that, in your view, represents an example of exemplary research design. Write a one- to two-page (double-spaced) statement about what makes this research design exemplary. Also identify any limitations to the research design. Upload this assignment to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, January 10.

Week 3: No class (MLK Day)

Assignment

Write a one- to two-page (double-spaced) statement about your final paper proposal. Each statement should briefly describe the topic, the theories that pertain to the topic, the research question(s), the data to be used, and the methods to be used (including measurement and analytic strategies). Upload this assignment to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, January 17.

Week 4: Measurement and Sampling

Readings

Singleton and Straits (Chapters 5 and 6)

Brady, David, and Zachary Parolin. 2020. "The Levels and Trends in Deep and Extreme Poverty in the United States, 1993–2016." *Demography* 57(6):2337–2360.

Lindberg, Laura, Kathryn Kost, Isaac Maddow-Zimet, Sheila Desai, and Mia Zolna. 2020. "Abortion Reporting in the United States: An Assessment of Three National Fertility Surveys." *Demography*:1–27.

Spence, Cody, James D. Bachmeier, Claire E. Altman, and Christal Hamilton. 2020. "The Association Between Legal Status and Poverty Among Immigrants: A Methodological Caution." *Demography*:1–9.

Assignment

In a two- to three-page (double-spaced) memo, address the following: The Brady and Parolin (2020) article addresses the measurement of poverty. The Lindberg, Kost, Maddow-Zimet, Desai, and Zolna (2020) article addresses the measurement of abortion. The Spence, Bachmeier, Altman, and Hamilton (2020) article addresses the measurement of legal status. For each article, describe what you learned about measurement, paying particular attention to (1) the match between theoretical arguments and empirical analyses and (2) the validity and reliability of measurement. If you see shortcomings in the articles, propose improvements. Which article was most convincing (with respect to measuring its respective concept) and why? Upload this assignment to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, January 24.

Week 5: Causal Inference

Readings

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

Dobbie, Will, Hans Grönqvist, Susan Niknami, Mårten Palme, and Mikael Priks. 2018. "The Intergenerational Effects of Parental Incarceration." Washington, DC: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Norris, Samuel, Matthew Pecenco, and Jeffrey Weaver. 2018. "The Effects of Parental and Sibling Incarceration: Evidence from Ohio." Social Science Research Network.

Wildeman, Christopher. 2010. "Paternal Incarceration and Children's Physically Aggressive Behaviors: Evidence from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study." *Social Forces* 89(1):285–309.

Assignment

In a two- to three-page (double-spaced) memo, address the following: The Dobbie, Grönqvist, Palme, and Priks (2018), Norris, Pecenco, and Weaver (2020), and Wildeman (2010) articles all address research questions about the intergenerational consequences of incarceration. In your reading of these articles, pay close attention to the methods and findings. What evidence presented in these articles do you find strongest and weakest and why? How successful are each set of authors in demonstrating a causal relationship between parental incarceration and various outcomes? How could you improve upon their research designs to answer similar questions? Upload this assignment to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, January 31.

Week 6: Using Secondary Data

Readings

Singleton and Straits (Chapters 9, 10, and 12)

Cancian, Maria, Yiyoon Chung, and Daniel R. Meyer. 2016. "Fathers' Imprisonment and Mothers' Multiple-Partner Fertility." *Demography* 53(6):2045–2074.

Daza, Sebastian, Alberto Palloni, and Jerrett Jones. 2020. "The Consequences of Incarceration for Mortality in the United States." *Demography*:1–22.

Muller, Christopher. 2012. "Northward Migration and the Rise of Racial Disparity in American Incarceration, 1880–1950." *American Journal of Sociology* 118(2):281–326.

Assignment

Select a data set from those available at Social Science Data Archives in UCI Library (<http://data.lib.uci.edu>). Prepare a brief research outline using the data set. Suggest a research question, detail a couple of competing hypotheses to explain an outcome of interest, specify how you would operationalize all variables of interest and the outcome. Upload this assignment to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 7.

Week 7: No class (President's Day)

Week 8: Experimental Design and Evaluation

Readings

Singleton and Straits (Chapters 7, 8, and 14)

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

Clampet-Lundquist, Susan, and Douglas S. Massey. 2008. "Neighborhood Effects on Economic Self-Sufficiency: A Reconsideration of the Moving to Opportunity Experiment." *American Journal of Sociology* 114:107–143.

Ludwig, Jens, Jeffrey B. Liebman, Jeffrey R. Kling, Greg J., Duncan, Lawrence F. Katz, Ronald C. Kessler, and Lisa Sanbonmatsu. 2008. "What Can We Learn about Neighborhood Effects from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment?" *American Journal of Sociology* 114:144–188.

Assignment

In a two- to three-page (double-spaced) memo, address the following: The Clampet-Lundquist and Massey (2008) and the Ludwig et al. (2008) articles offer two (mostly) competing perspectives about the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) social experiment. *Briefly* summarize Clampet-Lundquist and Massey's rationale for using the experimental data in a non-experimental fashion and their findings. *Briefly* summarize the arguments put forth by Ludwig et al. (2008). Which set of authors makes a more convincing and compelling case for their perspective? Why? In your response, please address reliability, validity, and selection. Upload this assignment to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 21.

Week 9: Ethnography

Reading

Singleton and Straits (Chapter 11)

Katz, Jack. 1997. "Ethnography's Warrants." *Sociological Methods and Research* 25:391–423.

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

Whyte, William Foote. 1951. *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Methodological Appendix.

Calarco, Jessica McCrory. 2020. "Avoiding Us versus Them: How Schools' Dependence on Privileged 'Helicopter' Parents Influences Enforcement of Rules." *American Sociological Review* 85(2):223–246.

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

Assignment

In a two- to three-page (double-spaced) memo, address the following: Katz (1997), Small (2009), and Whyte (1951) each suggest ways of evaluating the quality of ethnographic research. Drawing on each perspective, evaluate the Calarco (2020) and Desmond (2012) articles. Upload this assignment to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 28.

Week 10: In-depth Interviewing

Readings

Singleton and Straits (Chapter 13)

Weiss, Robert S. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 5 (Issues in Interviewing).

Comfort, Megan. 2008. *Doing Time Together: Love and Family in the Shadow of the Prison*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Methodological Appendix.

Assignment

Find an article that is related to your final paper that uses an in-depth interviewing approach. Pretend that you have been charged with performing a peer review for a journal editor. For

helpful tips on writing a formal review, please see the following: Bengtson, Vern L. and Shelley M. MacDermid. "How to Review a Journal Article: Suggestions for First-Time Reviewers and Reminders for Seasoned Experts" (<http://www.ncfr.org/jmf/jmf-reviewers/reviewer-guidelines>). At a minimum, your two- to three-page (double-spaced) peer review should do the following:

1. The first paragraph should summarize the main argument of the paper and the data/evidence on which the argument is based.
2. The body of your peer review should critique and assess the validity of the argument and methods. In formulating your assessments, you should consider (a) issues of operationalization/validity, (b) the cogency of their logical/theoretical argument, (c) the validity of their inferences, and (d) the quality and limitations of their data. These considerations are not necessarily exhaustive.
3. The last paragraph should summarize your overall assessment of the research, the most important areas of concern, and your assessment of how important and convincing a contribution the research makes to the literature.

Upload this assignment to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, March 7.