

**Sociology 5 - EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE**  
**Syllabus - Fall 2014**

**TIME and LOCATION:** 8:00-9:30am Tuesday and Thursday, 145 Dwinelle

**INSTRUCTOR:** Professor Samuel R. Lucas

Office: 438 Barrows Hall

Phone: 642-4765 or 642-4766

E-mail address: lucas@berkeley.edu

home-page: <http://SamuelRoundfieldLucas.com>

Office hours: Thursdays, 11:30am-12:30pm and one of two times on  
Wednesday—*either* 3:00-4:00pm *or* 1:00-2:00pm (will differ by week)

**GSIs:** Joy Hightower, Andrew Jaeger, Steven Lauterwasser, Santiago Molina,  
Hila Peretz

**SUBJECT MATTER**

The course covers a variety of research approaches in sociology. The first part of the course emphasizes fundamental concepts in the methods of sociological research. The second part of the course emphasizes hands-on data collection experiences.

**TEXTS**

Some materials are online via Google Scholar. Some materials are in a Reader that is for sale at Copy Central, 2560 Bancroft (across the street from Barrows Hall). And the book below can be purchased at University Press Books, which is located at 2430 Bancroft (across the street from the construction near Zellerbach):

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

There are three types of assignments. Each one is meant to help you experience and grapple with the research process, which is far less direct than many realize. Every researcher occasionally follows leads that lead nowhere, revises written work to reflect new information or clearer thinking, and defends positions that are vulnerable to attack. The assignments are designed to help you learn and use the skills of a researcher in an imperfect (and imperfectly known) world.

Collaborative Methods Exercises

You will form 2-person groups for three exercises. One exercise is to conduct a participant observation study of some issue of your own choosing. You will need to hand in your observation notes as well as a short write-up of what you found. A second collaborative assignment is to write a short one page questionnaire and, using that questionnaire, interview two other people. You will need to hand in your questionnaire, and the results of your interview. A third collaborative assignment is to analyze some quantitative results that will be provided to you.

### Research Proposals and Portions Thereof

This is an opportunity for you to be an independent scholar (though, all thought and research is social). You can use the resources available in this class (i.e., the Professor's time, the TAs' time, the ear of your colleagues, the material we cover in class) to develop a strategy for investigating a question of interest. Have you often wondered why some schools focus on sports and some do not? Do you want to know whether your parents really had it harder? Have you been puzzled by the slow reaction of world governments to the beginning of the Ebola epidemic? These and other questions can be the point of departure for a research proposal. If you are not now and have never been curious about anything, then a course in research methods is probably a waste of your time. But, perhaps not. Why are some people very curious, while others seem to go through life taking everything at face value? That's a possible research question.

You will hand in portions of the proposal at five different times in the semester. Each later assignment should reflect the revisions you have made after thinking about the comments on the previous portions of the proposal. A proposal cannot be completed overnight; neither can a portion of a proposal. Please do not try it.

### Final Exam

In the final exam you will be given two or three research questions, and asked to design a study to answer one or two of those questions. The final exam counts 15 percent toward the final grade.

With the exception of the exam, all written assignments must be typed or word-processed. And, incompletes and extensions will not be given.

### FORMAT

There are lectures on Tuesday and Thursday, and required discussion sections. Attendance at both lecture and discussion section is required.

**GRADING SYSTEM**

Each collaborative assignment is worth 15 percent, and the final exam also counts as 15 percent. The proposal counts as 30 percent of the final grade. Discussion section counts as 10 percent of the final grade. That said, I expect that the material we cover early in the semester will aid comprehension of material we cover later in the semester, and also aid your efforts to develop a research proposal. If this assumption is true, one would expect that hard work on the early assignments will pay off in later assignments.

**FINAL THOUGHTS by way of INTRODUCTION**

On a good day the main aim of academia is to teach and to learn the answers to questions that we find important. As this is what this course is about, this course--a course in research methods--stands at the center of the academy. Thus, your work in this class may allow you to learn specific facts about conducting research, and it may provide you with an opportunity to take a first pass at questions you hope to pursue in the future. In short, our work here is not divorced from the substantive questions that interest you. Quite the contrary, our work here gives you access to the very foundation of the (shaky as well as sturdy) claims you've read elsewhere, and begins to construct the foundation on which you can stand (in the years to come) to add to society's stock of knowledge, and thereby transform the very universe from something you inherited into something you own.

## SCHEDULE AND READINGS

### INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

Thursday, August 28

Overview of Course

Tuesday, September 2

Reading:

The Sociology Writing Group. 1994. *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, 3rd edition*. Pages 1-29 **READER**

Thursday, September 4

Reading:

None

Tuesday, September 9 **Research Question due (P/F)**

Reading:

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Pages xi-162.

Thursday, September 11

Reading:

Geller, Amanda, Irwin Garfinkel, and Bruce Western. 2011. "Paternal Incarceration and Support for Children in Fragile Families." *Demography* 48: 25-47. **Google Scholar**

### BASIC CONCEPTS IN GATHERING DATA

Tuesday, September 16

Reading:

Lucas 2014, "What is a Variable?" **READER**

Thursday, September 18

Reading:

The Sociology Writing Group. 1998. *A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, 4th edition*. Pages 96-114 **READER**

Tuesday, September 23 **Literature Review Due (P/F)**

Reading:

Carmines, Edward G. and Richard A. Zeller. *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Pages 9-16. **READER**

Thursday, September 25

Reading:  
None

## **TYPES OF DATA GATHERING ACTIVITIES**

Tuesday, September 30

Reading:

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Pages 211-261

Thursday, October 2

Reading:

None

Tuesday, October 7 **Collaborative Participant Observation Assignment due**

Reading:

Campbell, Donald T., and Julian C. Stanley. 1963. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Pages 1-22 and 34-42. **READER**

Thursday, October 9

Reading:

Aronson, Joshua, Michael J. Lustina, Catherine Good, Kelli Keough, Claude M. Steele, and Joseph Brown. 1999. "When White Men Can't Do Math: Necessary and Sufficient Factors in Stereotype Threat." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 35: 29-46. **Google Scholar**

Tuesday, October 14

Reading:

Converse, Jean M., and Stanley Presser. 1986. *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*. Pages 9-47. **READER**

Thursday, October 16

Reading:

None

Tuesday, October 21 **Collaborative Questionnaire/Interview Assignment due**

Reading:

Kalton, Graham. 1983. *Introduction to Survey Sampling*. Pages 5-19. **READER**

Thursday, October 23

Reading:

None

Tuesday, October 28

Reading: Lucas 2010, "Conduct, Advantages and Disadvantages of Quantitative Analysis" **READER**

Thursday, October 30

Reading:

Davies, Andrew Lucas Blaize, and Alissa Pollitz Worden. 2009. "State Politics and the Right to Counsel: A Comparative Analysis." *Law and Society Review* 43: 187-220. **Google Scholar**

Tuesday, November 4 Collaborative Quantitative Analysis Assignment due

Reading:

Levine, Robert J. 1979. "Clarifying the Concepts of Research Ethics." *The Hastings Center Report* 9: 21-26. **READER**

Taylor, Steven J. 1987. "Observing Abuse: Professional Ethics and Personal Morality in Field Research." *Qualitative Sociology* 10: 288-302. **Google Scholar**

Thursday, November 6

Working session on student methods sections

**MONDAY November 10 & Thursday, November 13– Research Methods Section due in Section Meetings (P/F)**

Tuesday, November 11–HOLIDAYThursday, November 13

Working session on student methods sections

Tuesday, November 18

Poster Presentations of Proposals

Thursday, November 20

Poster Presentations of Proposals

Tuesday, November 25

Guest Lecturers on some intriguing additional research methods, final words on preparing the proposal

Tuesday, December 2

Poster Presentations of Proposals

Thursday, December 4 **PROPOSALS DUE**

Wrap-up, Working session on final exam, and **PROPOSALS DUE**

**Final Exam date Wednesday, December 17, at 3:00-6:00pm, at a place to be announced**