

**Soc U321 Research Methods**  
Department of Sociology & Anthropology  
Northeastern University  
Fall 2006

Professor Kathrin Zippel  
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**Section 1: Tu, Fr 11:45-1:25 pm**  
**431 Ryder**

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**Section 2: Tu, Fr 1:35 pm-3:15 pm**  
**435 Ryder**

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### Course Description

Sociology 321 is an introduction to methodology of social sciences and enables students to gain a more in-depth understanding of research. The course is designed to provide the learner with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct, evaluate, and utilize empirically based research. This is the first course in the sequence of statistics and research methods courses, and thus assumes no background in research methods, statistics, or mathematics. It provides a general overview of the research process, including the ways sociologists collect information about social phenomena and an elementary introduction to different forms of analysis, as well as the ethical concerns involved in conducting research. Sociology 320 (Intro to Statistical Analysis) can be taken in the same semester.

We will begin with an overview of the process of social research, including question formulation, conceptualization, causation and research design, and the systematic nature of data collection that leads to reliable data that can be trusted. We will then explore different research designs and methods: surveys, experiments, field research, and comparative-historical methods.

### Course Objectives

There are three main objectives of this course:

1. to introduce you to the “ways of knowing,” we use in sociology,
2. to learn through hands-on-experiences how to conduct sociological investigations.
3. to learn tools to read research reports and academic articles with a critical eye. This will help you to evaluate the work of others not only by academics but also research used by journalists, policy makers, etc.

### Course Requirements

- **Preparation and participation.** You are expected to do all assigned readings and to thoughtfully reflect on them and think of questions you want to raise in preparation for an active participation in class discussions. You need to have finished the readings on the day they are assigned. There will be (reading) quizzes unannounced in class.
- There will be six **homework assignments**. The assignments will be handed out in class. Homework **must be submitted** (typed) at the **start of class on** Tuesday to receive full credit. If the assignment is late, one letter grade per day will be deducted. Missing class is not an excuse for late homework. The only exception is illness or other circumstances beyond your control (or religious holidays); attach a **written explanation** with the late homework when you submit it.

- There will be two tests. These tests will cover material discussed in the text and in class. The best way to prepare for them is to do the homework assignments. In accordance with university and departmental policies, make up tests or incomplete grades will be given at my discretion only in cases of acute illness, with evidence of problem required (e.g. doctors' notes); or unforeseen, extraordinary extenuating circumstances. In this case you need to contact me **before** the test.
- **Extra Credit Option:** Send questions about the readings or "what I have learned from readings" (min. 1 page) by 10 am on Mondays to Kathrin via e-mail. You can also complete the tests on the Study Site:

### Course WWW Site:

<http://www.atsweb.neu.edu/zippel/courses/321/>

The Study Site has flashcards and more on the publisher's WWW page: <http://www.pineforge.com/isw5/>

### Required Text (available at the NU bookstore):

Russell K. Schutt, *Investigating the Social World* (5<sup>th</sup> edition). Pine Forge Press (2006). Make sure your book has the CD Rom you will need it for your homework assignments. Since many professors in sociology have been using this book, most likely you will be able to sell it back to the bookstore. It is also available on reserve in the NU Library.

### Grading

30 % Homework Assignments (2.5 % each)

50 % Tests each 25%

20 % Active participation and Attendance (includes in-class presentations, unannounced quizzes)

### Grading Scale

A = 93-100, A- = 90-92,

B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82,

C+ = 76-79, C = 73-75, C- = 70-72,

D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, F below 59

### Ground Rules:

Class sessions will involve a mixture of lecture, discussion, and sometimes team work. I expect you to be prepared for class, as discussions are only fruitful when the students are prepared. You are responsible for obtaining the material you miss if you are absent. This includes handouts that you might receive in the beginning of the class. Thus, you need to make sure you arrive on time for each session! You will need to do two to three hours of work outside of class most days. If you become ill or there is some other crises please contact me as soon as possible. We will keep daily attendance and missing class more than two times will be reflected in your participation grade, and please keep in mind that there are no make-up quizzes.

Disruptions such as repeatedly coming late to class, talking to your neighbor, packing your bag before class time is over, etc. will not tolerated and violations of these ground rules may be reflected in your participation grade.

In accordance with university rules and the "Academic Honesty & Integrity Policy" any form of plagiarism, cheating or other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in a failing grade for the assignment or tests.

If you have any concerns about your participation in the course, I encourage you to come and talk to me as soon as possible. For students with disabilities, I will make reasonable accommodation as necessary for the materials, homework assignments, and tests, etc.

Methods is a course in which you learn skills and tools. However, the material is not always easily absorbed or understood. I encourage you to ask questions in class. Please try to remember, if you have questions other fellow students are likely to have the same question. No question is too basic! I also expect that you will need to utilize our office hours. Your TAs and I are available during the times listed on the first page. Please make use of the office hours! In addition, we can arrange meetings by appointment if the regular office hours are not convenient for you. We will also respond to your e-mails.

### Tentative Weekly Reading Schedule

	Day	Topic	Read Chapter	Assignment Due
<b>WEEK 1</b>	Fr Sept 8	<b>Introduction</b> Bring the newspaper article to class on Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup>		
<b>WEEK 2</b>	Tu Sept 12	<b>Science, Society and Social Research</b>	Ch1	
	Fr Sept 15	<b>LIBRARY: Meet in Lab C, 202 Snell Library</b>		
<b>WEEK 3</b>	Tu Sept 19	<b>Role of Theory in Research</b>	Ch2	<b># 1</b>
	Fr Sept 22	<b>Process and Problems of Social Research</b>	Ch3	
<b>WEEK 4</b>	Tu Sept 26	<b>Conceptualization and Measurement</b>	Ch4	
	Fr Sept 29	<b>Conceptualization and Measurement</b>		
<b>WEEK 5</b>	Tu Oct 3	<b>Sampling</b>	Ch5	<b>#2</b>
	Fr. Oct 6	<b>Sampling</b>		
<b>WEEK 6</b>	Tu Oct 10	<b>Causation and Research Design</b>	Ch6	
	Fr Oct 13	<b>Causation and Research Design</b>		
<b>WEEK 7</b>	Tu Oct 17	<b>Experiments</b>	Ch7	<b>#3</b>
	Fr Oct 20	<b>TEST 1</b>		
<b>WEEK 8</b>	Tu Oct 23	<b>Survey</b>	Ch8	
	Fr Oct 27	<b>Survey</b>		
<b>WEEK 9</b>	Tu Oct 31	<b>Qualitative Methods</b>	Ch9	<b>#4</b>
	Fr Nov 3	<b>Qualitative Methods</b>		
<b>WEEK 10</b>	Tu Nov 7	<b>Qualitative Data Analysis</b>	Ch 10	
	Fr Nov 10	<b>Qualitative Data Analysis</b>		
<b>WEEK 11</b>	Tu Nov 14	<b>Historical and Comparative Methods</b>	Ch12	<b>#5</b>
	Fr Nov 17	<b>Historical and Comparative Methods</b>		
<b>WEEK 12</b>	Tu Nov 21	<b>Secondary Data Analysis &amp; Content Analysis</b>	Ch 13	
	Fr Nov 24	<b>Happy Thanksgiving</b>		
<b>WEEK 13</b>	Tu Nov 28	<b>Reporting Research</b>	Ch 15	<b>#6</b>
	Fr Dec 1	<b>Review for Test</b>		
<b>WEEK 14</b>	Tu Dec 5	<b>TEST 2</b>		