

Sociology 398: Sociology Research Project
Online
Spring 2022

Instructor: Emily Shafer

Email: emily.shafer@pdx.edu DO NOT EMAIL ME THROUGH D2L

Office Hours on Zoom: Tuesdays 5pm-6pm and Thursdays 12pm-1pm and by appointment

<https://pdx.zoom.us/j/6070120839>

TA: Daniel Mackin

Email: dmackin@pdx.edu

Office Hours on zoom: Wednesdays and Fridays 2pm-3pm & by appointment

<https://pdx.zoom.us/j/6070120839>

Course Description

This course is intended to provide applied research experience following successful completion of Social Research Methods (SOC 397). It is a required course for undergraduate sociology majors. The main purpose is to apply skills and knowledge from SOC 397 to an original research project.

Course Goals

- ✓ Strengthen understanding of major concepts and methodologies in sociology
- ✓ Enhance data analysis skills using SPSS
- ✓ Write the “back end” of a research paper
- ✓ Critically evaluate quantitative sociological research

Prerequisites

Students must have taken and passed SOC 397 with a C or better (Social Research Methods).

Required Textbook

None – You will be using materials from 397.

Course Structure

In this class, you will answer a research question of your choice using General Social Survey data (GSS) and SPSS. You will have several assignments leading up to your final class paper. These are outlined below. In order to help you stay on track with your assignments, I will create weekly “checklists” that refer you to readings, assignments to submit, and other items to complete.

Requirements for the Class

Syllabus quiz and survey response (5% of grade): During the first week of class you will take a syllabus quiz for the class, which you may take as many times as you need

to get a 100%, and a brief survey answering a few questions for me. I strongly encourage you to be exploring the GSS data (<https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/>) for variables you may be interested in.

Initial Research Proposal Worksheet (10% of grade): During the second week you should choose a research topic that you will work on throughout the term. To help you pick, you will fill out “initial research proposal worksheet.” In addition, you should post your initial research ideas to your small group’s discussion board and reply to at least one other group member’s post.

Identification of Variable #1 (interim step; no associated points, but necessary for your work moving forward and your group members will be rating you for your contributions at the end of the quarter): In the third week of class, you will visit the General Social Survey (GSS) Data Explorer (<https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/>) and identify at least one dependent variable (DV), at least one independent variable (IV), and at least 2-3 sociodemographic control variables that might be used to answer your research question. In addition, you should post to your groups discussion board about your topic and identified variables/initial thinking about your research plan and reply to at least one other group member’s post.

Research Plan (20% of grade): In the fourth week of class, you will take into account our feedback from the “initial research proposal worksheet.” The initial research plan should include a (tentative) title, the motivation of the study (one or two paragraphs), your research question and hypothesis (or hypotheses), and the variable/s you are using for your dependent variable, MAIN independent variable, and control variables (we will discuss this more). The initial research proposal should be about 1-2 pages in length with double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. In addition, you will post to the class discussion board about your topic and reply to at least two other class members’ posts.

Identification of Variables #2 (interim step, no associated points, but necessary for subsequent weeks): In the fifth week of class, you will get your dataset (<https://gss.norc.org/get-the-data/spss>) open in SPSS and develop a plan for cleaning/recording based on feedback received in week 4. This includes identifying variables from the codebook or the data file and then cleaning/recoding these variables as needed. Variables should measure your IVs, DV, and control variables, including sociodemographic information such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, employment status, income, marital status, and parental status, as needed. In addition, you should post to your group’s discussion board about your variables and your success in opening GSS in SPSS and reply to at least one other group member’s post.

Data Description (20% of grade): In this sixth week of class, you should write your data description. The data description should describe what your target population is, how your sample was recruited, what method(s) was used to collect your data, and the sample size. You can find this information on the GSS website. It should also include the variables used in the analysis and explanations about how they are

coded (or recoded). The data description should be about 2-5 pages, with double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. In addition, you should post to your group's discussion board a summary of your data description and reply to at least one other member's post.

Data Analysis #1 (10% of grade): In the seventh week of class, you will work on univariate and bivariate data analysis. Analyses should be conducted after cleaning the data and recoding variables as desired. In the data analysis, you should present summary sample characteristics by providing central tendencies, dispersions, and distributions of the relevant variables, as well as a bivariate table (or figure) of the two main variables (i.e. IV and DV). In addition, you should post to your group's discussion board a summary of your data analysis, along with plans/requests for feedback on your multivariate analysis and reply to at least one other group member's post.

Data Analysis #2 (10% of grade): In the eighth week of class, you will work on developing and presenting analyses conducted to answer research questions and confirm or reject hypotheses (with multivariate linear regression). These results should include some use of hypothesis tests and formal interpretations of results with significance values and be presented in a table.

Paper "Presentation" (10% of grade): In the ninth week of class you will post a brief description of your findings from your project to your group's discussion board. In addition, you post on at least two of your group members' posts.

Final Paper (10% of grade): In your final paper you will combine your (revised, based on feedback) research plan, data description, data analysis, and a discussion of your findings. The final paper will be least 7 pages but should not exceed 15 pages in length with double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. Follow ASA or APA style guidelines.

In addition to weekly steps (1-10) to help you develop your research project, two additional assessments will be part of your final grade:

Self-Evaluation (2.5% of grade): At the end of the quarter you will be required to submit a self-evaluation of your work on this project, including revisions made based on feedback, and how well you contributed to your small group's discussions.

Peer Evaluation (2.5% of grade): At the end of the quarter, all small group members will be asked to assess their fellow group members' contributions to discussion and peer feedback.

Grading Scale

A 94 - 100%	B+ 86 - 89%	C+ 76 - 79%	D+ 66 - 69%	F ≤ 59%
A- 90 - 93%	B 82 - 85%	C 72 - 75%	D 62 - 65%	
	B- 80 - 81%	C- 70 - 71%	D- 60 - 61%	

Week 1 April 3	Introduction and Overview of Course syllabus quiz, introductory discussion post, and response to a peer due at midnight
Week 2 April 10	Research question and operationalization Initial research proposal, discussion post, and response to a peer worksheet due at midnight
Week 3 April 17	Questionnaire/Data Identification of variables #1 (interim step – nothing to turn in) Discussion post & response to a peer due at midnight
Week 4 April 24	Research plan Research Plan due at midnight
Week 5 May 1	Finalize variables & clean/recode Identification of variables #2 (interim step – nothing to turn in) Discussion post & response to a peer dur at midnight
Week 6 May 8	Data description Data description due at midnight Discussion post & response to a peer
Week 7 May 15	Data analysis #1 Data analysis #1 due at midnight Discussion post & response to a peer
Week 8 May 22	Data analysis #2 Finalized Data Analysis due by midnight
Week 9 May 29	Presentations "Present" your findings in a group chat by midnight Comment on 2 (or more) presentations
Week 10 June 5	Final Paper Final paper due
Finals Week June 12	Evaluations Self-evaluation & Peer evaluation due by midnight

COURSE POLICIES

Net Etiquette: In all course communications, including small group discussions, you are required to observe the rules of net etiquette. These include the following:

- Avoid using all CAPS as it can give the impression that you are shouting. If you want to emphasize a point, use *asterisks* around a word.
- No personal attacks. If you disagree with a fellow student, describe your perspective clearly and academically. No personal criticism or derogatory language.

- If you disagree with a fellow student, describe your perspective clearly and politely rather than primarily criticizing the student. Avoid personal criticism or potentially offensive language.
- Be respectful when making a comment or responding to others' comments. This rule is the same as for face-to-face classroom behavior. However, as we are not going to have body language and tone of voice in our online communications, please use formal English appropriately.
- Be extra polite, careful, and kind about how you express yourself while posting to a discussion board or emailing the instructor.
- Avoid that thousand-word lengthy post and avoid posting dozens of messages a week. In the interest of time only, which I know none of you have enough of, please work on being succinct.
- Avoid text message abbreviations. Not everyone knows them.
- Finally, if you run into any net etiquette-related problems, please e-mail the instructor directly. I would like to be aware of any concerns.

Writing Tips: All assignments for this course should use double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. Please follow ASA style guidelines when you cite reference(s) in your assignments. I provide several resources that would help you write your written assignments below. These resources are also accessible on D2L.

- **Quick Tips for ASA Style:**
[https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick Tips for ASA Style.pdf](https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick%20Tips%20for%20ASA%20Style.pdf)
- **Plagiarism Resources:**
<https://www.slideshare.net/peter1t/an-introduction-to-plagiarism>
- **How to Avoid Plagiarism:**
<https://guides.library.pdx.edu/c.php?g=271259&p=2613696>

Late Assignments

Assignments are due by specified deadlines and should be turned in via Canvas. Because we are living through a national health crisis, I will accept late work IF you contact me and Jenna by email to explain what is going on. However, I urge you not to take advantage of this because completing on time so that you can get our feedback ASAP is key to your success in this class.

Students with Disabilities

Students with special needs should first register with the Disability Resource Center, 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150 or drc@pdx.edu so that appropriate accommodations may be made. DRC coordinates support services, accommodations, and equipment for students with disabilities. DRC works to ensure equal access to all University programs, services, and activities for students with disabilities. DRC certifies eligibility for services, determines reasonable

accommodations, and develops plans for the implementation of accommodations.

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities: PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please discuss with me.

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations.

During the pandemic, DRC will hold appointments and drop-ins over the phone, via Zoom, and Google Hangouts. You can also email them at drc@pdx.edu or call 503-725-4150 and leave a detailed message. Someone will call you back soon. You can also “visit” their [virtual front desk](#) Monday-Friday 12pm-4pm. In this Zoom space, students can meet with someone to ask questions, get put into the drop-in queue, or take care of other business as you would have at the front desk.

- If you already have accommodations through DRC, please contact Professor Shafer to make sure she has received the faculty notification letter and to ensure that all accommodations are being provided.

Title IX Reporting Obligations: Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and on-housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Information about PSU’s support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU’s Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website at: <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help> or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672.

Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors are required to report information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or student code of conduct, I must share the information with my supervisor or the University’s Title IX Coordinator or the Office of Affirmative Action. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus on D2L.

COVID-19: I will be flexible, understanding, and compassionate with students who are worried about or affected by the virus and its consequences. Be aware that we will have a wide range of thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the Covid-19 pandemic. If you need any assistance, visit [Student Health and Counseling](https://www.pdx.edu/health-counseling/) (SHAC) at <https://www.pdx.edu/health-counseling/>) or call SHAC's Nurse Line: 503-725-2515. SHAC's 24/7 Nurse Advice Line (after hours): 844-224-3145. For more information about COVID-19 related resources at PSU, please visit: <https://www.pdx.edu/health-counseling/covid-19-resources>.

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty

It is expected that the students will maintain the highest level of academic integrity while participating in this class. As per university guidelines, students will be subject to disciplinary action for academic misconduct (includes but not limited to: cheating, fraud, plagiarism, etc) or violations of the code of conduct (includes but not limited to: disruption of teaching, harm or threat of harm, etc). Any of the above mentioned violations will result in the appropriate disciplinary penalties including an "F" in the class, suspension, and/or expulsion. Please refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information at <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct>