

SYA 4300 – Methods of Social Research

Spring 2025 • University of Florida • 3 Credits

Pugh Hall, Room 120

Tuesday, Period 4 (10:40am-11:30am) | Thursday, Period 4-5 (10:40am-12:35pm)

<u>Section #14878 Lab</u> Weil Hall, Room 0408D Wednesday, Period 3 (9:35am-10:25am)	<u>Section #14877 Lab</u> Weil Hall, Room 0408D Wednesday, Period 4 (10:40am-11:30am)
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Instructor & Office Hours

Dr. Evan W. Lauteria (he/him) elauteria@ufl.edu Office Location: Turlington 3361A	Walk-ins: Tuesdays Time: 11:45am-1:45pm [no appointment needed]
	By Appointment: Wednesdays & Fridays Time: 2:00pm-3:30pm http://calendly.com/evanlauteria/oh15

Laboratory Teaching Assistant & Office Hours

Kaili Zhang (she/her) zhangkaili@ufl.edu	Tuesdays, 11:45am-1:45pm Location: Turlington 3347
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Course Description and Learning Objectives

Introduces the scientific method and its application to social science research. Includes research design, data collection and computer data analysis and interpretation

Course Texts

Alford, Robert R. 1993. *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence*. New York, NY: Oxford University Publishing. [ISBN: 0195119037]

Chen, Victor Tan, Gabriela León-Pérez, Julie Honnold, and Volkan Aytar. 2024. *The Craft of Sociological Research: Principles and Methods of Collecting, Analyzing, and Presenting Social Science Data*. Fairfax, VA: Virtual Library of Virginia. Access online at <https://viva.pressbooks.pub/sociology-research-methods/>.

Course Structure & Assignments

Students in this class will be assessed across these three thematic areas based on their performance on the assessments outlined below. Assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed unless otherwise specified.

Assignment	Points	Percent	Date
Practicals (lowest score dropped)	11 x 10	22%	Each Tuesday
R Lab Tutorials (lowest score dropped)	11 x 10	22%	Each Wednesday
Exam #1	40	8%	Thursday, February 27 th
Exam #2	40	8%	Thursday, April 17 th
Final Exam	100	20%	Monday, April 28 th [10am-12pm]
Study Reviews	3 x 30	18%	Monday, February 24 th Monday, March 24 th Monday, April 21 st
Wednesday Lab Attendance	10	2%	
Thursday Lecture Attendance	0	--	
TOTAL	500	100%	

Practicals [Tuesdays]

Each Tuesday our class will meet for “practicals”—applied and/or experiential sessions aimed at giving you first-hand experience grappling with issues and methods described in a previous lecture. These sessions are self-contained activities; you will be assessed on your performance in these practicals, but all work can be completed *during* class. You will, however, have until 11:59pm that Tuesday evening to submit the final documents for the practical on Canvas. Attendance and participation in these practicals is mandatory, though students may miss one practical submission without penalty.

Lab Tutorials [Wednesdays]

Each Tuesday our class will meet for “practicals”—applied and/or experiential sessions aimed at giving you first-hand experience grappling with issues and methods described in a previous lecture. These sessions are self-contained activities; you will be assessed on your performance in these practicals, but all work can be completed *during* class. You will, however, have until 11:59pm that Tuesday evening to submit the final documents for the practical on Canvas.

Attendance and participation in these practicals is mandatory, though students may miss one practical submission and one lab meeting without penalty.

Exams

Three times during the semester, you will be assessed on your content knowledge via in-person examinations. These exams cover material addressed in course lecture, practicals, and lab

tutorials. Specific R code will not be tested, but you may be asked to analyze R output or data visualizations.

Each exam is cumulative, though a greater proportion of questions will draw from more recent weeks. Exams #1 and #2 will be administered during our normal class time; the final exam will be administered during the [University-scheduled final exam time](#).

Exam	Date
<i>Exam #1</i>	Thursday, February 27 th
<i>Exam #2</i>	Thursday, April 3 rd
<i>Final Exam (cumulative)</i>	Monday, April 28 th (10am-12pm)

Study Reviews

Alongside developing your skills at conducting research, you also need to apply them to comprehending and analyzing *others'* research. To that end, you will be tasked with reading three articles, one for each “paradigm” of sociological research, and analyze the particulars of the study—where it was published, its sampling method, its main argument, etc. These will take the form of 2-page worksheets which can be filled out in GoogleDoc, in Word or Pages, or via a PDF annotation tool. Details, as well as which articles to review, will be made available on Canvas.

Thursday Lecture Attendance

Students are required to be in class for Tuesday practicals and Wednesday labs, due to the nature of assignments on those days. Absences beyond the one free “drop” for each will only be permitted for “acceptable reasons,” in accordance with University Attendance Policies (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>). Planned absences must be addressed with the instructor ahead of time; unplanned absences should be address as soon as possible. In either instance, students will need to make up the practical or lab at home in a timely manner. Details will be discussed and arranged via email.

Thursday’s classes, however, are lecture-based. Students may miss up to three such class meetings without grade penalty. Further absences will result in a 5-point reduction to a student’s attendance grade, resulting in a negative attendance score included in final calculation of grades. Tardiness is permitted (please come to lecture even if you are late!), but if a student arrives after attendance has been taken, the student will be marked as absent for that day.

Attendance will be taken in-class in the form of daily questions that can be answered via a smart phone, tablet, or laptop. As such, students either need to bring their own technology to each classroom meeting or arrange for an alternative attendance recording process with the instructor. These questions may address lecture content from the current class or materials assigned for reading, but most can be answered easily as long as you have paid attention in-person for that day of class.

Course Policies

Communication: You may contact me with questions about the course, the site, or assignments and assessments. When emailing me, I ask that you mention in the email title or body that you are in SYA 4300. I will endeavor to reply as quickly as possible, usually within 48 hours. Please be aware that I do not typically check my email regularly on weekends. Please use your UFL email account; I cannot guarantee messages sent through the Canvas messaging system or sent from non-UFL email accounts will receive timely responses.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Course Grading Policy: This course's grading scale for final scores, based on the assignment descriptions provided earlier in this syllabus, is as follows:

A	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
90% or higher	< 90% to 87%	< 87% to 84%	< 84% to 80%	< 80% to 77%	< 77% to 74%	< 74% to 70%	< 70% to 67%	< 67% to 64%	< 64% to 0%

Please note the absence of an "A-" in this class. All scores of 90% or higher are marked as an "A." Further information on university grades and grading policies at the University of Florida can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Extra Credit: In general, I do not provide extra credit opportunities during the semester beyond the attendance policy. As such, students should plan to perform well on the regular course assignments and assessments.

Late Assignments: Practicals, labs, and study reviews may be submitted up to 3 days (72 hours) late. Late submissions can only receive a maximum score of 80% and will be graded last among submissions. For example, a submission that earned a 96% but was submitted late would yield a score of 80%. Conversely, a paper that earned a 78% and was submitted late would still result in a score of 78%.

Extensions or exceptions beyond this policy will only be provided in *extreme* extenuating circumstances, usually requiring documentation and/or discussion with the instructor in accordance with University Attendance Policies (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>). Such instances will be handled on a case-by-case basis (that is, just asking for an extension is not a guarantee!).

Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Students with disabilities who experience barriers to learning should request academic accommodations through the Disability Resource Center. Visit <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/> to begin this process. Part of the process will involve the generation of an accommodation letter; please share this letter with the instructor as early as possible in the semester. You are invited, but not required, to discuss your needs with the instructor, as well.

UF Student Honor and Conduct Code: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment’.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

As text-generative large-language models (LLMs), colloquially described as “AI” or “artificial intelligence,” become increasingly accessible and integrated into digital life, you may find use in such tools for your own learning. The general policy for this course is...

- Permitted, to improve learning and comprehension: AI may be used to assist in student comprehension, understanding, or clarification of course materials and content (as a study buddy or reference). Additionally, AI can be used to brainstorm, outline, or structure writing assignments and “jump start” the writing process, if applicable.
- Not Permitted, to minimize inaccurate representation of comprehension: AI-generated text should not be used for written assignments or worksheets; in these cases, the final explanation or communication must be from your own writing or the writing of other experts in the form of quotations and citations.

If you are uncertain if your use of an AI LLM constitutes a violation of the above policy, please speak with the instructor prior to submitting the relevant assignment. In cases where you lack time to do so, err on the side of caution and use your own words/writing.

Changes to Syllabus: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus during the semester. Changes will only be to the students’ benefit, and changes will always be announced well in advance. All changes will be reflected in the syllabus with appropriate notation, and changes will be announced with sufficient advanced notice on Canvas.

Course Schedule

Assigned readings are listed under “Modules” on Canvas.

Week*	Practical (Tuesday)	R Lab (Wednesday)	Lecture (Thursday)
01: Jan 14-16	Course Introduction	-- [no lab meeting]	Sociological Inquiry & Applied Sociology
02: Jan 21-23	Careers in Sociological Data Analysis	Displaying and Describing Data in R	Research Questions and Literature Review
03: Jan 28-30	Finding Sources and Previous Research	Displaying One Categorical Variable	Paradigms of Social Research
04: Feb 4-6	Research Question Brainstorming	Box Plots and Comparing Distributions	Sampling, Bias, and Ethics
05: Feb 11-13	Bias Case Studies	Regression	The Multivariate Paradigm
06: Feb 18-20	Ethics Case Studies	Simulations and Functions	Operationalization and Measurement
07: Feb 25-27	Operationalization Practice	Confidence Intervals	Exam #1
08: Mar 4-6	Developing Testable Hypotheses	Hypothesis Testing	Surveys & Experiments
09: Mar 11-13	Survey Design	Chi-Squared Tests	The Interpretive Paradigm & Ethnography
10: Mar 25-27	Virtual Ethnography	Social Network Analysis	Interviews and Analyzing Qualitative Data
11: Apr 1-3	Interview Practice	Text Analysis I	Exam #2
12: Apr 8-10	User Experience Research Design	Text Analysis II	The Historical Paradigm
13: Apr 15-17	Media Content Analysis	Time Series Analysis	-- [no class]
14: Apr 22	Final Review	/	/

The final exam will be administered in-person during our [University-scheduled final exam time](#): Monday, April 28th, from 10:00am to 12:00pm, in Pugh Hall 120.