Introduction
This course introduces students to fundamental principles in the logic and execution of social research methods. Students will develop skills in critically analyzing social scientific research by examining issues pertaining to research design, sampling, conceptualization and operationalization of measures, and a range of social scientific methods including surveys, ethnographies, content analyses, and experiments. We will learn about how social researchers use theory as well as ethical and practical considerations to make decisions as they gather and analyze data. The class will also have the opportunity to gain experience in designing and conducting social research within the Saratoga Springs community. Along with “Statistics for the Social Sciences” (SO226), this course provides sociology majors with the necessary background to carry out their own survey research study in Senior Seminar (SO375). However, the primary goal of this course is to cultivate skills of informed citizenship by preparing students to evaluate truth claims about the social world more effectively.

Learning Outcomes
Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:
1. Explain how researchers use theory and empirical evidence to develop sociological insights.
2. Construct testable research questions and appropriate strategies for answering them.
3. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods.
4. Critically evaluate the design and execution of current social research.

Required Texts

Other readings for the course are available on the course’s Blackboard site (http://learn.skidmore.edu).

Requirements
The following are the course assessments:
Two Quizzes 30%
Class Project 30%
Homework 25%
Scholarly Attitude 15%
100%

Grades:
94%-100% A 90-93% A- 87-89% B+
84-86% B 80-83% B- 77-79% C+
74-76% C 70-73% C- 67-69% D+
64-66% D 60-63 D- <60 F
Course Policies

Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation, you must formally request accommodation from Meg Hegener, Coordinator for Student Access Services. You will also need to provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call 580-8150 or stop by the office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center. I would also encourage you to communicate with me about any accommodations well in advance of exams and due dates.

Electronic Devices: Unless directed to do so, I expect that students will not use laptops or other electronic devices in class. Many studies have shown that people are extremely poor multi-taskers. Looking at Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, etc. or even doing Google searches that may seem relevant all distract from lecture and discussion. Moreover, most people retain information better when taking handwritten notes. If you feel that your learning will be hampered by not having access to your laptop for note-taking or other legitimate purposes, please speak to me privately. Otherwise, keep your laptop as well as your cell phone and any other devices will be turned off and stowed away during class.

Late Policy: On all assignments, your grade will be reduced by one unit for each day late (e.g., 1 day, from A to A-; 2 days, B+; 3 days, B, and so on). After two weeks from the due date, you will receive a zero for the assignment.

Missed Quiz: Students who will miss a quiz date due to an official school absence must schedule an alternative quiz date and time in advance. As a general rule, I do not allow students with unscheduled quiz absences to reschedule. In extreme circumstances, a make-up quiz will be given at my discretion and I reserve the right to change the format.

Cheating and Plagiarism: By enrolling at the college, all students have agreed to abide by the Skidmore Honor Code, which says, “I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to adhere to honesty and integrity in all relationships, to be considerate of the rights of others, and to abide by the College regulations.” Part of that code means not to misrepresenting others’ work as your own. Please review the detailed description of the rules and regulations surrounding cheating and plagiarism as described in the Skidmore College Student Handbook (http://www.skidmore.edu/student_handbook/honor-code.php). If you are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism and/or cheating, please discuss it with me in advance of due dates or exams. In the case of a violation, the offending student will receive a zero (“F”) for the assignment and I am required to report all offenses to the Dean of Academic Studies, which may result in disciplinary action. Please don’t let this happen!

Civility and Respect: The Skidmore Honor Code also has important implications for how students ought to treat each other. This course will include discussions of class, nationality, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. I expect students to show respect toward all the subjects of our study. More importantly, I expect you to treat your classmates and your instructor with respect and dignity at all times – especially when you disagree with them.

Course Outline

All listed readings are required. The readings are listed using the following shorthand: (B)
Social Research Counts (Babbie) and (E) available electronically on Blackboard. Please let me know immediately, if you have difficulty accessing the electronic files.

**Part One: Introduction to Inquiry**

Jan. 27  Introductions

Jan. 29  Asking Social Questions  
(B) Ch. 1

Feb. 3  Beginning with Theory  
(B) Ch. 2

Feb. 5  The Logic of Elaboration  
(E) Firebaugh, Excerpt from Ch. 1 of Seven Rules for Social Research  
(B) Ch. 3, pgs. 41-53

Feb. 10  Conceptualization, Operationalization, & Measurement  
(B) Ch. 3, pgs. 53-69

Feb. 12  Sampling Design  
(B) Ch. 4

Feb. 17  Reading for Methods  
(E) Stack and Gundlach, “The Effect of Country Music on Suicide”  
(E) Houle, “How to Read (Quantitative) Journal Articles: A Primer”

Feb. 19  NO CLASS MEETING

Feb. 24  Quiz 1

**Part Two: Data Collection Options**

Feb. 26  Reading and Writing Social Science  
(E) Gusfield, “Two Genres of Sociology”

March 2  Basics of Survey Research  
(B) Ch. 6

March 4  Challenges in Survey Research  
(E) Freese, “Secondary Analysis of Large Social Surveys”  
(E) Lavin and Maynard, “Standardization vs. Rapport: Respondent Laughter and Interviewer Reaction During Telephone Surveys.”

March 9  Social Theory and Quantitative Research: A Love Story  
(E) Gross and Simmons, “Intimacy as a Double-Edged Phenomenon? An Empirical Test of Giddens”

March 11  Introducing Qualitative Methods  
(B) Ch. 7
***Spring Break***

March 23  
Asking Questions and Thick Description  
(E) McCurdy, Spradley, and Shandy, Excerpt from *The Cultural Experience*

March 25  
Qualitative Design  
(E) Duneier, “How Not To Lie With Ethnography”

March 30  
The Ethics of Ethnography  
(E) Goffman, Footnote to *On the Run*

April 1  
Introducing the Experimental Method  
(B) Ch. 5

April 6  
Experiments in the Lab and in the Field  
(E) Correll, “Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations”  
(E) Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record"

April 8  
“Unobtrusive” Research  
(B) Ch. 8

April 13  
Evaluation Research  
(B) Ch. 9

April 15  
**Quiz 2**

**Part Three: Data Analysis and Reporting**

April 20  
Qualitative Data Analysis  
(B) Ch. 10

April 22  
Qualitative Data Analysis, Cont’d

April 27  
Managing Quantitative Data  
(B) Ch. 11

April 29  
Analyzing Quantitative Data