

Lewis-Clark State College
PSYC/SS 385: Research Methods
Fall 2022

Course Information:

Tuesday/Thursday 9:00AM-10:15AM

Room: Administration Building, 16

Instructor: Dr. Britzman

Email: kjbritzman@lcsc.edu | Office: 306 Spalding Hall

Office Hours: 10:30AM-11:30AM on Tuesdays or by appointment

Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course is designed to develop each student's ability to understand the results of research presented in professional journals and to communicate the meaning of data, research findings, and statistical data to others. This course integrates 1) analytical and evaluative thinking; 2) descriptive, explanatory and critical writing; 3) basic knowledge of research design and statistical thinking; and 4) data interpretation. Learning research methods and analytical skills will not only prepare you for JS/PSYC/SS 499 and subsequent employment opportunities, it will also help you in your day-to-day life as you encounter information from a variety of sources.

Catalog Description:

Develops students' ability to design an empirical study within the ethical constraints of human research and to understand the results of research in professional journals. Specific research designs covered include archival research, experimental designs, naturalistic observation, participant observation, quasi-experimental designs, single subject designs, and survey research. Integrates (1) analytical and evaluative thinking, (2) descriptive, explanatory, and critical writing, and (3) basic knowledge of the theory and application of qualitative and quantitative research design.

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of the semester students in this course should be able to:

- Write a research question
- Link research questions to relevant literatures
- Connect theory and research questions to subsequent methods and findings
- Consider the ethical concerns when evaluating and designing social science research
- Understand how scholars use different types of methods to conduct research
- Explain and critique how others use social science methods and describe how you would design an investigation to answer a research question
- Apply the principles of social science research to information in your other courses and information you encounter in your daily life

Required Readings:

Students are required to obtain the following textbook, which is available at the campus bookstore and via online booksellers.

Dixon et al. 2018. *The Process of Social Research*. Oxford University Press.

There are multiple required course readings outside of the textbook. Links to these readings will be posted on the course website. These readings are marked with an asterisk (*). Please complete all of the readings **before** the class session for which they are assigned.

Assignments and Grading:

Assignments

Ethical writing training	5%
Exams	30% (10% each)
Research project writing assignments	40%
Scholarly article summary	5%
Annotated bibliography	10%
Research question	5%
Concepts and theory	10%
Research design	15%
Full research proposal	20%

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	92.50 - 100
A-	89.50 - 92.59
B+	87.50 - 89.49
B	82.50 - 87.49
B-	79.50 - 82.49
C+	77.50 - 79.49
C	72.50 - 77.49
C-	69.50 - 72.49
D+	67.50 - 69.49
D	59.50 - 67.49
F	59.49 or lower

My policy is that all grade inquiries must be made **in writing** no fewer than 24 hours and no more than one week after the class in which the graded assignment is first handed back.

Course Requirements:

Ethical writing training

Ethics is a critical component of the research process. To make sure that everyone has received practice and training on the topic of ethics and ethical writing you will complete an ethical writing training and submit a certificate to show you've passed this training module.

Exams

Three exams that cover questions from the reading and class materials will be given throughout the semester. The exams are a way for me to measure how well students are keeping up with the course readings and to encourage all of you to make sure you keep up with the course readings. Students will complete the exams online through the Canvas course page.

Writing assignments

You will be asked to complete several writing assignments throughout the semester. The due dates are indicated in the schedule below. Each of these writing assignments will be a full draft for the comprehensive research proposal. Specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on Canvas and discussed in class. These writing assignments include:

- A. Scholarly article summary
- B. Annotated bibliography
- C. Research question
- D. Concepts and theory
- E. Research design

Research proposal

By the end of the semester you will complete a research proposal based on a research question that you will develop throughout the semester. The research proposal will include a research question, brief summary of the relevant literature, description of methods, analysis plan, potential challenges, and conclusion. You must integrate feedback from the shorter writing assignments to develop your comprehensive proposal.

A portion of your grade for the papers will also be based on attending a virtual appointment with Professor Britzman to discuss your research proposal project.

Course Policies:

1. Late work

In order to be successful in this course, it is necessary to attend class regularly, keep up with the assigned readings, and turn in all work on time. I recognize that life happens, and I ask that you notify me **24 hours before the due date** to discuss a deadline extension. Barring such an agreement, late work will be assessed a penalty of ten percentage points per day for each day past the due date. In general, you should plan ahead so that you will be able to meet class requirements and deadlines even if you have computer troubles, are sick, or are out of town in the days before an assignment is due.

2. Academic integrity

The point of taking a college class is for you to grapple with the assigned readings and other course materials and demonstrate that you have gained an independent understanding of them.

Thus, university standards for academic integrity apply in this class. Any form of plagiarism or cheating will not be tolerated. When you turn in an assignment, make sure everything in it is your own work and that you have made the appropriate references where necessary. You are expected to know and understand the college's policies on this matter. If you have questions about these standards, please consult the [student code of conduct](http://www.lcsc.edu/student-affairs/student-code-of-conduct/prohibited-conduct/) on academic integrity (<http://www.lcsc.edu/student-affairs/student-code-of-conduct/prohibited-conduct/>).

If you plagiarize, you will automatically receive a zero on that assignment, which will lower your overall grade substantially, and, depending on the seriousness of the offense, I may also report the incident to the Vice President of Student Affairs, which will result in a formal sanction. I also reserve the right to assign you **a failing grade for the entire course** in especially egregious cases, such as copying full sentences directly from a website, the textbook, another student's paper, or other sources and presenting them as your own. Also, **you should never share your written work (a draft of an assignment/paper, a paper written for a previous class, etc.) with another student** except in the context of a formal peer review initiated by an instructor.

The best approach for avoiding academic dishonesty is to carefully read the assigned chapters/articles, give them some thought, and then put ideas into *your own words* in a way that demonstrates that you understand the material, and, when appropriate, cite key ideas and instances of paraphrasing, and occasionally include especially relevant direct quotes from others, properly noted with quotation marks around exact phrasing and introduced with a signal phrase or in some other way.

The LCSC Writing Center (Library, room 172) is also a good resource for students who have questions about writing or would like assistance with their writing assignments. Full information about their services is provided at their [website](http://www.lcsc.edu/writing-center) (<http://www.lcsc.edu/writing-center>). Additionally, a great online source is the [Purdue University Online Writing Lab](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html) (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html).

3. Course website

Our course website is your LC Canvas page (<https://lcsc.instructure.com/login/canvas>). You will find the syllabus, course readings, assignment information, quizzes, journal instructions, class announcements, your grades, etc. on the Canvas webpage.

4. Office hours

If you have any questions, I encourage you to contact me via email. Monday through Friday I will answer emails within 24-48 hours. I will let you know if I have a conflict that will affect email response times.

Additionally, I will have weekly office hours in Spalding Hall. I am also available to meet virtually via Zoom. Please do not hesitate to reach out and set up an appointment.

5. Classroom environment

Diverse backgrounds and experiences are essential to the critical thinking endeavor at the core of university education. Therefore I expect you to follow the Code of Conduct in your interactions with your colleagues and me in this course by respecting the social and cultural differences among us, which may include, but are not limited to: age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, family status, gender identity, citizenship and immigration status, national origin, race, religious and political beliefs, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and veteran status. Please talk with me right away if you experience disrespect in this class, and I will work to address it in an educational manner.

6. Class accessibility

Students with learning disabilities will be accommodated in accordance with university guidelines.

7. Final grades

Final grades are based on the total points you earn throughout the semester on graded assignments, as detailed in the “Assignments and Grading” section of this syllabus. Under no circumstances should you ask for extra points to be awarded or for extra credit opportunities at the end of the semester because your final grade is not as high as you were hoping that it would be (for the purposes of scholarships, sports eligibility, or any other reason). Doing so would be asking me to treat you differently than I treat your classmates, which would be unfair to them and therefore ethically problematic. If you ever have any questions about your grades on particular assignments and/or believe that I have made a grading error, you can address your concerns to me, in writing (via email), within one week of when an assignment has been graded. Any such questions or concerns should be specific and reference the grading criteria (and rubric, if applicable) for the assignment. If warranted, we will then meet to discuss your concerns/questions to clarify how the assignment was graded.

Course Schedule

Course schedule is subject to change. Any changes to assignments, grading, due dates, etc. will be made with students' well-being and workload in mind.

Day/Weekly Topics	Readings/Exams	Major due dates
Week 1: Introduction to Research Methods		
Tuesday August 23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to class • Syllabus 		
Thursday August 25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why care about research methods? 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 1 (pages 1-13)	
Week 2: From Theory to Data and Back		
Tuesday August 30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of science 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 2 (pages 14-24)	
Thursday September 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logic of inquiry • Evaluating science 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 2 (pages 24-38)	
Week 3		
Tuesday September 6	*Exam 1*	
Thursday September 8	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 14 (pages 437-455)	

Week 4: Doing What's "Right"		
Tuesday September 13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical issues in research Professional guidelines 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 3 (pages 39-55)	Due: signed copy of ethical writing training certificate
Thursday September 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Politics of research Intersection of ethics and politics 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 3 (pages 55-73)	
Week 5: It Depends on the Question		
Tuesday September 20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting the research process 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 4 (pages 74-84) *Meet at the LC State library for classroom instruction*	
Thursday September 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing qualitative and quantitative questions 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 4 (pages 84-104)	
Week 6: Linking Theory to Research		
Tuesday September 27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conceptualization and operationalization 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 5 (pages 105-124)	
Thursday September 29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliability and validity Levels of measurement 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 5 (pages 124-130+140)	Due: Scholarly article summary

Week 7		
Tuesday October 4	Catch up and review	
Thursday October 6	*Exam 2*	
Week 8: Case Selection as a Basis for Inference		
Tuesday October 11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling process • Probability and non-probability sampling 	<i>Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 6 (pages 143-157) In-class exercise: sampling strategies	
Thursday October 13	<i>No class – work on annotated bibliography</i>	Due: annotated bibliography
Week 9		
Tuesday October 18	Individual meetings with Dr. Britzman this week Watch: writing a good research question before meeting	
Thursday October 20		
Week 10: What Causes What?		
Tuesday October 25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts and theories • Introduction to experiments 	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 7 (pages 181-193)	Due: research question
Thursday October 27	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 7 (pages 193-210)	
Week 11: Questioning and Sampling		
Tuesday November 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey design 	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 8 (pages 211-228)	

Thursday November 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and conducting surveys 	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 8 (pages 229-248)	
Week 12: Systematic People-Watching and Listening		
Tuesday November 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of qualitative research 	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 9 (pages 249-272)	Due: Concepts and theory
Thursday November 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of conducting field research and in-depth interviews 	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 9 (pages 271- 294)	
Week 13: Using Data from Secondhand Sources + Research Design		
Tuesday November 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using existing data • Content analysis • Comparative historical analysis 	<i>The Process of Social Research</i> Chapter 10 (pages 295-335)	
Thursday November 17	Class workshop: research design	
<i>Fall Break (November 21-November 25)</i>		
Week 14		
Tuesday November 29	*Exam 3*	
Thursday December 1	Peer review workshop	Due: research design

Week 15

Tuesday December 6	In class work session on final research proposals	
Thursday December 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluating research• Course wrap-up and summary	*Science isn't broken	
Final research proposals due by 11:59PM on Tuesday December 13		