

**SOCIOL 710: Research Methods I
Spring 2023 Syllabus**

Instructor: Dr. Youngmin Yi (“Min”)
Pronouns: she/her
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Class Schedule: Wed., 4:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Class Location: Machmer Hall, Room W-22
Student Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

How do you ask a research question? How do you (try and) answer it? These are the two overarching questions that will frame this graduate-level course, focusing on engagement with the sociological research process and a critical survey of many methodological and analytic approaches used to build theory and describe, explain, and otherwise understand social process and organization. The course will be structured around readings and, occasionally, other material (e.g., audio and video clips), in-depth discussions, and applications. The objectives of this course are to:

- (1) Learn how to develop sociological research questions;
- (2) Develop an understanding of various research methods and approaches, including their strengths, weaknesses, requirements, and assumptions;
- (3) Learn to evaluate, critique, and otherwise engage meaningfully with methods, data, and claims;
- (4) Learn how to select appropriate research designs for a question and to translate them into executable research plans; and
- (5) Apply appropriate techniques to our own questions and topics of interest, ideally in service of our progress in the Sociology PhD program and scholarly journeys.

SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT LEARNING IN COMMUNITY (IN CRISIS)

Because of the ongoing health crisis, we must take precautions while striving to learn together. These include measures required by UMass Amherst (i.e., vaccination, consistent masking with KN95 and surgical masks) as well as measures strongly recommended outside of the classroom and off-campus (e.g., consistent masking, discretion regarding social gatherings, regular testing). I am proud of our community for putting safety first, and I also recognize the frustrations and hardship that accompany these responsibilities as well as the broader hardship and stress of the pandemic.

I am committed to these measures, and I am also committed to helping you succeed in this class. Please talk to me and check in with me regularly. If you feel at all unwell, please *do not* come to class and contact me so we can develop a plan to support your wellbeing and success. I commit to being thoughtful and compassionate towards each of you as you navigate the current learning conditions and your own personal circumstances. In turn, I ask that you exercise the same consideration and compassion towards your classmates, Teaching and Grading Assistants, UMass Amherst staff, and your instructors. We are all moving through this differently, but we are moving through this together.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND SCHEDULE

In Spring 2023, this is an in-person class. Because this class will be heavily discussion-based, with the intent of fostering open (and, perhaps even intellectually vulnerable) discourse and engagement, class will not be recorded. Content will be introduced through assigned material to be read, reviewed, or completed before class.

Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.
		Class 4:00 pm – 6:30 pm		

COURSE ACTIVITIES

The course activities are designed to help us meet our learning objectives.

Critical Engagement

Class engagement activities help inform a collaborative approach to our learning.

(1) Introductory questionnaire (1 questionnaire)

This questionnaire, to be completed in Moodle, will provide me with some helpful information about you, your interests, and your experience (I'll share mine, too).

(2) Reflections (2 written submissions)

This written activity, to be completed in-class on February 8 and May 17, will ask you to consider your ideas of "research design and method."

(3) Discussion leadership

Each class meeting will be "led" by one or two members of the class. Discussion leaders will provide "scaffolding" for the class meeting by offering an overview of methodological and conceptual insights or takeaways, challenges, or points for consideration from the week's material. Discussion leaders should also prepare questions for us to engage during our group discussion. Preferences for class discussion leadership assignments will be collected using a sign-up sheet that will be circulated in the first weeks of class.

(4) Active participation

All students are expected to prepare for and contribute to class discussions each week.

Applications/Extensions

Applications and extensions will provide a structured outline for the development of an independent (or ongoing) research effort over the course of the semester. Detailed instructions will be offered well in advance of each deadline. Students must submit their own individual (and novel) work. Group submissions and products from collaborations with faculty/senior researchers are ineligible for submission.

- **Week 2: Response Memo** due Wed., Feb. 14 at 4:00 pm
- **Week 3: Tracing an Argument** due Fri., Feb. 24 at 11:59 pm
- **Week 5: CITI Human Subjects Training Certification** due Fri., Mar. 10 at 11:59 pm
- **Week 8: Follow the Respondent** due Wed., Mar. 29 at 4:00 pm
- **Week 11: Qualitative Coding** due Wed., Apr. 19 at 4:00 pm
- **Week 13: Final Project/"Exam" Plan** due Fri., May 5 at 11:59 pm
- **Week 14: Network Data and Measures** due Wed., May 10 at 4:00 pm

Final Research Paper/Proposal

Your work this semester will culminate in a final application of research methods and design to an output that serves your research training and objectives. There will be two options, of which each student will select one, to be determined and detailed earlier in the semester with me. This will be submitted by the last day of finals period, Thursday, May 25 at 11:59 pm ET.

- (1)** A polished draft of the motivation, background, research objectives, and analytic strategy for a research paper or proposal.
- (2)** An "exam" in which you will be asked to develop a set of research designs for a specific sociological topic of investigation.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

These course expectations provide structure for us to pursue the course objectives within the timeline of the academic semester.

Deadlines

Students are expected to keep pace with the Course Schedule, as all materials/deadlines are posted in advance. Students should make every effort to submit assignments by the noted deadlines to proceed through the course within the limited time we have together. Should you be facing extenuating circumstances that prevent you from doing so, please connect with me as soon as possible so we can co-create an alternative plan for success and enrichment.

Attendance

There is no formal attendance policy for this class. As adults and scholars who have registered for this program and class of your own accord, you have committed to the course objectives and are expected to take responsibility for your own learning. For some, this will entail working with Min to develop a modified plan to address extenuating or changing circumstances.

Grading

My starting assumption is that you will receive an A in this class, which will be fulfilled with satisfactory completion of course activities and regular active participation in class. Feedback will be provided on all applications and extensions, in service of informing your own assessment of your engagement and progress in this course.

COURSE MATERIALS

We will draw upon a range of different materials and resources for this class.

Moodle: The class Moodle page will serve as “home base.” Most class materials will be posted to this site. Access it by logging in with your NetID and password here: <https://umass.moonami.com/>

Class Meetings: This class is structured around assigned material that we will all engage deeply prior to coming to class. Each week, I will offer guiding questions and reading suggestions for the following week’s material, along with instructions for upcoming assignments and activities. Class meetings will center heavily on discussion, expansion, and clarification, and reflection, with time allocated for in-class application, as well.

Zoom: Meetings with Min may sometimes need to take place over Zoom. All UMass Amherst students have free access to Zoom through our Moodle site using their NetID and password.

Course Texts: Please refer to the Detailed Course Schedule for the reading and assignment schedule. Unless otherwise indicated, completion of the listed reading is required. Readings will draw from the following texts as well as peer-reviewed articles, podcasts, and other material made available through our class Moodle page:

- **Required Text:** *The Art and Science of Social Research, 2nd edition (Art and Science)*, by Deborah Carr, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, and Mary C. Waters: <https://wnorton.com/books/9780393537529>
- **Optional Text:** *Give Methods A Chance (GMAC)*, by Kyle Green and Sarah Lageson: <https://wnorton.com/books/9781324000549>

Both of these texts are available through their respective publishers and the UMass Amherst Campus Bookstore (<https://umass.ecampus.com>). Although I love hard copies of texts, I strongly recommend acquiring the eBook version of *Art and Science*; it is identical and substantially cheaper. Unfortunately, UMass Amherst is not able to acquire an institutional copy of the eBook. I will also offer a list of suggested supplementary readings; these should be considered “next steps” for those seeking to extend or learn more about any of the topics we cover.

Technology: You will need access to a stable internet connection and a computer to participate fully in this class. *If any of these requirements presents a challenge, please contact me and/or the Office of the Dean of Students as early as possible so we can work together to address these needs.*

Software Programs: All of the software programs that students will need to use for this class are free and publicly available to you as UMass Amherst students. *If your computer does not allow you to install programs, please contact Min immediately so she can help you set up an alternative arrangement. Google Chromebook users, this applies to you.*

- **Microsoft Office (Word, Excel):** All students have free access to Microsoft Office through UMass Amherst. You will need to download and install Microsoft Office, and specifically Word and Excel, to complete and submit all course activities.
- **Optional: R and RStudio:** These are free open-source statistical software for data analysis (and more). R is available on the CRAN R Project website and RStudio is available on the RStudio website; you will need both. You should download and install these programs on your own before classes begin, following the step-by-step instructions that I will provide later this semester.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

A number of tools and resources will help us build and maintain our learning community:

Discussion Forum: The class Discussion Forum on Moodle is an organized but informal space where students and instructors can post questions, comments, and suggestions. I encourage students to use this resource. Instructors will check this forum regularly to contribute and answer questions.

Student Hours: Student hours will be scheduled by appointment; this is dedicated time *for you* during which you are encouraged to “stop by” to connect and ask questions. After reviewing course materials and notes, student hours should be your first stop for “live” support and questions about this class. To request a student hour appointment, please email me directly using your @umass.edu email address and a message detailing the purpose of the requested appointment, and some dates/times when you would be available to meet.

Email: I will generally respond to student emails within 2 business days. As a policy, I do not communicate about classes or work responsibilities via personal phone calls, text/SMS messages, or social media. Please be sure to include a salutation and sign-off for all emails and to keep emails professional, curious, and respectful – I will be sure to do the same!

COURSE OUTLINE

The schedule below summarizes the semester's topical outline. Please see the Detailed Course Schedule for a detailed itemization of weekly readings, topics, assignments, due dates, and specific instructions on how to prepare for particular class meetings.

- I. Introduction: The Sociological Perspective (February 8)**
- II. Research Design and Sociological Theory (February 15)**
- III. Ethics and Community (February 22, No Class/Monday Schedule)**
- IV. Measurement and Conceptualization (March 1)**
- V. Samples, Cases, and Observations (March 8)**
- VI. Spring Break (March 15)**
- VII. Causality (March 22)**
- VIII. Survey Methods (March 29)**
- IX. The Scholar in Society: Ethnography and Observation (April 5)**
- X. Statistical Inference (April 12)**
- XI. Interviews and Focus Groups (April 19)**
- XII. Materials-Based, Comparative, and Historical Methods (April 26)**
*Note: Meet in the Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) on the 25th floor of the W.E.B. Du Bois Library.
- XIII. Experiments (May 3)**
- XIV. Network Analysis and Computational Social Science (May 10)**
- XV. New Directions and Contemporary Debates (May 17)**

CAMPUS AND COURSE POLICIES

Commitment to Inclusion

The university recognizes and values the wide range of voices and perspectives in all spheres of the academic enterprise. The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to policies that promote inclusiveness, social justice, and respect for all, regardless of race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, political belief or affiliation, marital status, veteran status, immigration status, gender identity and expression, genetic information, or any other characteristic or status protected by state or federal laws.

We commit to maintaining an environment that supports our and others' participation and pursuit of the class objectives. In service of this commitment, behavior that marginalizes or harasses others, whether persons in this class or outside our class community, will not be tolerated. Resources and support for students facing or witnessing behavior or experiences that violate this commitment may learn about reporting options and how to report these concerns to the Title IX and Equal Opportunity and Access Office here: <https://www.umass.edu/titleix/reporting>.

Commitment to Academic Integrity

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty).

We commit to honest representation of our work. Students acknowledge that assignments may be submitted to Turnitin for textual similarity review for the detection of plagiarism. Use of content from ChatGPT, other Artificial Intelligence (AI) text generators, and other content-producing tools for is explicitly prohibited for this class. Input of course material into text generators without permission from the source (i.e., classmates or instructors) is also a violation of privacy and academic integrity.

Student Services, Special Circumstances, and Needs

Reasonable accommodations and support are available to students to support their participation in the face of disabilities, illness, immigration laws, mental health, learning needs, and other considerations. Please contact Professor Yi to discuss any such concerns and needs.

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify Professor Yi as soon as possible (within the first two weeks of the semester) so that we may make appropriate arrangements in a timely manner. For more information, consult Disability Services (<http://www.umass.edu/disability>).

Sharing Policy

Transfer, duplication, and sharing of course material outside of our class beyond that which is publicly available on Professor Yi's website is expressly prohibited unless unequivocal written consent has been obtained from the instructors and students involved. This includes, but is not restricted to, screenshots, audio/video recordings, Zoom chats, transcripts, and class documents. Violation of this policy is a violation of the privacy, rights, and safety of our class and will be treated as such.

Support in Response to Harassment, Assault, and Violence in the UMass Amherst Community

As a faculty member, I (Professor Youngmin Yi) am required to report any sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking of which I become aware to the Title IX Coordinator in the Dean of Students Office. This includes any experiences or concerns that you disclose to me. Students can contact the Office of Equal Opportunity & Diversity or the Dean of Students Office directly to make a report, file a complaint, or learn about available resources and accommodations. If you would like support or further guidance in doing so, please know that I am here to support you in that process. Students can find additional information at <http://www.umass.edu/titleix>, the Sexual and Relationship Violence Resource Guide at <https://bit.ly/3Keb2NH>, and the Survivors' Bill of Rights at <https://www.umass.edu/titleix/survivors-bill-of-rights>.

Land Acknowledgment

The University of Massachusetts Amherst acknowledges that it was founded and built on the unceded homelands of the Pocumtuc Nation on the land of the Norrwutuck community.

We begin with gratitude for nearby waters and lands, including the Kwinitekw -- the southern portion of what's now called the Connecticut River. We recognize these lands and waters as important Relations with which we are all interconnected and depend on to sustain life and wellbeing.

The Norrwutuck community was one of many Pocumtuc Indian towns, including the Tribal seat at Pocumtuc (in present day Deerfield), Agawam (Springfield), and Woronoco (Westfield) to name just a few. The Pocumtuc, who had connections with these lands for millennia, are part of a vast expanse of Algonquian relations. Over 400 years of colonization, Pocumtuc Peoples were displaced. Many joined their Algonquian relatives to the east, south, west and north — extant communities of Wampanoag, including Aquinnah, Herring Pond, and Mashpee, Massachusetts; the Nipmuc with a reservation at Grafton/Hassanamisco, Massachusetts; the Narragansett in Kingstown, Rhode Island; Schaghticoke, Mohegan and Pequot Peoples in Connecticut; the Abenaki and other Nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy extending northward into Canada; and the Stockbridge Munsee Mohican of New York and Massachusetts, who were removed to Wisconsin in the 19th century. Over hundreds of years of removal, members of Southern New England Tribes would make the journey home to tend important places and renew their connections to their ancestral lands. Such care and connection to land and waters continues to the present day.

Today, Indigenous Nations in southern New England continue to employ diverse strategies to resist ongoing colonization, genocide, and erasure begun by the English, French, Dutch, Portuguese and other European Nations, and that continued when Tribal homelands became part of the United States. Native Americans from Tribal Nations across the U.S. and Indigenous peoples from around the world also travel into these Pocumtuc homelands to live and work. This land has always been and always will be, Native Land.

We also acknowledge that the University of Massachusetts Amherst is a Land Grant University. As part of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, Tribal lands from 82 Native Nations west of the Mississippi were sold to provide the resources to found and build this university.

This Land Acknowledgement is the first step in the university's commitment to practice intellectual humility whilst working with Tribal Nations toward a better shared future on Turtle Island. We aim to foster understanding, deep respect, and honor for sovereign Tribal Nations; to develop relationships of reciprocity; and to be inclusive of Native perspectives and thriving Native Nations far into the future. Members of Massachusetts-based Tribal Nations who are kin to the historic Pocumtuc contributed their insights in composing this acknowledgement -- namely Tribal representatives from Mashpee, Aquinnah, and Stockbridge Munsee. As an active first step toward decolonization, we encourage you to learn more about the Indigenous peoples on whose homelands UMass Amherst now resides on and the Indigenous homelands on which you live and work.

ADDITIONAL CAMPUS RESOURCES

Here are some links to other UMass Amherst resources available to support your learning and wellbeing.

Anonymous Witness Form

<https://www.umass.edu/umpd/anonymous-witness-form>

Assistive Technologies Center

<http://www.oit.umass.edu/atc>

Bias Reporting (Non-Emergency)

<https://www.umass.edu/diversity/reporting-options>

*For emergencies, please call 911 or (413) 545-3111

Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (Crisis: 877-831-7421)

<https://www.umass.edu/counseling/>

COVID-19 Policies, and Resources

<https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/>

Disability Services

<https://www.umass.edu/disability/>

English as a Second Language

<https://www.umass.edu/esl/>

Graduate Employee Organization (GEO/UAW 2322)

<https://www.geouaw.org/>

Graduate School

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/>

International Programs Office

<https://www.umass.edu/ipo/>

Office of Equal Opportunity & Diversity (413-545-3464)

<https://www.umass.edu/eod/>

Ombuds Office

<https://www.umass.edu/ombuds>

Sexual Assault Services (Hotline: 413-545-0800 or 888-337-0800)

<https://bit.ly/2XWGdXe>

University Health Services (413-577-5000, Triage Advice Nurse 413-577-5229)

<https://www.umass.edu/uhs>

Veteran Services Office

<https://www.umass.edu/veterans/>

Writing Center

<https://www.umass.edu/writingcenter>