

Measuring Behavior

Winter 2025
Tuesdays 10-12:50am

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Learning Objectives

- (1) To introduce students to a wide variety of research methods used in anthropology to measure human behavior
- (2) To engage in the practice of research design, data collection and data analysis by directly engaging with various research methods
- (3) To learn about common pitfalls in behavioral research, including biases in study design and data collection and engage with examples of research that showcase either particular strengths or significant limitations.
- (4) To develop an understanding of the various facets of a research study, and to use those in the implementation of a small-scale study of their own design

Course Structure

In this course you will learn about the various ways that social scientists quantitatively measure human behavior. We will draw from anthropology, psychology, sociology and economics to review a variety of methods. A large part of this class revolves around the actual practice of data collection and analysis. Therefore, each week will be divided into three segments: (1) compilation of results from previous week's method and discussion of results (2) a "methods module" that highlights a critical issue relevant to measuring behavior in the social sciences; (3) introduction of a method and design of that week's homework assignment. Because this class relies of student interaction and participation, it is critical that you come to class having read the background materials on our primary method for the week.

Assignments

- (1) *Class Participation*: Each week we will be learning a new method and designing a study that uses that method. We will do this together as a group and student input on design is critical. In addition, we will be analyzing the data that you collected the previous week, which will be done in groups and as a class. Students are expected to present each week and actively helping to generate ideas for study design and analysis. **(10%)**
- (2) *Weekly Homework*: Each week (other than weeks 1 and 10) students will conduct a short study based on the method learned in class that week. These will often require interacting with or watching other people. You may conduct these assignments with your friends, family, or strangers, but please do not include other members of this class in your

samples. The assignments are fairly short and should be fun. Your results will be posted via shared google spreadsheets (links available on the course webpage) so that we can compile everyone's answers and discuss the results during the following week's class. Therefore, ***late assignments will not be accepted***. Your grade will be based on completion of 7 of the 8 studies (in other words, you can skip one study without penalty). **(60%)**

(3) ***Final Project***: In a final paper (5-7 double-spaced pages) you will describe a study that you have designed and run. Your paper should include an introduction, description of the method, results (with at least one figure or table) and discussion/conclusions. You will also be presenting your project in a brief PowerPoint presentation in Week 10. More details on both the paper and the presentation will be available on the course webpage. You will also be required to meet with one of the Professors in Week 6 or 7 to discuss your project idea. **(30%)**

Weekly Schedule

	Method Introduced	Method Discussed	Learning Module	Readings
Week 1	Scan Sampling	--	Research Design	Hames & Paolisso 2014
Week 2	Focal Follows	Scan Sampling	Objectivity & Representation	Hames & Paolisso 2014
Week 3	Free-Listing/ Pile Sorts	Focal Follows	Power & Sampling	Quinlan 2019; Scelza and Prall 2018
Week 4	Social Networks	Free Listing/ Pile Sorts	Reliability & Validity	Yuksel, 2022
Week 5	Cultural Consensus	Social Networks	Types of Bias	Weller 2007; Hrushka 2009
Week 6	Surveys	Cultural Consensus	Types of Error	Launiala 2009
Week 7	Vignettes	Surveys	Causality	Aguinis & Bradley 2014; Barrett et al. 2016
Week 8	Economic Games	Vignettes	Data Visualization	Henrich et al. 2001 Gervais 2017
Week 9	--	Economic Games	Writing a Research Paper	--
Week 10	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS			

Student Resources

Accommodation and Accessibility

We want to ensure that you have whatever resources and accommodations that you require to succeed in this course. If you need accommodations of any sort, please contact the Center for

Accessible Education (<https://www.cae.ucla.edu/students>). CAE can be contacted at (310)825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. Please notify me once you have registered with the CAE. If you require accommodations on exams, I will need a minimum of one week's notice to plan accordingly.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS supports student mental health needs as they pursue their academic goals. Their services are designed to foster the development of healthy well-being necessary for success in a complex global environment. CAPS offers a variety of services to meet student needs including: crisis counseling available by phone 24 hours a day/7 days a week 310-825-0768, emergency Intervention, individual counseling and psychotherapy, group therapy, psychiatric evaluation and treatment, psychoeducational programs and workshops, and campus mental health and wellness promotion. Please visit <http://counseling.ucla.edu> for more information.

Assigned Readings

Aguinis, Herman, and Kyle J. Bradley. "Best practice recommendations for designing and implementing experimental vignette methodology studies." *Organizational research methods* 17.4 (2014): 351-371.

Altmann, Jeanne. "Observational study of behavior: sampling methods." *Behaviour* 49.3-4 (1974): 227-266.

Barrett, H. Clark, et al. "Small-scale societies exhibit fundamental variation in the role of intentions in moral judgment." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113.17 (2016): 4688-4693.

Bernard, R. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (2011). New York: Altamira Press.

Gervais, Matthew M. "RICH economic games for networked relationships and communities: development and preliminary validation in Yasawa, Fiji." *Field methods* 29.2 (2017): 113-129.

Henrich, Joseph, et al. "In search of homo economicus: behavioral experiments in 15 small-scale societies." *American Economic Review* 91.2 (2001): 73-78.

Hruschka, Daniel. "Defining cultural competence in context: Dyadic norms of friendship among US high school students." *Ethos* 37.2 (2009): 205-224.

Quinlan, Marsha B. "The freelisting method." *Handbook of research methods in health social sciences*. Singapore: Springer (2017): 1-16.

Reyes-Garcia, V., et al. "Ethnobotanical knowledge shared widely among Tsimane'Amerindians, Bolivia." *Science* 299.5613 (2003): 1707-1707.

Scelza, Brooke A., and Sean P. Prall. "Partner preferences in the context of concurrency: what Himba want in formal and informal partners." *Evolution and Human Behavior* 39.2 (2018): 212-219.

Weller, Susan C. "Cultural consensus theory: Applications and frequently asked questions." *Field methods* 19.4 (2007): 339-368.