



01:595:215 (CRN 09988)

RESEARCH METHODS IN LATINO & CARIBBEAN STUDIES

Tues. & Thurs.; 1:40-3:00pm

LSH A256 (Livingston)

ADMIN INFO

Instructor:

Kenneth Sebastian León, PhD

E-mail:

KSL96@rutgers.edu

Office Phone:

848.445.4242

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 11a-12p or by appointment

Office Location:

A259 Lucy Stone Hall (B-Wing; 2nd Floor)

Course Management:

Canvas. Contact help@canvas.rutgers.edu for IT issues

COURSE OVERVIEW

Latino and Caribbean Studies (LCS) offers interdisciplinary insights into the social, political, cultural and economic conditions of various Latino subjectivities. As a political location, LCS also seeks to improve or democratize such conditions. This mandate involves not only the concentrated study of substantive topic areas, but also the development of analytic perspectives and methodological skill sets that enable the LCS project.

Datapoints and observations are fundamentally different from how we interpret, contest, or reinterpret their meaning. We will therefore examine convergent and divergent research methods, orientations, and debates found in the humanities and social sciences.

This course offers an introduction to research methods from interdisciplinary vantage points located within and beyond Latino & Caribbean Studies. In addition to a robust but accessible introduction to major theoretical, epistemological, and political tensions in humanities and social science research methods, you will also be challenged to learn a variety of specific research methods and apply them to your individual and collective interests. Lastly, you will be asked to demonstrate your competency in theoretical and practical skills through the completion of an original research proposal.

The class format consists of substantive lectures, small-group workshops, and class-wide discussions. Guest lectures, group activities, and multimedia assignments may be incorporated at the discretion of the instructor.

It is my professional objective to ensure that, upon completion of this course, you feel comfortable, confident, and qualified to continue cultivating a research-oriented imagination and build upon the skills you will gain throughout the semester. Welcome to the course.

PRE-REQUISITES AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

No prior research experience or methods training is required. However, this is a discussion- and workshop-intensive course, and students are expected to bring both analytic rigor and personal curiosity to the subject matter. In lieu of a conventional reading load, students will be required to invest substantive amounts of time practicing and experiencing the research process, and sharing their experiences both verbally and in writing. Students who are not prepared to dedicate the corresponding time and energy to these demands should consider taking this course another time.

LEARNING GOALS

This course will directly advance the learning goals of both the [Latino & Caribbean Studies](#) major and the [Criminal Justice](#) major. Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Read, analyze, and critically engage with academic, historical, and cultural texts;
2. Examine methodological approaches to the study of race and ethnicity in the United States;
3. Demonstrate an introductory mastery of key issues, themes, and debates in social science research methods, with an emphasis on Latino & Caribbean Studies;
4. Develop a working familiarity with the principles and applications of interdisciplinary research methods;
5. Show proficiency in advancing an original research question and an individualized research plan;
6. Effectively articulate in oral and written form complex ideas about knowledge, power, and society;
7. Understand the limits of research in providing unequivocal “facts” and the importance of considering competing assumptions, biases, and conflicts of interest;
8. Improve methodological literacy, including the ability to critique measures, themselves, as “objective” indicators in the social world.

A complete description of Department Learning Goals and Major/Minor requirements can be found on the LCS website: <http://latcar.rutgers.edu>

COURSE MATERIALS

Required readings and multimedia will be provided via Canvas or as in-class handouts. All students are required to have a notebook for recording class activities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSESSMENT, AND GRADING

GRADING SCALE

A=93-100, B+=89-92, B=81-88, C+=77-80, C=70-76, D=65-69, F=64 and below

The cumulative grade is weighted to reflect the following components.

Percentage of Cumulative Final Grade

Attendance	5%
Class Participation	10%
8 Out-of-Class Research Assignments	40%
Research Journal / Course Notes	20%
Research Plan	25%

Attendance [5%]

Regular and consistent attendance is critical for success in this course. All students are able to miss one class session without penalty, no questions asked. Please do not contact me with questions about what you missed due to an absence. Students who have reason to believe they will have difficulty maintaining a consistent attendance record should reconsider taking this class.

Please come to class prepared and on time.

Students should report all scheduled absences should be reported via the Self-Reporting Absence Application, available at: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> All students are expected to be familiar with the university's Course Attendance policy and the institutional position concerning religious observances, available here: (<https://policies.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/10.2.7%20-%20current.pdf>).

Participation [10%]

Students are expected to contribute regularly to class discussions by raising relevant questions, providing thoughtful feedback, or engaging in constructive criticism of course readings and/or lecture materials. Students who may not feel comfortable speaking in class should make an appointment to meet with the instructor or drop by during office hours to discuss further. As a general guideline, you should verbally contribute a substantive comment or question at least once per week, and ideally once per class meeting.

Out-of-Class Research Assignments [40%]

Research methods are most effectively learned through direct experience. There will be a total of 8 separate research-based assignments. This will provide you with a structured opportunity to gain first-hand research experience. Detailed prompts and corresponding due dates will be provided separately via Canvas.

Research Journal / Course Notes [20%]

All students are required to keep a research journal which will be used to complete the Research Assignments all notes, observations, reflections, and critiques that pertain to our coursework and course materials. If you are unable to secure a notebook before January 23, I will provide one for you.

I will regularly provide open-ended and/or exploratory prompts for you to incorporate into this research journal. You are encouraged to be creative with your journal entries and responses, but always be sure to anchor your writing in the course material(s). This journal will be submitted at the end of the semester for a formal evaluation. Please do not write anything in this journal that presents legal liabilities to yourself or others. The contents of this journal will be viewed solely by the professor and will be returned to all students upon grading.

Research Plan [25% total]

In lieu of a midterm and final exam, your Research Plan represents a semester-long project of developing a 7-10 page research prospectus. The components of this project include:

1. Identifying a research question with a theoretical framework and research design;
2. Writing a concise literature review;
3. Providing and receiving feedback with your colleagues;
4. Delivering a 7-minute presentation on your project;
5. Submitting a finalized research plan

More details will be provided via Canvas.

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours

Office hours represent the opportunity to raise any and all questions, comments, concerns, or curiosities regarding course material and academic interests. This is also the best time for any advising-related questions that you may have, or any other research or learning-related matters that you wish to discuss. If you are unable to meet during my scheduled office hours, please set an appointment by offering three windows of availability. You may also call my office line at

848.445.4242 during office hours or via appointment if there are scheduling- or mobility-related concerns.

Technology in the Classroom

Unless otherwise specified, the use of laptops, tablets, and smartphones is prohibited during class lectures and group discussions. Supplemental readings on this topic are provided below.

- Brookings 2017. For better learning in college lectures, lay down the laptop and pick up a pen. (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/for-better-learning-in-college-lectures-lay-down-the-laptop-and-pick-up-a-pen/>)
- New York Times 2017. Laptops are great, but not during a lecture or meeting. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html>)
- Scientific American. 2017. Students are Better Off without a Laptop in the Classroom. (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/>)

Late Submissions

Late work of any kind will not be accepted without prior written approval/authorization from the instructor.

Communication and E-mail Standards

If your inquiry is neither time-sensitive nor of a confidential nature, please consider raising questions in class, immediately after class, or during office hours. Please *do* use e-mail for communicating about sensitive or individual matters that may have administrative importance. Please specify the course and substantive topic in the subject line of your e-mails. E-mails are generally responded to within 48 hours. You may also call my office line at 848.445.4242 during office hours or via appointment if you are unable to meet on campus.

This course encourages that we consider multiple perspectives, paradigms, and worldviews. I encourage critical inquiry into all aspects of our learning environment, including the materials that I share. Please feel free to raise questions or offer critiques of anything that we cover in this course. It is possible that we might collectively discuss difficult or sensitive subject matters that are pedagogically relevant. It is our shared responsibility to ensure a baseline of mutual respect and intellectual openness when discussing contested topics or divergent viewpoints.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Please do not plagiarize or engage in activities that constitute violations of the Academic Integrity Policy. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld. The full PDF policy is available on Canvas, and all students are expected to be familiar with the policy, also linked below: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

Administrative Detail for Students Who Are Parents/Guardians

Students who are parents or guardians to young children are more than welcome to bring their child to class if the childcare or related demands might otherwise prevent the student from attending.

Disability Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. To begin this process, please complete the [Registration form](https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration) (<https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Rutgers Libraries** | <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>
- **Campus Safety Home Page** | <https://www.rutgers.edu/about/campus-safety>
- **Rutgers University Police Department** | RUPD (New Brunswick) can be reached at 732-932-7211 or via other channels listed at <http://rupd.rutgers.edu/rupd.php> | All members of the RU community are encouraged to subscribe to the RU Emergency Notification System (ENS) via https://eas.rutgers.edu/?ht_kb=emergency-notification-system-ens
- **Counseling, ADAP and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)** | CAPS offers online screening for Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Alcohol Use Disorder, Eating Disorder, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This free screening is made available to all students and is taken anonymously. At CAPS, there is a counselor available for crisis intervention / emergencies every day of the week during regular business hours (8:30am – 4:30pm) to assist with urgent concerns. **CAPS: 848-932-7884 | AFTER HOURS: 855-515-5700**

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

I am an Assistant Professor of Latino & Caribbean Studies and Criminal Justice at Rutgers-New Brunswick. Prior to joining the Rutgers community, I was a Visiting Assistant Professor at George Washington University, where I also served as the Interim Director of the Law & Society Minor. While living in DC, I was a contracted researcher of transnational organized crime at the National Institute of Justice – which is the primary justice research entity in the U.S. Department of Justice. Some of my research and professional experience in this area includes grant-funded research of the Colombian National Police, the Honduran National Police, and the transnational capacity of MS-13 in the United States and El Salvador.

I was born in Bogotá, and my family is from San Andres (Colombia). I migrated with my immediate family to the U.S. when I was two years old, and grew up between North Miami and Ft. Lauderdale. I have two dogs (1 Amstaff and 1 APBT-Boxer mix) that occasionally come to campus.

Being the first in my family to graduate with a college degree in the US, it is a sincere privilege to contribute to your undergraduate learning experience, and a responsibility which I take very seriously. You can learn more about my scholarship, research, and teaching at ksebastianleon.com

Copyright Statement and Restrictions on Sharing Course Materials

No documents, notes, or materials pertaining to this course should be uploaded to websites that rely on paid subscriptions (e.g., *Course Hero*). Unauthorized uploading of student-created and instructor-created documents

pertaining to this course could constitute violations for the University Academic Integrity Policy and subject the student to disciplinary action. Posting lecture notes or other course materials from this course may constitute both a copyright infringement and the facilitation of academic dishonesty.

COURSE TOPICS AND READING CALENDAR*

**Course content is customized and tailored – where possible – to meet your collective interests. As a result, the schedule is subject to modification with advanced, written notice.*

Week # Dates	Topic(s)	Assignments and Deliverables
PART 1. THEORIES, PARADIGMS, AND POLITICS		
1 Jan 21	Introduction & Syllabus Review	Obtain 2 notebooks/journals
Jan 22	Core Concepts, Dilemmas, and Themes	
2 Jan 28	NO CLASS MEETING Jan 28	NO CLASS MEETING: Complete Google Form Identify 4 Research Interests (see Canvas Prompt)
Jan 30	Science, Knowledge, and Empire	IN CLASS: Research Interests Workshop
3 Feb 4	Epistemology, Positionality, Authority	TBD
Feb 6	Ethics and Conflicts	TBD
	PART 2. PRACTICAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT	[Research Assignment Prompts Released]
4 Feb 11	Specifying Research Question	TBD
Feb 13	Conducting Background Research & Lit. Review	RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 1
5 Feb 18	Physical Observations	TBD
Feb 20	Physical Observations	RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 2
6 Feb 25	Interviews	TBD
Feb 26	Interviews	RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 3
7 Mar 3	Ethnography	TBD
Mar 5	Ethnography	RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 4
8 Mar 10	Content Analysis	TBD
Mar 12	Content Analysis	TBD
9	SPRING BREAK	
10 Mar 24	Discourse Analysis	TBD
Mar 26	Case Studies	RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 5
11 Mar 31	Methods in the Humanities	TBD
Apr 2	Methods in the Humanities	RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 6
PART 3. INDEPENDENT RESEARCH AND ADVANCED METHODOLOGICAL LITERACY		

12 Apr 7	Statistics 101	TBD
Apr 9	Statistics 101	RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 7
13 Apr 14	Survey Research	TBD
Apr 16	Survey Research Spatial Methods	RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 8
14 Apr 21	Data Management	TBD
Apr 23	Ethics Revisited	TBD
15 Apr 28	Writing and Presenting Your Work	Final Presentations
Apr 30	Final Presentations	Final Presentations