

Sociology 332: Social Research Methods Summer 2018

Class Time: M-F 12:30-1:45 p.m.
Class Location: Languages 114B
Instructor Office: SOC/Psych 141

Instructor: Miles Marsala
Instructor Email: miles.marsala@duke.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the core concepts and methods used in social research. In the course students will learn how to evaluate existing social research, as well as how to design and present (both in oral-presentation and in writing) their own social research. Readings and lecture materials enable students to learn about core concepts and considerations for conducting social research, and about the different research methods used by sociologists. In course assignments and weekly in-class workshops, students will implement their knowledge of the lecture and reading material, producing their own research proposal, and providing constructive feedback on each other's.

Student Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the course, SOC 332 students should be able to:

- Identify and describe systematic steps social scientists take when studying the social world
- Explain and discuss benefits, limitations, and the rationale for using various research methods
- Explain guidelines social scientists follow to ensure their research projects are ethical
- Identify and locate appropriate, relevant scientific resources using library and online search databases
- Apply prior theory and literature to formulate empirically testable research questions and hypotheses
- Design a study to address a proposed research question and hypotheses
- Critically interpret and evaluate social research findings (both in scholarly literature and in the news)

Required Readings

There is one required text for this course: Babbie *The Practice of Social Research 14th Edition*. The book is available for purchase from the university bookstore. However, I suggest renting either the hardcover version or the eTextbook from Amazon because the cost is much lower (~\$30). Students may also purchase older editions—however, you will be responsible for making sure you read the appropriate sections (as page numbers may shift between editions).

Any additional resources for the course as well as instructions for the course assignments will be made available in the “Resources” folder in the course Sakai site.

Course Requirements and Grades

1. *Attendance and Participation* - Students are required to attend and participate in class. All in-class assignments, activities, and workshops are designed to prepare you to

successfully complete the final research proposal. This, combined with the accelerated nature of the summer session schedule, means that students should aim to be present for all classes. Attendance and participation make up 15% of your final grade.

Participation Requirements – All students are required to actively participate in each class meeting. Active participation involves: arriving to class on time, contributing to class discussions (answering or asking questions, providing feedback to other students on workshop days), following class behavior and technology-use guidelines, and participating in in-class activities. To receive a top grade, students should consistently contribute to discussion multiples times in each class meeting.

Attendance Requirements – To accommodate illnesses, deaths, religious holidays, and other absences, students may miss **two** class meetings, without penalty to their attendance and participation grade. Each additional absence will result in a 5-point deduction from the participation and attendance grade.

2. *Homework* – We will not have in class exams or quizzes. Instead, brief writing assignments are designed to encourage you to read and comprehend the assigned reading and lecture material. After completing each day's assigned reading, you will be asked to write a **short answer** to 1 or 2 questions posted in the tests/quizzes section of the Sakai site. This is not a true quiz because it is only graded for completion (not correctness) and you can use the textbook for reference. The questions typically ask you to apply a key concept by giving examples, and your answers will help spark class discussion. The homework must be completed on Sakai no later than 1 hour before the start of class. **I will not accept make up homework. However, you may miss two homework assignments** without penalty. These brief assignments make up 15% of the final grade.
3. *Research Project Proposals* – In this course, you will complete a research project proposal, turned in in stages during the session. Each phase of the proposal builds on the earlier completed phases, providing opportunity for you to revise and improve your project at each stage (based on what you learn in the course and on instructor feedback). Detailed project instructions and grading rubrics are provided on Sakai. We will also discuss the requirements for each assignment in class. **All assignments are due at 11:59 pm on the assigned date (with exception of presentations, which are due 1 hour before the start of class). I deduct 5 points per day an assignment is late.**

Research project phases/assignments include:

- Assignment 1 – Research Question and Introduction
- Assignment 2 – Literature Review
- Assignment 3 – Research Methods Part I: Methods Description
- Assignment 4 – Research Methods Part II: Research Instruments/Materials
- Assignment 5 – In-class Project Proposal Presentation
- Final Project – Full Research Project Proposal

Date*	Assignment	Description	% Of Grade
Daily	Participation	Attendance, class discussion, small groups activities, in-class exercises, and workshops	15
Daily	Homework	Assessment of text/lecture material comprehension	15
May 25	Assignment #1	Research question and introduction paper	10
June 3	Assignment #2	Literature review paper	10
June 10	Assignment #3	Research methods pt. 1 – methods description paper	10
June 17	Assignment #4	Research methods pt. 2 – research instruments/materials	10
June 22	Assignment #5	In-class project proposal presentation	10
June 24	Final Research Proposal		20

*Assignments 1-4 and Final Project due at 11:59 PM on the scheduled date. Assignment 5 due 1 hour before class.

Grade	Average	Definition	Grade	Average	Definition
A+	98-100		C+	77-79.9	
A	93-97.9	Exceptional work	C	74-76.9	Satisfactory work
A-	90-92.9		C-	70-73.9	
B+	87-89.9		D	60-69.9	Low passing work
B	84-86.9	Superior work	F	0-59.9	Failing work
B-	80-83.9				

Writing and Research Workshops:

The assigned readings and lecture material will give you foundational knowledge of key concepts and techniques in research methods. Through in-class research and writing workshops, you will learn how to investigate the social world and effectively communicate your empirical findings verbally and on paper. In workshops, you will receive feedback from the instructor and your fellow students. You will incorporate useful recommendations into the next revision of your project.

Other Course Policies:

1. *Classroom behavior*- Students should refrain from engaging in conversations unrelated to class activities, browsing the internet, checking email/Facebook/Twitter/texts/etc., and cellphone use during class time. Students on cellphones, browsing the internet, or texting/messaging during class time will be counted absent for the class meeting, negatively impacting the participation grade.
2. *Late/make-up assignment policy*- Exceptions to the late/makeup policies described in course requirements section above will not be granted unless you are seriously ill, hospitalized, have an excused absence for religious observance, or death in your family. You will need to provide documentation for these events, such as a doctor's note or an

Hermanowicz, Joseph C. 2002. "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed." *Qualitative Sociology* 25(4):479–499 (Posted on Sakai)

June 12 Analyzing Qualitative Data

Barbie 13 (*Qualitative Data Analysis*)

June 13 Creating a Qualtrics Survey

Students will create their own online survey. No reading due today but you can work on designing your instrument and/or get a head start on reading Babbie Ch14 and Ch16 because they are dense

June 14 Audit Studies/Field Experiments and Qualtrics Part 2

Pager, Devah, Bart Bonikowski, and Bruce Western. 2009. "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment." *American Sociological Review* 74(5):777–99.

Correll, Shelley J., Stephen Benard, and In Paik. 2007. "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?" *American Journal of Sociology* 112(5):1297–1339.

June 15 Workshop: Research Instruments

In small groups and as a class, students will workshop their research materials/instruments used to collect data for the proposed projects (list of survey questions for those doing surveys, an interview guide for those doing interviews, or coding rubric/scheme for those doing content analysis). If time permits, we will "test" each student's survey/interview guide/coding scheme to help students and instructor provide feedback on question/coding instruction clarity. We will also discuss guidelines for the Research Methods Pt. 2 Assignment and Student Presentations.

You should come to class prepared with:

1. A draft (full or partial) of your survey/interview guide/coding rubric and a few sample documents to be coded (depending on method chosen).
2. A description of which questions/codes capture your key variables and how.

June 17

***** Assignment #4 due. Post in Sakai Drop Box by 11:59*****

June 18 Analyzing Surveys and Workshop: Quantitative Data Analysis of Qualtrics Results

Babbie 14 (*Quantitative Data Analysis*)

June 19 Statistical Methods and Workshop: Quantitative Data Analysis of Qualtrics Results

Babbie 16 (*Statistical Analysis*)

June 20 Evaluating Social Science Claims in the News Part 1

We will be completing an extended in class exercise on evaluating social science claims in news reporting. Using what we have learned so far in class, we students will work in groups to read and discuss news articles reporting on scientific findings, the actual scholarly articles that originally reported the finding, and whether the news claims are supported by the social scientists' original work.

June 21 Evaluating Social Science Claims in the News Part 2

We will continue work on the exercise on evaluating social science claims in the news. As a class, we will discuss and compare claims made in news vs. original scholarly articles and how/why they might differ.

June 22 Student Presentations

Students will present their research proposals to the class (using PowerPoint). Presentations should last 8-10 minutes. There will be a short amount of time (1-2 minutes) after each presentation for feedback and questions from other students and the instructor.

****Students should send their PowerPoint to the instructor 1 hour before class****

June 24

***** Post Final Research Paper to Sakai Drop Box by 11:59*****

June 25 Last Day

Recap of course, final questions, grading questions.