

SOC 4293: Methods of Social Research

CRN 63791 (traditional) and 63864 (online) Fall 2015

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Office hours: T/Th 11-12:40 and by appointment

Textbook and Materials

Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 13th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2013.

Access to Blackboard

Access to Microsoft Office

Facility with A-State's online library databases

Purpose and Goals/Learning Outcomes

Catalog Course Description: Overview of qualitative and quantitative tools used in the social sciences to analyze relationships among social variables.

Purpose and Goals: The purposes of this course are to offer students diverse perspectives and knowledge tools that enhance analytical and critical thinking skills and to prepare students for professional careers within and outside of sociology fields. The goal is that all students will be able to recognize how and why research methods are selected to study different problems and how those methods can be improved to produce more accurate results that yield greater insights into social problems, especially problems of the kind they are likely to encounter in their professional work as well as in their life as community members. I will know if you achieved this goal if you are able to successfully demonstrate the following *Student Learning Outcomes* in the following ways:

1. List, identify, and follow steps of the scientific method (as assessed exams, article notes, and research proposal)
2. Design social science research projects (as assessed on research proposal).
3. Identify the proper research method for specific research questions (as assessed on exams, article notes, and research proposal).
4. Critically evaluate research findings (as assessed on exams and article notes).

Course Requirements

Exams: You will complete 10 exams this semester, one per chapter that we will address in the course EXCEPT for chapter 3. All exams are taken online via Blackboard. In lieu of an online exam for chapter 3 (which you should still read), you will complete the online training Human Research Curriculum, available to you at citiprogram.org. The training is lengthy and includes multiple parts, so you will need to devote ample time to it. When you have completed the training, submit a .pdf file of your completion certificate (which will be generated automatically when you complete the training) via Blackboard. *This assignment is pass/fail. If you complete it, you will earn full credit. If you do not complete it, you will earn a 0.*

All other exams are available in Blackboard; due dates are listed below, and each exam is available for 5 days prior to the due date, except for the CITI training, which can be submitted any time before its due date. You may attempt each exam up to two times. Each exam includes 25 questions written specifically for this exam; all of them are objective (multiple choice and

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true/false). You have 90 minutes to complete each exam. All exams are worth 25 points. In sum, exams are worth 60% of your final grade for the course. You may use any resources you like during your exam, including books and internet resources, but *you must work alone*. The test bank is very large, so if you try to work together, you will soon realize that it's unlikely your exam and your peers' exams have questions in common. Additionally, *don't bother trying to find a key to the answers online as one is not available since I wrote all the questions myself for this class*. If you chose to take an exam multiple times, only the most recent exam score (not necessarily the highest) will be recorded. If you miss no exams this semester, I will drop your lowest exam grade.

EXAM DUE DATES:

9/7: Exams over chapters 1 and 2

9/28: Exams over chapters 4 and 5; CITI program training due

10/26: Exams over chapters 6, 7, and 8

11/23: Exams over chapters 9 and 10

12/7: Exam over chapter 11

Research Proposal: At the heart of this course is the research proposal, which is a very large, semester-long project worth 40% of your final grade. For this project, you will select a social problem of concern to you and propose a research plan that could yield socially useful information about that topic. *You will not actually complete the research, only propose it.*

It is due in stages, with multiple drafts due at most stages. The stages are described below:

<i>Assignment name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Point value</i>
Brainstorming	Complete THREE copies of the worksheet available on Bb to help you start thinking about your project; Submit a copy of each on Bb and post a copy of each on Discussion Board, being sure to provide a subject line that usefully identifies your point	8/31	10 points
Feedback to peer brainstorming	Respond to TWO brainstorming ideas submitted by your peers on Discussion Board. Write at least 50 words of response—something that will help them expand their ideas.	9/4	5 points
Selection of research topic and first draft of a research question	You may work alone or in a pair (but no groups of 3) to select a research topic and articulate a research question. If you select to work in a pair, you will still turn in separate components of this project, completed independently for all components EXCEPT the rough draft of the research proposal, the final draft of the research proposal, and the mock IRB, which will be completed as a pair. You may chose to work with someone who is enrolled in a different section of this course also taught by me this semester. Submit a statement of your partner's (if any) name, your general topic, and your first draft of your research question.	9/7	5 points
Working bibliography	An APA-style bibliography of 10 sources total: 7peer-reviewed journal articles on your topic, <i>at least 6 of which must be research-based</i> (rather than, say, theoretical or historical) and 1 government website; the remaining 2 sources must be academically reputable (books from university presses or other high quality presses, more journal articles, white papers or working papers, government documents, etc.)	9/21	40 points
Justification	a 2-4 paragraph (3-5 sentences per paragraph) description of the	9/28	10 points

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	selected topic. The introduction should a) justify why this topic is of importance, 2) explain who could potentially use the information your research, if pursued, could yield, 3) state your research question, refined from the one you chose, if needed , and 4) operationalize your terms (Make a list of every noun, adjective, and verb in your research question. Define each.).		
Notes on sources	You must read all 7 articles and at least one chapter from each book you select, as well as a substantial part of the website you select. You must submit typed notes of at least 250 words over each. Your submission should be in the form of notes, which will demonstrate that you read the entire article, rather than a summary.	10/5	70 points
Short biography of an interviewee	You will select one person with first-hand expertise on your topic. This may include a person who works to address the problem (such as a doctor, nurse, lawyer, social worker, sociologist, teacher, etc.) or someone who has experienced this problem. You will submit a 1-paragraph biographical statement about this person, explaining why s/he is a valid source of information	10/12	10 points
Audio of interview:	You will submit at least 15 minutes of recorded audio of your interview. Interviews may be conducted in person, via phone, or online via Skype, Facetime, Google Hangouts, etc. You may not perform your interview via email or in another form of text; it must be in real time.	1/19	15 points
Transcription of primary interview	You will submit a <i>word-for-word</i> transcription of at least 15 minutes of your interview. (This will produce many, many pages of text.) Don't forget to include the date and location of your interview, as well as your full name and the name of your interviewee.	10/26	25 points
Research design, rough draft	The core of the assignment, the research design is a 2-4 page document in which you clearly outline your plan for research. What will you do? How? Submit to Blackboard AND to Discussion Board as an attachment	11/16	40 points
Feedback to peer research design	Select any research design posted to Discussion Board that does not yet have feedback. Open it, mark it up with critical feedback using Track Changes in MS Word, and repost to Discussion Board. Also submit as an assignment.	11/30	10 points
Research design, final draft	Revise your rough draft based upon peer feedback	12/14 by 10 am	15 points
Mock IRB application	Using the sample found on Bb, you will create an application for IRB approval, a consent form, and a copy of any tools used in research collection. (<i>Note that, as you are not actually completing the research you propose, you will not actually submit these documents to A-State's IRB.</i>) Sample forms are available on Bb.	12/14 by 10 am	100 points

Extra Credit: You have one extra credit opportunity for this course. If you visit the writing center (or participate in a Skype conference with a writing center tutor), you will earn 5 extra credit points on the research proposal per visit; you may earn up to a total of 20 extra points this way (4 writing center visits). Simply sign in when you visit and request that the tutor notifies me that you've visited. I will then receive email notice that you visited and add your extra credit to your grade.

Grading Scale

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A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=0-59%

Policies

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities or challenges that create a barrier to success in this class and who need accommodation in order to succeed in the course should contact me promptly. Confidentiality will be maintained, and every reasonable effort will be made to meet student needs. Any student requiring accommodation must be registered with ASU's Office of Disability Services, 972 3964.

Inclement Weather Policy: All course materials, including recordings of the lectures shared in class, are available online. If we miss a day of class for any reason, including inclement weather, we will keep on schedule.

Attendance:

For students enrolled in the traditional format class:

You may miss up to six days of class for any reason. Absences are neither excused nor unexcused. Please DO NOT submit excuse notes to me. Do note, however, that absences for university-sanctioned events, such as athletic competitions or field trips in other classes, do not count toward your absences; these, of course, should be brought to my attention in advance of your absence, at all deadlines remain in place. For each absence (other than ones for university-sanctioned events) beyond six, your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade. If you suffer from a long-term illness or face other extenuating circumstances, please contact me immediately so we can figure out how to help you do your best in class in your situation.

For students enrolled in the online version of this course:

You must log in to our Bb class twice a week every week this semester, except for the week of Labor Day, when you are required to login only once, and the week of Thanksgiving, when you are not required to login at all. Your final grade will be reduced by .5% for each week you login only once and 1% for each week you fail to login at all. Because I run an attendance report *only* at the end of the semester, please do not contact me with questions about your attendance; instead, be responsible for tracking it yourself.

Academic Misconduct Policy:

Cheating, including plagiarism, is an act of dishonesty with the intention of obtaining and/or using information in a fraudulent manner. Plagiarism is a serious offense against academic integrity usually involves passing off the work, words, or ideas of others as your own without giving proper credit. If you have questions about what constitutes cheating, including, plagiarism, you should ask me. Remember these two rules to avoid an accusation of cheating: 1) When it doubt, cite. 2) Don't collaborate if you have any doubt it could be interpreted as cheating.

For further information, including specifics about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, see ASU's Academic Integrity Policy at <http://studentconduct.astate.edu/AcademicIntegrity.html>.

All accusations of student cheating will be shared with the student's advisor and, if needed, coach, as well as the department chair and dean of the college. Students accused of cheating will

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meet with me to discuss the matter. Students found guilty of cheating will face penalties ranging from failure on the assignment to expulsion from the university. *Please note that I press the matter of cheating as far as it can go and always urge the harshest possible penalty.*

Academic Performance: Show respect for your peers and your professor and their time and effort by doing your work on time. Most of all, remember that you are a member of a community seeking to learn together—and that you means you have an obligation to yourself and your peers to create a classroom environment free from hostility, including derogatory remarks. I want to remember you as a scholar, so present yourself that way.

Late Work: I do not accept late work.

Extensions: If you anticipate being unable to complete an assignment prior to its due date, contact me via email at least 24 hours before it is due. In the subject line, write “Request for an extension on _____” and describe the assignment. Extensions are not guaranteed, and multiple requests for extensions are likely to be denied.

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