

Research Methods

1 INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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2 COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a general overview of social research methods. As social scientists, we study how humans interact with one another and their environments. Unlike the natural sciences where measurements are taken in the lab, social sciences are subject to an uncertain human element, not just in the data collection process, but also in the creation of data. Thus, aspects of research like measurement, research ethics, validity, and even interpretation are complicated. For example, there have been multiple measures of individual fear of crime. And choosing one method over another will generate very different responses, or data. Beyond that, social science research is messy. We often face challenges when conducting research and have to make a number of decisions or revisions in the field. In this class, we will discuss how social scientists navigate the research process and make decisions. These decisions ultimately impact the quality of the work produced. As consumers of this research, we will define what constitutes good (and bad) research. As producers of research, we will also conduct novel research projects.

3 COURSE GOALS

The course will::

- Improve understanding of the social science research process
- Examine the benefits and limitations of various research methodologies
- Interact with researchers and ask appropriate questions about their research process
- Develop a basic social science research project and conduct statistical analyses

4 LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course students will:

- Have an understanding of the scientific process and its application to social science research
- Acquire skills necessary to access and interpret existing research
- Be familiar with data sources available on the Internet
- Be able to recognize common sources of error and bias in research
- Be able to apply the code of ethics to research
- Be able to design, execute, analyze, and report a social science research project

5 TEACHING METHOD

The course is structured to examine various approaches to applied research methods in social sciences. We will draw from the textbook, as well as from research articles in criminal justice, criminology, and related fields. To be successful in the course, you are required to read all assignments,

come to class prepared, and engage fully in discussions and other course activities.

Research has shown that students learn best when they actively participate in class discussion and projects. I believe that the role of an instructor is to facilitate an active learning environment through a combination of brief lectures, productive classroom discourse, teamwork, and creative thinking. As such, the course will engage in a variety of activities in addition to lectures, including writing exercises, group work, class discussions, practical exercises, et cetera. I value your opinions about the course, and will solicit feedback periodically.

6 COURSE EXPECTATIONS, REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

6.1 ASSESSMENT

Attendance and Participation (15%): You are expected to attend and participate in class. You should thoroughly read all assigned material and bring a thoughtful question for each piece of reading. Points will be distributed for active participation in discussions and class activities. See attendance policy for more details.

Quizzes (20%): There will be two non-cumulative quizzes. Each has multiple choice and short answer questions designed to apply course materials to questions posed from each weeks readings and class activities.

Paper Review (5%): You will be asked to review one academic, peer-reviewed paper assigned to the class. On the day that your review is due you will also help lead the discussion on that paper. In your review, you will consider a number of factors including theory, sampling, measurement, analyses, and conclusions, as well as how it relates to that week's topic(s). The paper review should be no more than 2-4 pages. The grading rubric can be found on BlackBoard.

Final Project: The major project in this class will be a group research paper. Groups will be assigned the first week of class. Your group can either collect its own data or rely upon an existing data set. One member of your group must submit each component of this project to Blackboard before the class for which it is due. You **MUST** get my approval on the Methodology before collecting data. I will provide comments along the way that should be incorporated into the next version submitted. All group members will receive the same grade for the components of the project turned in. Each student will also receive an individual grade that is determined by the group members anonymously. The grading rubrics can be found on Blackboard.

Research Question, Annotated Bibliography & Academic Integrity (5%): Each group must submit their proposed research question, an annotated bibliography included at least 5 peer-reviewed academic articles, and the answers to the academic integrity quiz.

Literature Review(10%): The research project is designed to apply research methods to an original project. Each group is required to submit an abstract, introduction, literature review, and hypotheses that will receive comments and will require my approval.

Methods (10%): For this assignment, each group will revise the literature review section that was previously submitted and add the following sections: proposed methodology, how you will obtain data, what variables are important, how you will operationalize them, and how you will

measure them.

Oral Presentation (10%): Each group will give a 20-minute presentation on your project and respond to questions about your research. If you would like to make a Power Point presentation or Power Point poster, you are welcome to do so for extra credit, but it is not required.

Final Paper (15%): You will take the paper proposal and add: results and discussion sections, tables and figures, and a codebook. The paper should be: in APA style; about 15-20 pages (excluding the title, abstract, codebook, tables/figures, or reference pages); be in 12 pt Times New Roman with 1 inch margins.

Peer Review (10%): One of the emerging trends in teaching is increasing the amount of active learning (i.e., group work). The biggest challenge for this type of work is to equitably balance the workload and to ensure that the completed projects fairly represent the efforts of all involved. Groups negotiate the division of labor differently; there is no one correct way. However, codes of academic conduct do require that any student whose name is on a product/paper/presentation has contributed substantially to that work. Putting your name on an academic assignment that is, essentially, not your work represents academic misconduct. In order to be fair to all of you in my grading, peer reviews will be utilized for the group research project. Think carefully about what you believe each group members rights and responsibilities should be. You might want to think about group operations (how decisions will be made, how conflicts will be managed, etc.). You should note what you expect of one another as fellow group members. What rights and responsibilities should group members expect? Also, you should specify what constitutes excused and unexcused absences from group meetings or failures to complete required assignments (written or oral). This section is the heart of your contract, in that it outlines your expectations of one another. You are not limited to the above items; give this some serious thought, considering what you believe to be the qualities of an effective group.

Tips on Class This is a difficult, but not impossible course. It is my hope that you will find this class challenging, but rewarding in terms of the knowledge you will walk away with. If you anticipate having difficulty (or when you are), I strongly urge you to do ALL of the following:

- Attend every lecture, and take good notes (lecture slides are posted on blackboard)
- Study and rewrite lecture notes on the day of the lecture (before you go to bed)
- Complete the reading assignment before each lecture
- Take written notes as you read the book and articles
- Discuss the material with other students. Ask them questions. Ask me questions!

Grading

A = 95-100	A- = 90-94	
B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79	C = 73-76	C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69	D = 63-66	D- = 60-62
F = 59 or below		

If you have questions or concerns about a grade(s) and believe I should review them, you should submit a written request over email to me describing your concern in detail. You must take 24 hours to reflect on the grade before contacting me, but you must submit the request within one week of the date that grades for that assignment are disseminated. The exception is an addition

error, which should be pointed out immediately.

Unless otherwise stated in class, there are no extra credit assignments for this class. Assignments will be graded on accuracy, depth of expression, grammar, neatness, punctuation, quality, spelling, and thoroughness. Rubrics are available on BlackBoard for all graded assignments. Please note that Blackboard shows unweighted grades.

As per the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA), grades will not be posted, given out over the phone or email, or released to anyone other than the student.

6.2 COMMUNICATION

Email

I will send emails on a regular basis to remind students about upcoming events, due dates, important news, et cetera. These messages will come to your official university email. Students are responsible for the contents of these messages. I will respond to email within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours on the weekend unless otherwise specified in advance.

Skype

I will hold office hours once a week online at a mutually agreed upon time. If you cannot make this time, I can also be on Skype by appointment. If multiple students would like to speak with me simultaneously, we can use Google Hangout. If students have questions about class, they will be encouraged to ask them via the class discussion board on Piazza, as other students may have the same question and would benefit from the answers.

Professionalism

Recently, my colleagues and I have noticed that some (by no means all) students email us using language and format more appropriate for friendly emails, not professional ones. I will only respond to emails that include: a subject, a salutation (Dear, Hello, etc.), a closing (at least your name), and proper grammar (no text speak). Additionally, if your question is about a due date, what the reading is for next week, or something else that is found in the syllabus or grading rubrics, I will not respond to your email. This is not to be harsh, but I want to make sure that all students are in the habit of corresponding professionally, which is what will be required of you in your future careers or in graduate school.

6.3 COURSE POLICIES

Student Copyright

For the benefit of future students, work in this course may be used for educational critique, demonstration, samples, presentations, and verification. Outside of these uses, work shall not be sold, copied, broadcast, or distributed for profit without student consent. Items submitted for this course also may be submitted to TurnItIn.com for analysis.

The Miscellaneous Calamity Clause

As you may know, each class is required to meet for a specified number of hours in a semester. When class is cancelled due to snow/ice/hurricane/plague/zombies, these hours need to be made

up. Instead making up hours at the end of the semester when you are very busy, we will simply hold class online for any week in which class is cancelled. If this happens, I record a lecture over that weeks PowerPoint and post it to Blackboard, and then we can have discussion electronically via Piazza, which is built into the Blackboard platform. Additionally, I am occasionally required to be out of town for professional conferences. I will give you as much advanced notice as possible and we will simply move the class online for that week.

Make-up Exams, Assignments, and Notes

Handouts, returned tests, and assignments will be brought to class and distributed only once. Students who miss such items must schedule a time to pick them up. If you are absent, you will need to get the notes from a classmate, so find a reliable source now.

All due dates are stated explicitly and are hard deadlines. You will receive a 0 if an assignment is not submitted at the time it is due. I WILL NOT accept late papers or projects. Papers MUST be submitted to Blackboard. Make duplicate copies of your papers and projects as you go! No excuses will be accepted.

In an extraordinary circumstance, a make-up test can be scheduled. To qualify for a make-up, the student must notify me by email in advance of the absence and provide documentation. The make-up exam must be schedule within a week of the original test date. You will receive a 0 for unexcused absence from an exam. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include, but are not limited to: medical problems that require bed care or surgery (including yourself and immediate family members), subpoena for court or jury duty, or in-service training. Oversleeping and other personal events do not qualify. The instructor reserves the right to exercise discretion in this matter so that individual predicaments may be considered.

Classroom Courtesy

I expect all members of the classroom community to be active participants who learn from others and contribute, in turn, to the learning of others. Therefore, all members of the community agree to work together in every academic activity to create an educational environment of responsibility, cooperation, respect and civility.

To create such an environment, all members should contribute to the learning environment by arriving on time and leaving when dismissed. Repeatedly arriving late or departing early is not acceptable. Students who must arrive late or leave early from an individual class should notify the professor before the scheduled class and should enter and/or leave class with minimal disruption.

During class, all electronic devices should be shut off unless required in a class activity. Those whose work or family obligations require them to remain in contact should inform the instructor in advance and use the devices least intrusive setting.

Classroom courtesy is essential for learning. The classroom is a professional setting where appropriate behavior is expected. Every participant should focus on the educational activity and contribute to it. Electronic communication among participants should be conducted professionally. All students have the right to learn without unneeded distractions such as: cell phones, talking out of turn, reading, falling asleep, entering and leaving the classroom, etc. If you need cell phone for emergency purposes, it must remain on vibrate. All other use of cell phones is prohibited. Laptop and tablet use is restricted. Unless you have a documented learning need, laptops and tablets may

only be used to take notes. It is your responsibility to arrive on time and stay for the entire class period. If you need to leave early, tell the instructor beforehand. Repeated disruptions will lead to a reduction in your final grade. Most importantly, please remember that class discussion must be respectful and scholarly at all times.

Scholarly Comments:

- are respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement
- are related to class and/or the course material
- are focused on advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs
- are delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner

Unacceptable Comments:

- are personal in nature (this includes attacks on a persons appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs)
- include interrupting the instructor or other students
- often use the discussion to argue for political positions and/or beliefs. If political discussions arise in the context of the research discussed, they must be discussed in a scholarly way
- may include using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students and being threatening in any manner
- include ignoring the instructor's authority to maintain the integrity of the classroom

7 REQUIRED TEXTS

REQUIRED BOOK

Babbie, E. (2013). *The Practice of Social Research* (13th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

*available at the bookstore and other retailers - the 12th edition will also be acceptable for our class, but do note that Chapter 15 is different and we will be basing discussion off of the 13th edition version

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Mandatory supplemental readings will be posted to Blackboard. These readings are denoted with a * on the Course Schedule. Students are required to do all the assigned reading. Due to the topical nature of the course material, additional reading will come from newspapers, magazines, et cetera. You are expected to read a newspaper regularly and bring in interesting and relevant articles for discussion throughout the semester.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

You are not required to buy the APA Publication Manual. Purdue University has an excellent online guide that should be consulted for all written materials that are submitted for this course.

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

If you are having trouble with Stata and the in-class assignments/the book are not helping, UCLA has a thorough online guide that should be the first place you look for additional help. If your issue is still not resolved, look on Google or YouTube for tutorials. For the most part, the information

on the web is very useful.

<http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/stata/>

SUGGESTED READINGS ACADEMIC JOURNALS

The following journals are available either in print or through the library's electronic resources. Some of these may be useful for your research paper.

Criminology; Criminology & Public Policy; Criminology & Criminal Justice; American Journal of Sociology; American Sociological Review; Justice Quarterly; Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency; Journal of Quantitative Criminology; Journal of Experimental Criminology

8 COURSE SCHEDULE

This syllabus is a guide for the course. It is subject to change with advanced notice. Changes may come in class or may come via e-mail. You are responsible for all such communications.

Section 1: Introduction to Social Science Research Concepts

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
1	Introduction to Research, Human Inquiry, Paradigms and Theory	Babbie, Chapter 1 & 2 Catcalling Article*	
2	Reading and Writing Social Research & Research Design	Babbie, Chapters 4 & 17	Group Project: Research Question, Annotated Bib Integrity Quiz
3	Conceptualizing and Measurement & Sampling <i>Intro to Stata</i>	Babbie, Chapters 5 & 7 Warr (2000)* Roundtree & Land (1996)*	
4	Ethics of Social Science Research & Indexes and Scales <i>Guest Lecture</i>	Babbie, Chapters 3 & 6 Milgram (1963)* Roberts & Indermaur (2003)*	Group Project: Literature Review Due

Section 2: Research Designs and Data Collection Techniques

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
5	Experiments and Quasi-Experiments	Babbie, Chapter 8 Nordgren et al. (2011)* Ebesen et al. (2001)*	Quiz 1
6	Non-Experimental Research, Administrative Data & Evaluations <i>Using to Stata</i>	Babbie, Chapters 11 & 12 Findley & Young (2011)* Birkland et al. (2005)*	
7	Survey Research & Radelet <i>Guest Lecture</i>	Babbie, Chapters 9 Lacock (2009)*	Group Project: Methods Due
8	Interviewing, Ethnography and Participant Observation <i>Guest Lecture</i>	Babbie, Chapter 10 Comfort (2003)*	

Section 3: Data Analysis and Presentation

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
9	Special Topics in Research posted on BlackBoard	Readings TBD, will be	Quiz 2
10	Creating a Code Book & Descriptive Data <i>Beginning Data Analysis</i>	Babbie, Chapter 126	
11	Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis <i>Guest Lecture</i>	Babbie, Chapters 13 & 14	
12	Analyzing Your Data <i>Lab all day</i>		Complete data collection
13	Presenting Research		Project Workshop
14	Research Project Presentations		Present in Class Papers due