

SOCIOLOGY 300
Principles of Sociological Inquiry

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Class Schedule: T & TH 12:00pm-1:15pm (CR 115)

Lab Schedule: T 1:30pm-2:30pm (Saunders 342), W 1:30pm-2:30pm (Saunders 342), TH 1:30pm-2:30pm (Saunders 342)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:30am-1:30pm and/or by appointment

Required Text: Neuman, Lawrence W. 2011. *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (The 3rd edition)*

Class Objectives:

The objective of this class is to provide students with a basic understanding of qualitative and quantitative social research methods. The research process includes selecting appropriate research topics, designing effective and appropriate research methods, properly conducting and analyzing data, and reporting the results accurately and succinctly. While this course includes the theoretical and methodological issues vital to properly conducting survey research, it also provides an opportunity for students to learn from experience.

In an attempt to provide a practical application of the technical elements of social research methods, this course is centered on the creation and analysis of (a) a handful of semi-structured interviews and (b) an original survey. Course assignments build on each other from week to week as the students first choose realistic research topics, then create and conduct a research instrument, and finally analyze the data and report the findings. The lab periods will be used as an opportunity for students to work toward their various assignments, as the labs focus more on the technical aspects such as literature searches, field work, data entry, and analysis, while the lectures focus on the principles of social research.

The assignments in this course are included to help students develop clear and effective verbal and written communication skills. Therefore, I expect students' written work to be of high quality and the meaning of ideas effectively conveyed. Students must display a wide vocabulary and proper choice of words and exhibit proper sentence structure, some sentence variety, and cohesion between sentences. Papers must be carefully edited and include few errors in grammar, and the conventions of standard written English must be observed.

Assignments:

Readings You are expected to have readings completed in the week they are assigned

in order to participate and contribute in the class and lab discussions. The textbook is a major resource in preparing for exams, as well as a supplementary resource for conducting your research.

Exams There will be four short tests and one final exam. The tests will be drawn primarily from the course text and lecture materials. The short tests include 15-20 multiple-choice questions each and will consist of the readings and material covered in class up to the time of the exams (3 or 4 chapters). If you are not present for the short exams you will not receive a score, unless you have a valid written excuse. The final exam is cumulative, i.e., it will be made up of all the material covered throughout the course. You will have 2 hours to complete the final exam, which will be taken in class on the assigned day.

Written Work Written work for this course is composed of three parts and will be assigned and turned in in the labs. The lab instructors will distribute a separate syllabus for weekly assignments.

(1) Drafts of your progress for your qualitative and quantitative projects. Assigned and due in the labs.

(2) A quantitative research paper including Introduction, Literature Review, Data & Methods, Findings, Analysis/Discussion, and Works Cited sections. An automatic deduction of 15% will be applied to all late papers. ASA citation and writing guidelines must be followed.

(3) A qualitative research paper including Introduction, Literature Review, Data & Methods, Findings, Analysis/Discussion, and Works Cited sections. An automatic deduction of 15% will be applied to all late papers. ASA citation and writing guidelines must be followed.

Grading	Lab Assignments –	15%
	Quantitative Paper –	20%
	Qualitative Paper –	20%
	Short Exams –	20%
	Final Exam –	15%
	Participation & Attendance –	10%

CLASS SCHEDULE

1. **8/23/16** – Introduction & Syllabus
8/25/16 – Ch. 1 – Doing Social Research

In Lab: **No lab**

2. **8/30/16** – Ch. 1 – Doing Social Research
9/1/16 – Ch. 2 – Theory and Social Research

In Lab: Introduction

Lab HW: Social Observations – Pick a public space for making social observations. What happens in this space? Who is there? What does their appearance suggest about them? Why are they in this space? What are they doing? How do the characteristics of the space determine people's behaviors, emotions, and thoughts? What types of interactions are occurring? **2 Page Description Due Next Lab. (10% of Lab Grade)**

3. **9/6/16** – Ch. 2 – Theory and Social Research
9/8/16 – Ch. 3 – Ethics in Social Research

In Lab: Selecting a Research Topic and Creating a Research Question

Lab HW: **Description of Research Question (2-3 pages) (10% of Lab Grade)**– What topic will you be researching throughout the semester? Try to select a guiding research question that is sociological, personally interesting to you, and can contribute to our academic understanding of your topic. You do not need to already know the correct answer to your question when you select it; indeed, choosing a research question that you are unsure of an answer to is recommended. When deciding, keep in mind that you will need to have access to individuals who can provide information about your topic.

4. **9/13/16** – Ch. 4 - Reviewing the Scholarly Literature and Planning a Study
9/15/16 – Ch. 4 - Reviewing the Scholarly Literature and Planning a Study

In Lab: Becoming Familiar with Academic Literature. Begin searching for relevant literature in lab.

Lab HW: **Continue Conducting Literature Review**. It must include at least **five** academic sources, which can be journal articles, books, doctoral theses, etc. Although directly relevant sources (literature on exactly the same topic) are preferred, not all sources need to directly relate to your topic. For instance, academic literature about rock climbers could be used to discuss similarities/differences with other extreme sports, such as skydiving or surfing. Non-academic sources are allowed, but they do not replace the requirement for academic sources.

5. **9/20/16** – Exam 1 (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4)

9/22/16 – Ch. 11 – Field Research and Focus Group Research

In Lab: Continue Working on Literature Review (Use lab time for this)

Lab HW: **First Draft of Introduction, Literature Review & Works Cited Due Next Lab. (10% of Lab Grade)** Your Introduction is a brief description of the research question, academic context, and methodology. Literature Reviews should set the context of your own research question(s) and project. Describe the research and content of your sources in a way that clearly demonstrates how your own research will contribute new knowledge about your topic.

6. **9/27/16** – Ch. 11 – Field Research and Focus Group Research

9/29/16 – Ch. 5 - Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement

In Lab: Sampling/Population, Consent Forms & Creating Interview Questions

Lab HW: **Consent Forms & First Draft of Interview Questions Due by Next Lab. (10% of Lab Grade)** Your interview questions will not be just a simple list of questions to be asked in sequential order. In addition, be prepared to ask about your respondents' experiences and backgrounds with your topic, stories of personal importance or that stand out for some reason, their observations and perceptions, etc. Questions should be focused enough to cover your main points but flexible enough to allow you to pursue new and unexpected directions as the interview occurs. They should primarily seek to gather detailed data (information) that will contribute to answering your research question(s).

7. **10/4/16** – Ch. 5 - Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement

10/6/16 – Ch. 6 - Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling

In Lab: How to Conduct Interviews

Lab HW: **Data & Methods (including final interview questions) Due Next Lab. (10% of Lab Grade)** This includes a detailed description of your population & sample (including sampling technique), data collection process, and (expectations for) data analysis. Also, what limitations do you face? How will those limitations affect your research?

****Begin Conducting Interviews and Transcriptions****

8. **10/11/16** – Example Interviews with Guests

10/13/16 – Exam 2 (Chapters 5, 6, 11)

In Lab: Work on Transcriptions

Lab HW: **Interviews, Audio Files, and Full Transcriptions Due by Next Lab.** Interviews should last **at least thirty minutes**, and **must be audio recorded**. Transcriptions should be word-for-word accounts (scripts) of your interviews. These will serve as your visible data to be used later during analysis.

9. **10/18/16** – Film: Sidewalks
10/20/16 – Ch. 13 – Analysis of Qualitative Data
In Lab: Qualitative Analysis

Lab HW: **Coding & First Draft of Findings & Analysis Due by Next Lab.** Demonstrate your coding process on your interview transcriptions. Findings and Analysis (or Discussion) should present your data (dialogue from transcripts) and present your own analysis of those data. What recurring themes (codes) did you identify in the dialogue? How did your respondents' responses differ or agree with one another? Why? How do your data address (or answer) your research question? How do they relate to the theories, findings, and analyses discussed in your Literature Review? What new questions can be asked concerning your own findings and analysis? Suggestions for further research projects to pursue those new questions?

10. **10/25/16** – Ch. 14 – Writing the Research Report
10/27/16 – Ch. 14 – Writing the Research Report

In Lab: Writing a Paper

Lab HW: **Final Qualitative Paper Due Next Lab. Refer to Qualitative Paper Outline.** Be sure to reread each section in the order that they appear in the final paper. Does it flow in a linear fashion from beginning to end? Are there unnecessary redundancies that you can correct? Are there holes in the text that you should fill? Have you properly described each of the major aspects (sections) of your research project? Do you maintain the same tense and narrative point of view throughout the paper? Is your writing grammatically perfect? Would you enjoy reading your own paper?

11. **11-1-16** – Ch. 7 – Survey Research
11/3/16 – Ch. 7 – Survey Research

In Lab: Introduction to Survey Research & Creating Survey Questions

Lab HW: **First Draft of Survey Questions Due 11/5/16.** Build upon the findings and analysis from your qualitative research by extracting testable hypotheses from them. Does the majority of your population support your findings? Do they disagree? Can you follow up on unexpected, contradictory, or interesting findings from your previous research? Do respondents' responses vary by demographic categories, i.e., ethnicity, gender, class, educational attainment, occupational type, etc.? What questions can you ask that would contribute to the discussions in your academic sources?

12. **11/8/16** – NO CLASS: ELECTION DAY
11/10/16 – Exam 3 (Chapters 7, 13, 14)

In Lab: Polishing Surveys