

Introduction to Social Science Research

SOC/JUS 2303 - 01, Spring 2015

Instructor: Rick Moore

Office: Walker Center 206

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-5pm and by appointment

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Class Information:

Tues & Thurs 11a – 12:15p

Walker Center 140

Course Prerequisite: None

Course Description:

This course provides an overview of major research methods used in sociology and related disciplines, as well as introduces students to the basics of designing and conceptualizing research projects. The course accomplishes this through a combination of readings and practical exercises.

Course Objectives:

The students who successfully completes this course should:

- (1) Be familiar with the major research methods utilized by social scientists, especially sociologists
- (2) Have the ability to critically evaluate both the methods and results of published research
- (3) Be able to design, implement, and analyze their own social research, including writing a research proposal
- (4) Improve both writing, reading and oral presentation skills
- (5) Understand the ethical implications of conducting social research, as well as how to ensure research is performed ethically.

Required Texts (Available @ Campus Bookstore)

Bryman, Alan. 2012. *Social Research Methods, 4th Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Supplementary readings are available on our D2L site. Additional readings may be added during the semester.

Requirements:

1. Class Participation and in-class exercises (20%)

Active class participation is essential for our collective learning project. This means that attendance is mandatory. However, class participation is more than just attendance: *You must come to class having read the assigned readings for that day and prepared to discuss them in detail.* Bring copies of the readings to class; we will refer to and discuss specific pages. Some days there will also be ungraded exercises to complete in class. There will also be a number unannounced quizzes covering the reading for that particular day. In-class exercises and quizzes cannot be made up at a later date. If for some reason you cannot come to class, please refer to the procedures in the course attendance policy located under the General Course Policies section of this syllabus.

2. Practical Homework (40%)

Throughout the semester you will have **eight** homework assignments. Each homework assignment is worth 5% of your final grade. These assignments are designed so you get some practical experiences with some of various research methods we will cover in class. Further information about the individual assignments will be provided as the semester progresses. For policies late work, please refer to the procedures outlined under General Course Policies.

- 1) Bibliography (Due: 2/3)
- 2) Observation (Due: 2/10)
- 3) Fieldnotes (Due: 2/17)
- 4) Interview (Due: 2/24)
- 5) Qualitative Analysis (Due: 3/10)
- 6) Survey Design (Due: 3/24)
- 7) Datasets (Due: 3/31)
- 8) Internet and Big Data (Due: 4/16)

3. Exams (20%)

There will be two in-class exams covering material from the textbook, supplemental readings, as well things we discussed in class.

- Midterm Exam: **March 5**
- Final Exam: **During the university assigned final exam time for this course.** You must be present at the assigned time to receive credit; the exam cannot be taken at another time for any reason.

4. Research Proposal (20%)

You will write a research proposal for a hypothetical sociological research project of your choosing. More information on the proposal requirements will be discussed later in the semester. **Papers will be due at 12 noon on Tuesday 5/5.** Late papers will not be accepted for any reason after 5p on Friday May 8th. For policies on late work, please refer to the procedures outlined under General Course Policies.

Notes on Reading:

Reading scholarly texts well, like good writing, is a skill that must be learned. Careful, "active" reading takes more time and effort than merely passively skimming a text. I encourage you read slowly and to take notes. Notes are good not only to help understand an author's ideas but also to begin to critically engage them, not to mention that they will be handy when you write your papers. It's also useful to write in your books; I often make comments in the margins, mark important passages, etc. (Only do this in your personal copy; never write in a library book!) Such active reading that combines a slow, deliberative approach with writing and reflection will be harder and take a lot more time, but it will be well worth it.

Course Outline and Readings:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Homework Due</u>
1/13	1. Intro (Quantitative, qualitative & mixed-methods; note taking)		
1/15		Bryman Ch. 1-2	
1/20	2. What are we trying to learn when we do research? (research questions; ethics; causality; theory)	Bryman Ch. 3-4	
1/22		Bryman Ch. 6	
1/27	3. What have other people already done? (Library search; lit reviews; article types; journal quality; citation software)	Bryman Ch. 5	
1/29	Qualitative Intro	Ch. 17-18	
2/3	4. Why not watch and try it yourself? (Ethnography)	Bryman Ch. 19	1. Bibliography
2/5		Sidewalk: Intro, Appendix, Book Vendor	
2/10	5. Ethnography takes a long time (Ethnography week 2)	Sidewalk: Magazine Vendor, Men without Accounts	2. Observation
2/12		Sidewalk: 115-187; Afterword	
2/17	6. What not ask a few people? (In-depth interviewing)	Bryman Ch. 20	3. Fieldnotes
2/19		Learning from Strangers	
2/24	7. Is it in the library? (Historical)	Ch. 23	4. Interview
2/26		TBA Historical reading	
3/3	8. How do I make sense of all this junk data? (Qualitative analysis)	Ch. 24	
3/5	Midterm Exam	N/A	
3/10	9. Why not ask a whole bunch of people? (Surveys; sampling)	Ch. 8; Ch 11	5. Analysis
3/12		Ch. 9;	
3/17	10. Spring Break		
3/19	Spring Break		
3/24	11. How do I interpret all these numbers? (Quantitative analysis)	Ch. 7 (Skim or review Ch. 15)	6. Survey Design
3/26	12. Is it in the bureau? (Demography)	Ch. 14	
3/31			7. Datasets
4/2	13. Why not mess around with them? (Experimental, qualitative and quantitative)	TBA	
4/7		TBA, Open Topic	
4/9	14. Let's get the computer to do it (Internet, Big data and computational sociology)	Ch. 28	
4/14		TBA Big data reading	
4/16	15. Let's tell others! (Writing results)	Ch. 29	8. Internet and Big Data
4/21		TBA	
4/23	16. Let's tell others in person! (Presenting results)	TBA	
4/28	Presentation of Research Proposals	N/A	
4/30			
TBA	Final Exam		

General Course Policies:

Academic Integrity:

All work that is not your own must be cited appropriately. Academic dishonesty *of any sort* will not be tolerated and may result in a failing grade for the course and other actions as the university deems appropriate. Unless I have informed you otherwise in writing, reusing material from previous work you wrote for this class or other classes also constitutes plagiarism. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic honesty please speak with me and I will be happy to help you.

The university's academic honesty policy is published in the 2012-13 undergraduate catalog (page 30) and graduate catalog (page 31).

A helpful page with resources for citation practices is

<http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/cite>

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory and *four unexcused absences will result in a failing grade* for the course. Excused absences (e.g. athletic participation) for a regular class require notice by email 48 hours before the absence in order for it to count as excused. Absences on exam days should be avoided whenever possible; if the absence cannot be avoided you must email me at least 2 weeks before the exam date to arrange an alternate time to take the exam. The final exam, however, must without exception be taken during our final exam time. If you are sick and cannot come to class, I hope you feel better! Also, if you are sick please email me within 24 hours of the class you missed for your absence to count as excused. Frequent or extended absences may require additional documentation.

Course Changes:

Over the quarter there might be changes made to the syllabus, especially concerning the exact readings. If any changes are made, we will go over them in class.

Grade Changes:

If you feel that I have graded something incorrectly, or not entered the correct grade in the D2L gradebook, you have one week from the time the assignment was returned (or graded on D2L) to discuss the possibility of any changes.

Grade checks:

If you require a grade check form signed for any reason, please inform me via email 48 hours before you would like me to sign it. If I do not receive an email from you, I will not sign any grade check forms.

Grading Scale:

A	> 93%	A-	90.0 – 92.9%	B+	88.0 – 89.9%
B	83.0 – 87.9%	B-	80.0 – 82.9%	C+	78.0 – 79.9%
C	73.0 – 77.9%	C-	70.0 – 72.9%	D+	68.0 – 69.9%
D	63.0 – 67.9%	D-	60.0 – 62.9	F	< 60%

Email and Electronic Etiquette:

You are expected to regularly check your official OCU email account, as important class emails will be periodically sent to it. Having not checked that account or having technical problems are not excuses for missing something in the class.

I do my best to answer emails quickly. However, I cannot guarantee that last minute emails will be answered as soon as you might wish. Please do not expect an answer to your email faster than 48 hours. Most likely I'll answer much sooner but there are no guarantees - please plan accordingly. Also, I will not answer emails related to an assignment after 5p the day before the assignment is due.

Computers are great for taking and organizing notes but can also be distracting from class discussion. If you choose to bring a laptop or tablet to class please be respectful and do not use it for anything except taking notes relevant to this class (i.e. no internet, no email, no working on other assignments). Phones must be turned off unless you work for some type of emergency agency (i.e., medical or law enforcement). Failing to adhere to this policy will affect your participation grade.

Exceptions:

Any exceptions to standard course procedures due to exceptional circumstances must be worked out with me over email in addition to any in-person discussions we might have. This helps prevent any misunderstandings.

Incompletes:

An incomplete will only be given in exceptional circumstances. For the university's incomplete course policy see page 36, 2012-13 in the undergraduate catalog and pages 29, 42, and 57 of the 2012-13 graduate catalog. The catalogs are posted on StarNet and on www.okcu.edu.

Late Work:

Assignments that are accepted late will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day overdue – for example, A will become A-, B- will become C+ etc. Late assignments can receive grades below failing (< 59%) as there will be a continued reduction of 3.3% credit each day late beyond the time the work would receive an F. In-class assignments and quizzes will not be accepted late and cannot be made up. No work will be accepted after the end of the semester.

University Required Notifications:

Disability Accommodation:

If you believe that you need accommodations for a documented physical, psychiatric, or learning disability, please contact the Disabilities Services Coordinator at (405) 208-5090 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. The Student Disabilities Services Coordinator is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students a documented Access Plan, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact the Student Disabilities Services Coordinator as soon as possible. To speak with the coordinator about other concerns, such as medical emergencies or arrangements in case of a building evacuation, please make an appointment as soon as possible. Contact Lee Hall (lphall@okcu.edu), director for disability services, located in the Clara E. Jones Administration Building, Room 438 and Laura Reinhardt (lreinhardt@okcu.edu), director of the health center, for other medical concerns.

Emergency Preparedness:

Our classroom has information posted on what to do in the case of an emergency. Please familiarize yourself with this information.

Preventing Sexual Harassment:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds, including federal loans and grants. Title IX also prohibits student-to-student sexual harassment. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk with your professor or with the Title IX Coordinator at 405-208-5075. Visit <http://www.okcu.edu/hr/titleIX/> for more information.