

## **SOCIOLOGY 4200: RESEARCH METHODS**

**Winter Semester 2015  
TUESDAYS, 3:00PM – 6:40PM  
1172 Old Main**

Professor: Dr. Heather Dillaway  
Office: 2237 Faculty Administration Building (FAB)  
Hours: TUESDAYS, 1:00pm - 2:30pm, or by appointment  
Phone: 313-577-2930 (this is the main office in sociology; you can leave a message for me)  
Email: dillaway@wayne.edu (easiest and fastest way to reach me)

### **Course Description:**

This course will provide students with a brief review of both quantitative and qualitative methods in sociology. We will review various types of research designs, and the benefits and costs of each. We will also read about and discuss ethical considerations in research. Further, we will review and critique published research articles in peer-reviewed journals. Finally, students will learn how to put together a sociological research proposal, and students will turn in that research proposal in at the end of the course. The content and assignments for this course are designed to prepare students for the Sociology Capstone Course (SOC 4996), a course that all sociology majors must successfully complete prior to graduation.

Attendance is mandatory for this course and students are required to participate when I open topics up for discussion. Students should complete all assigned readings before coming to class and be prepared to discuss with the larger group the key ideas found in the readings. Students are also responsible for completing a number of written assignments in this course; each assignment is designed to increase understanding of the diversity and complexity of sociological research. We will go through topics quickly in this course and, therefore, students must enter this course willing to keep up with readings and assignments as they are assigned. Activities and requirements of the course are outlined in this syllabus.

If students have questions or concerns about the course at any point during the semester, I will be available before/after class, during office hours, or by appointment. Also, students may contact me via email or phone. My contact information is listed above.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR SOCIOLOGY 4200**

The basic learning outcomes for Sociology 4200 include, but are not limited to:

- (a) identify basic methodological approaches and describe the general role of methods in building sociological knowledge;
- (b) compare and contrast the basic methodological approaches for gathering data;
- (c) design a research study in an area of choice and explain why various decisions were made; and
- (d) critically assess a published research report and explain how the study could have been improved.

## REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS

**A. One book is required** for this course, and is available at the Wayne State University bookstore:

1. **Babbie**, Earl. (2013). The Basics of Social Research. SIXTH Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (WILL BE CALLED “BABBIE” IN SYLLABUS)

**\*\*YOU MAY BUY AN EARLIER EDITION OF THIS BOOK IF YOU’D LIKE.\*\***

**B.** I will also post **required readings** to **Blackboard** on certain weeks. Pay attention to the syllabus and weekly announcements so that you know when these extra readings are due.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance & Participation = 5%**

**Methods Journal = 10%**

**Article Analysis Exercises (2) = 20% (10% each)**

**Final Exam = 20%**

**Research Proposal Project = 45%**

### **Explanation of Course Requirements:**

1. Attendance: You may miss two (2) classes during the semester, no questions asked. After these two absences, every subsequent absence will affect the final course grade. There are NO exceptions to this policy, unless you have a VERIFIABLE emergency and we work something out. If you are absent due to medical reasons, I will need to see a doctor’s note. **Attendance will be recorded at ALL class sessions, starting on January 20, 2015, and ending on April 21, 2015.** Students are responsible for making sure that I have recorded them as “present” on any given day. Please be advised that the instructor will NOT provide lecture notes for students, but all students ARE responsible for all material covered and announcements made during class. Therefore, if students must be absent at some point during the course, it is their responsibility to find a classmate who is willing to share her/his notes with them.

2. Participation: **All students are required to participate actively during discussion.** This is part of all students’ grades. It is not enough to simply attend class. We will dedicate time to group discussion of readings, lecture material, and course assignments, and all students should be prepared for those discussion times.

3. Methods Journal: Each week after reading the assigned chapters or articles and before coming to class, **all students are required to write a journal entry that answers at least three (3) of the following questions:**

- (1) What are the major points in at least one reading assigned for this week? Summarize.
- (2) How is your own (current or future) research project informed by the major points covered in this week’s readings? Explain.

- (3) How are this week's readings relevant or related to your field of study (i.e., your interests in sociology or whatever your field is)? Explain.
- (4) What is the most important point you took away from the readings for this week and why? Explain.
- (5) What is the most confusing or most boring part of the readings for this week and why? Explain.
- (6) Did you learn anything new this week about research methods? If so what? Explain.
- (7) After reading this week's readings, are you leaning more towards quantitative or qualitative research or both, and why? Explain.
- (8) How are this week's readings different or similar (or both) to previous week's readings? Explain.

This assignment is something that you will do on your own time and I will collect your written journal entries three or four times throughout the semester. You will receive credit for having an entry in your journal for each week of class and for answering at least three of the above questions in each of your weekly writings. There is no required length of this assignment but my suggestion is that you write approximately one paragraph for each question you answer each week. I don't care whether you buy a notebook, keep a computer file, or use scrap paper for your journal but you need to bring your entire journal with you to every class meeting (just in case I decide to collect it that week). **Your first journal entry should be for January 20<sup>th</sup>, and your journal entries should continue through April 7<sup>th</sup>**, for all weeks that there are assigned readings. You may miss one journal entry over the course of the semester without penalty, so this means that you should have ten (10) journal entries by the end of the semester and follow the above directions to receive full credit for this assignment.

4. Article Analyses (2): **Students will analyze two articles from peer-reviewed journals**, one that represents quantitative research and one that represents qualitative research. Articles used for this assignment will be available on Blackboard as PDF documents at least two weeks before each assignment is due. In each case, students will be required to answer a set of questions regarding the research techniques that the author uses. The article analyses are worth 20% of your course grade (10% for each analysis). Students must complete both articles analyses. **Article analyses are due on February 24<sup>th</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup>.**

5. Research Proposal Project (worth 45% of course grade): Throughout the semester you will work towards the development of a research proposal, which you will complete in 3 stages. Specific instructions and rubrics for each part of the project will be provided approximately two weeks prior to the due date. You will turn in your research proposal project in the following 3 stages:

- *Stage 1* - Topic and Research Question: You will turn in a one-paragraph description and a research question related to your topic by no later than **January 27<sup>th</sup>**. (2% of course grade)
- *Stage 2* - Introduction, Literature Review, and Annotated Bibliography: This will be a 5-page paper introducing your topic, and describing what we know about your topic already based on existing literature. You are required to find 6-8 sources for your research topic and write a short paper about what these sources tell us about the topic. In this paper you will be asked to identify your research topic, identify your specific research question, discuss what existing literature says about your topic, and develop an annotated bibliography. You will turn this paper in by **March 10<sup>th</sup>**. (15% of course grade)

- *Stage 3 - Adding Methods and Compiling the Research Proposal:* In this paper you will be asked to take the research topic identified in Stages 1 and your knowledge of the literature on your topic (from Stage 2), and develop an appropriate research plan utilizing either a quantitative or qualitative methodology, including analysis of validity, reliability, and ethical issues, and a discussion of how data would be analyzed. You will add this new methods section to the parts of the proposal that you have already written in Stages 1 and 2, and turn in a completed research proposal by **April 29<sup>th</sup>**. (25% of course grade)
- You will present your work to the class in a short presentation on **April 7<sup>th</sup>**. (3% of the course grade)

6. Final Exam: The final exam will consist of a variety of short essay & analysis items. The items will be provided in class two weeks prior to the final exam to aid in preparation, but you will be required to write out your responses during the final exam period. The final exam will be given in class on **April 21<sup>st</sup>**. (20% of course grade)

### OTHER COURSE POLICIES

1. *Assignment Deadlines:* If students hand in papers or exams late, they will automatically lose points on their grade for that assignment. As a rule, assignments that are one day late will be moved down one grade (e.g., A to B or B to C). Assignments that are two days late will be marked down two full letter grades (e.g., A to C or B to D). Assignments that are three days late will be moved down three full letter grades (e.g., A to D). Assignments that are more than three days late will not be accepted.
2. *Responsibility for All Material Covered During Class:* You are responsible for all announcements made during class, as well as all information relayed during lecture, all discussions we have as a group, and all films (if any) we view during class meetings. I do not provide notes for students; thus I encourage you to find someone in the class who would be willing to share notes with you if you are absent or late to class.
3. *Cell Phones, Pagers, iPhones, iPads, iTouches, etc.:* All phones, pages, and other electronic devices should be turned off (or turned to a silent ringer option) before you enter the classroom and before the class period begins. Students should also refrain from texting, facebooking, tweeting, or surfing the web during class time. If you are using a laptop during class time, please use it for note-taking purposes only. Please respect your classmates who are trying to learn course material. *I reserve the right to lower students' participation and attendance grades if students are disruptive in class because they are online or on their devices during class time.*
4. *Course Withdrawals and Incompletes:* Incompletes will only be given in the cases of medical or other VERIFIABLE emergencies. If students are not doing well in this course, they have the responsibility of formally withdrawing from this course. Please note that the withdrawal system at Wayne State is student-initiated, in that students who desire to withdraw from the course do so themselves via Pipeline. When students withdraw, they may receive a “withdraw passing” (WP), “withdraw failing” (WF), or “withdraw not enough information” (WN) on their transcript, depending on how much of the course is completed. According to the university’s grading policies, students who do not formally withdraw from the course but stop attending

class and do not complete scheduled assignments will receive a failing grade (F) in the course. *Before withdrawing from the course, you should talk to the instructor about why you are withdrawing.* The last date to withdraw from this course is **March 29<sup>th</sup>**. The last day to withdraw from this course AND get your money back is **January 26<sup>th</sup>**.

5. *Course Ground Rules:* All rules of courtesy and respect are in effect during class time. Please respect your fellow students and your instructor by coming to class on time, staying until class is over, being patient and courteous while others are talking, etc. Treat others as you yourself would like to be treated. I reserve the right to lower students' attendance and participation grades if students are disruptive in class. *Excessive cell phone or internet use during class time will be considered disruptive behavior (see policy#3 above).*
6. *Concerns about the Course:* If you have any concerns about the course (grade-related or otherwise), you should speak to me immediately and directly about your concerns. However, class time will NOT be used to discuss your course concerns. The concerns you have about the course should be discussed PRIVATELY with the instructor, as they are *your* concerns and not your classmates'.
7. *Problems with Writing?* The grade for written assignments will depend partially on student's ability to write a coherent, well-organized, and grammatically sound written product. If students have concerns about their writing abilities, they should visit Wayne State University's Writing Center in the Undergraduate Library: <http://clas.wayne.edu/writing/> (you can schedule an appointment at the Writing Center on line as well). The Writing Center also has an online tutoring option through Google Hangout: <http://clas.wayne.edu/writing/Online-Writing-Center> . Finally, there is a page of writing resources posted on the sociology department's website that might help you: <http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/Sociology/WritingResources> . If you have difficulty with written assignments, you should make the effort to access these resources and talk to the instructors of all of your courses that involve writing.
8. *Student Disability Services:* If you are a student with a disability or condition (physical, emotional, or other) that might affect your performance or ability to participate in this course as currently designed, you should inform me of this as early as possible. Students with a range of disabilities can also receive help from Student Disability Services, located in the Undergraduate Library (phone number: (313) 577-1851; email: studentdisability@wayne.edu; website: <http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/> ).
9. *Plagiarism & Cheating:* All university rules about plagiarism and cheating are in effect during this course. I expect all students to abide by the academic honor code. Any quoted material must be placed in quotation marks with proper references to the author included. You may use statistical data or paraphrase other published works, but ONLY if you provide the complete citation, which includes author's last name and year. This means, even if you use your own words, but the ideas are from something you read you must give credit to that author. If you think you might be plagiarizing, then you probably ARE! Copying entire paragraphs from sources is not appropriate even if citations are provided. Evidence of cheating or plagiarizing will result in automatic failure of the test/assignment and possibly the course. Please see the student code of conduct for more information on WSU's policies regarding academic integrity:

<http://doso.wayne.edu/assets/codeofconduct.pdf> and  
[http://doso.wayne.edu/assets/scoc\\_section\\_10.1\\_a-b.pdf](http://doso.wayne.edu/assets/scoc_section_10.1_a-b.pdf) .

10. *Class Cancellations:* **Class is cancelled on April 14<sup>th</sup>**. In addition, **there is no class on March 17<sup>th</sup> (because of spring break)**. Besides these cancellations, please expect the course to meet at its scheduled time every week unless there is a weather or university emergency.
11. *Changes to the Syllabus:* Information in this syllabus is always subject to change. Please pay attention to course announcements each week so that you are informed of any changes. Please also make sure that you have access to your WSU email account so that you will receive emails that I may send via the course's Blackboard site.

<b>FINAL GRADES</b>
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**FINAL GRADES ARE DETERMINED USING THE FOLLOWING SCALE:**

93.51-100	A	71.51-75.50	C
89.51-93.50	A-	67.51-71.50	C-
86.51-89.50	B+	64.51-67.50	D+
82.51-86.50	B	59.51-64.50	D
78.51-82.50	B-	54.51-59.50	D-
75.51-78.50	C+	54.50 or below	F

<b>SCHEDULE OF READINGS &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</b>
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<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic and Readings</u>
<b>UNIT I: UNDERSTANDING THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH</b>		
1	Jan 13	<b>Intro to the Course; What is Research?</b>  Readings: Babbie, Ch 1 (Yes, you are behind! Catch up as soon as you can...)
2	Jan 20	<b>Basics in Research Design, Part I</b>  Readings: Babbie, Ch 2 & 4
3	Jan 27	<b>Basics in Research Design, Part II</b>  Readings: Babbie, Ch 5 <b>Topic Paragraph &amp; Research Question Due</b>

4 Feb 3 **Basics in Research Design, Part III**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 7  
Blackboard Readings 1 and 2

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**UNIT II: UNDERSTANDING CHOICES IN DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS;  
COMPARING QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

5 Feb 10 **Data Collection & Analysis, Part I: Quantitative Research**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 8  
Blackboard Readings 3 and 4

6 Feb 17 **Data Collection & Analysis, Part II: Quantitative Research**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 14  
Blackboard Readings 5 and 6

7 Feb 24 **Data Collection & Analysis, Part II: Survey Research**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 9  
Blackboard Readings 7  
**Article Analysis #1 Due**

8 Mar 3 **Data Collection & Analysis, Part II: Survey Research**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 6  
Blackboard Reading 8

9 Mar 10 **Data Collection & Analysis, Part III: Qualitative Research**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 10 & 11  
Blackboard Readings 9 and 10  
**Research Proposal Stage 2 Papers Due**

10 Mar 17 **NO CLASS, NO OFFICE HOURS -- SPRING BREAK!**

11 Mar 24 **Data Collection & Analysis, Part III: Qualitative Research**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 13  
Blackboard Readings 11 and 12

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**UNIT III: OTHER SELECTED ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

12 Mar 31 **Research Ethics**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 3  
Blackboard Readings 13 and 14  
**Article Analysis #2 Due**

13 Apr 7 **Reading and Writing Social Research;  
Student Presentations of Research Proposals**  
Readings: Babbie, Ch 15

14 Apr 14 **NO CLASS, NO OFFICE HOURS – STUDY FOR EXAM**

15 Apr 21 **Final Exam in Class, 3-5:30pm  
(During our last class period)**

16 Apr 29 **Research Proposal Projects Due in Full by Midnight!**  
(Note that this is a Wednesday, not a Tuesday! Submit via  
email to [dillaway@wayne.edu](mailto:dillaway@wayne.edu))