**Advanced Sociological Research Methods**

**Sociology 7200**

**Fall 2013**

**Course Time: Wednesday, 5:30- 9:10\***

**Course Location: Old Main 0137\***

**Instructor**: David M. Merolla, Ph.D

**Office**: 2253 FAB

**Telephone**: 313-577-2930 (Main Sociology Number)

**Office Hours:**

Monday 11am-1pm;

Thursday 1pm-3pm, or by appointment

**email**: dmerolla@wayne.edu

Readings:

Required course readings in journals are all available through the WSU library webpage. All reading is required, contact me immediately if you have problems obtaining course readings.

**Course Description:**

This course is the graduate level research methods survey course. This course will introduce students to the broad spectrum of research methodologies and approaches in the social sciences. The course will begin by reviewing the logic of scientific inquiry and empirical research, as well as the role of theory in the research process. In addition, students will learn how sociologists do research; topics including experimental design, measurement, survey research and sampling, qualitative research, unobtrusive methods and quasi-experimental design will be covered. This class will focus both on the technical skills needed to perform sound social research, and how each aspect of the research process is related to the logic of science and theory. In addition, this course will familiarize students with contemporary debates and controversies with social science regarding the strengths and weaknesses of particular research methodologies, the appropriate role of sociology in society, and perspectives on sociology as a science. Finally, students will be introduced to the processes of proposing and publishing empirical research.

**Student Learning Goals**

1. Students will understand the logic of scientific inquiry. Students will also understand current perspectives on sociological research and the disagreements among scholars on the appropriate approach to social research.

1. Students will understand the logic of causation, and understand how causation applies or does not apply to specific sociological research questions and methods.
2. Students will be understand how the process of conceptualization and measurement is approached in different research techniques, and how conceptualization and operationalization relates to theory.
3. Students will understand sampling and how sampling strategies affect the generalizability of research designs.
4. Students will understand the relationship between data collection & data analysis.
5. Students will understand the processes of publishing and proposing empirical research.

7. Students will understand different perspectives on sociology as a profession.

**General Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Attendance in class is mandatory. Students who miss more than two meetings will not be eligible for a grade of A. Repeated absences may result in being asked to drop or withdraw from the course with a failing grade. Students arriving more than 15 minutes late will be counted as absent.

**Assignments.** Students are required to complete all assignments by the due date; students who have difficulty with a particular assignment on time are expected to contact the instructor to discuss these problems **prior to the assignment due date.** Assignments not completed by the due date will not be eligible for full credit and will be evaluated at the instructor’s discretion.

**Quality is key.** If you are not already of the persuasion that you wouldn’t want to put your name on half-baked & last-minute “efforts,” may you come around soon to that way of thinking. Take pride in your work; do it well enough to claim it as your own.

**Reading.** Students are required to read all course materials by the time class begins and notify the instructor if they have difficulty completing required reading. If you did not understand a particular reading or concept please come to class with questions regarding that reading. I believe that you should have free access to all of assigned readings free of charge through the WSU libraries, if you have any difficulties accessing a specific paper, please contact me as soon as possible. Please do not pay to access a course reading.

**Office Hours.** Office hours are designed for me to answer specific questions or assist with specific aspects of an assignment. Please come to office hours with questions ready and attempt to complete assignments independently prior to coming to office hours. If you think you will need more that 20 minutes of time, please schedule an appointment.

**Focus.** Students are expected to be focused on class presentations during class time. **Cell phone use in class is strictly prohibited; students who use cell phones in class will not be eligible for a final grade of A, no exceptions**

**Final Grades.** Final grades submitted by the instructor are **final.** If you believe that there has been a clerical error or other mistake you may inquire for an accounting of your grade. However, grades will be based solely on your scores on course assignments and will not be arbitrarily adjusted at the end of the term. Students who ‘need’ a particular grade should ask me early in the semester about whether they are on track.

### Academic Honesty. Students are expected to display academic integrity in all of their work for this course. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. Any student suspected of dishonesty in their work will receive a zero for the assignment in question and referred to the department chair for further disciplinary action. If you have any questions about academic honesty or plagiarism, please contact me.

### Honor Code. Students are bound by the Wayne State University honor code which states: “Wayne State University holds its students to the highest academic standards. Pride in the University and in oneself requires students to maintain an environment free from any breach of academic honesty. As lifelong representatives of Wayne State, we seek to cultivate honor, integrity, and civility in order to ensure that we earn our degree honestly and that we provide an ethical platform for our continued success”

### Registration. Students may *drop* a class for fifteen-week classes through the end of the fourth week of class (September 20th). Classes that are *dropped* do not appear on the transcript. Beginning the fifth week of class students are no longer allowed to drop but must *withdraw* from classes. It is the student’s responsibility to request the withdrawal through the registrar’s office. Failure to do so will result in a grade of F. Students must be passing at the time of the request to get a ‘WP.’ After the 10th week (November 9th) you cannot withdrawal from the course and will receive a letter grade. Incomplete ‘I’ grades are given in very limited circumstances to students who are passing the course and cannot complete final assignments due to unforeseen extenuating circumstances. Students that get a grade of incomplete must complete all assignments by January 30th 2014. Student who are not registered for this course may not attend course meetings.

### Disability. If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you need to register with Student Disability Services (SDS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.

**Assignments and Grading**

1. Participation & Discussion Questions (15%)

Simply attending class will not qualify as participation. Instead, students must actively participate in course discussions and be ready to ask and answer questions in class. To facilitate full participation , each student must email the instructor three discussion question based on the course readings by 10am on Wednesday morning of class. Each student can choose two weeks where questions are not submitted.

2. In class response essays (15%)

We will begin class four times with an unannounced short essay quiz that will require you to answer one question using that week’s readings. Students who miss class for a valid reason will be able to complete an alternative assignment. Students who are late or otherwise absent will not be able to make up the quiz.

3. Homework (20%)

There will be 5 homework assignments in this course. Two of these assignments will be related to the final research proposal and three of the assignments will be methods activities. Assignments will be explained in class.

4. Exams (25%)

There will be two take home exams. A midterm exam and a final which will require you to answer essay questions based on the course readings.

5. Research Proposal (25%)

Each student will complete a research proposal. This assignment will be explained in class.

**All work, including participation, will be graded on the following scale:**

**“A” level work** consists of cogent, well-articulated, and well-developed written presentation, demonstrating exceptional understanding, preparation, insight, originality, logical argumentation, and factual accuracy. “A” level work is completed on time and according to the guidelines. “A” level work is considered excellent.

**“A-“ level work** consists of cogent, well-articulated, and well-developed written presentation, demonstrating very good understanding, preparation, insight, originality, logical argumentation, and factual accuracy. “A-“ level work is completed on time and according to the guidelines. “A-” level work is considered very good.

**“B+” level work** consists of well-written work that demonstrates an acceptable understanding, preparation, insight, originality, logical argumentation, and factual accuracy. “B+” work is acceptable graduate level work, but only shows a basic grasp of concepts and ideas and with only satisfactory levels of communication.

**“B” level work** consists of work that reflects a minimally adequate understanding, preparation, insight, originality, logical argumentation, and factual accuracy. “B” level work is considered mediocre and is the lowest passing grade in the course.

**“B-” level work** is not adequate in either form or content, thereby not fully meeting the minimum requirements. “B-” level work is not passing at the graduate level. A final grade of “B-” will require you to retake this course.

**“C” level work** shows the barest understanding of the subject or task assigned, is poorly written, and fails to make a coherent argument. A final grade of “C” may lead you to be removed from the graduate program.

**Course Schedule (subject to change)**

**Week 1 (August 28th):** Introduction to the Course and Course Requirements

**Week 2 (October 4th):** Understanding Social Science: The logic of (social) science and the research process

*Readings:*

Lieberson, Stanley and Freda Lynn. 2002. “Barking Up the Wrong Branch: Scientific Alternatives to the Current Model of Sociological Science.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 1-19.

Whyte, William, Foote. 1996. “Qualitative Sociology and Deconstructionism.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 2(2): 220-26.

Denzin, Norman. 1992. “Whose Cornerville Is It, Anyway.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 21 (1): 120-132.

Duster, Troy. 2006. “Comparative Perspectives and Competing Explanations: Taking On the Newly Configured Reductionist Challenge to Sociology.” *American Sociological Review* 71(1):1-15.

**Week 3 (October 11th):** Understanding Social Science: The role of theory in the research process

*Read:*

Lieberson, Stanley, and Joel Horwich. 2008. “Implication Analysis: A Pragmatic Proposal for Linking Theory and Data in the Social Sciences.” *Sociological Methodology* 38 (1): 1-50.

Straus, Anselm. 1995. “Notes on the Nature and Development of General Theories.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 1(1): 7-18.

Reskin, Barbara. 2003. “Including Mechanisms in Our Models of Ascriptive Inequality.” *American Sociological Review* 68 (1): 1-21.

Hammersley, Martyn. 2009. “Challenging Relativism: The Problem of Assessment Criteria.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 15 (1): 3-29.

Reed, Isaac. 2008. Justifying Sociological Knowledge: From Realism to Interpretation. *Sociological Theory* 26(2): 101-129.

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**Week 4 (October 18th):** Experiments and the Logic of Causation

*Read*:

Abbot, Andrew. 1998. “The Causal Devolution.” *Sociological Methods and Research* 27: 148-181.

Marini, Margaret Mooney and Burton Singer. 1988. “Causality in the Social Sciences.” *Sociological Methodology* 18: 347-409.

Howe, Kenneth. 2011. Mixed Methods, Mixed Causes? *Qualitative Inquiry* 17(2):166-71.

Holland, Paul W. 1986. “Statistics and Causal Inference.” *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81(396): 945-960.

Howe, Kenneth. 2004. “A Critique of Experimentalism.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 10 (1): 42-61.

**Week 5 (October 9th):** Turning Concepts into Variables

Clark, Lee Anna, and David Watson. 1995. “Constructing Validity: Basic Issues in Objective Scale Development.” *Psychological Assessment* 7(3): 309-319.

Jones, Malia, Anne Pebley “Eyes on the Block: Measuring Urban Physical Disorder through in-person

observation.”

Odgers, Candice, Avshalom Capsi, Christopher Bates, Robert Sampson and Terrie Moffitt. 2012. “Systemic Social Observation of Children’s neighborhoods using Google Street View: A Reliable and Cost-Effective Method.” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 53 (10): 1009-10017

Maxwell, Joseph. 2010. “Using Numbers in Qualitative Research.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(6): 475-482.

Cho, Jeaski and Allen Trent. 2006. “Validity in Qualitative Research Revisited.” *Qualitative Research* 6(3):319-40.

**\*Assignment 1: Conceptualizing Your Topic Due\***

**Week 6 (October 16th):** Turning Concepts into Variables

Dobash, Russel, E Emerson Dobash, Margo Wilson and Martin Daly. 1992. The Myth of Sexual Symmetry in Marital Violence. *Social Problems* 39(1): 71-91.

Felson, Richard and Alison Cares. 2005. “Gender and the Seriousness of Assaults on Intimate Partners and Other Victims.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 67(5):1182-1195.

Best, Joel. 2005. “Lies, Calculations and Constructions: Beyond “How to Lie with Statistics.” *Statistical Science* 20(3): 210-214.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo and Gianpaolo Baiocchi. 2001. “Anything but Racism: How Sociologists Limit the Significance of Racism.” *Race and Society* 117-131.

Koro-Ljungberg, Mirka. 2010. Validity, Responsibility and Aporia. *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(8): 603-610.

**\*Table of Correspondence assignment due\***

**Week 7 (October 23rd):** EXAM 1:

**Week 8 (October 23th):** Doing Research: Doing Research: Sampling and estimation

Read: Pp 1-90 in Groves et al, “Survey Methodology” (**Posted on Black Board)**

Kalleberg, Arne et al. 1990. “Comparing Organizational Sampling Frames.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 35(4): 658-688.

Brick, J. Michael, Pat D. Brick, Sarah Dipko, Stanely Presser, Clyde Tucker and Yangyang Yuan. (2007). “ Cell Phone Survey Feasibility in the US: Sampling and Calling Cell Numbers Versus Landline Numbers.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71(1): 23-39.

Magnani, Robert, Keith Sabin, Todi Saidel and Douglas Heckathorn. 2005. Review of Sampling hard-to-reach and hidden populations for HIV surveillance.” *AIDS* 19 (S2): 567-572.

Ferguson, Douglas A. 2009. “Name-Based Cluster Sampling.” *Sociological Methods and Research* 37(4): 590-598.

Sastry, Narayan. 2009. “Tracing the Effects of Hurricane Katrina on the Population of New Orelans: The Displaced New Orleans Residents Pilot Study. *Sociological Methods and Research* 38(1): 171-196.

**Week 9 (October 30):** Doing Research: Qualitative Data Collection

Ambert, Anne-Marie, Patricia Adler, Peter Adler and Daniel Detzner. 1995. “Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57(4):879-93.

Culyba, Rebecca, Carol A. Heimer and JuLeigh Coleman Petty. 2004. “The Ethnographic Turn: Fact, Fashion, or Fiction.” *Qualitative Sociology* 27 (4): 365-89.

Ceglowski, Deborah, Chiara Bacigalupa, and Emery Peck. 2011. “Aced Out: Censorship of Qualitative Research in the Age of “Scientifically Based Research.” *Qualitative Inquiry* July 22nd 2011.

Harding, David J. Cybelle Fox and Jal Mehta. 2002. “Studying Rare Events Through Qualitative Case Studies: Lessons from a Study of Rampage School Shootings.” *Sociological Methods and Research*  31(2):174-217.

Tracey, Sarah. 2010. “Qualitative Quality: Eight ‘Big Tent’ Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(10): 837-851.

**\*Survey Methodology Assignment Due\***

**Week 10 (November 6th):** Doing Research: Content Analysis & Unobtrusive Methods

*Read:*

Turner, Jacob. 2013. “A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Gender and Ethnicity Portrayals on ESPN’s *SportsCenter* from 1999 to 2009.” *Communication & Sport* 1-25

\* Online First Paper at Communication and Sport.

Castle, Tracy. 2012. “Morrigan Rising: Exploring Female-Targeted Propaganda on Hate Group Websites.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15(6) 679-694.

Phelan, Jo C. Bruce G. Link and Naumi Feldman. 2013. “The Genomic Revolution and Beliefs about Essential Racial Differences: A Backdoor to Eugenics?” *American Sociological Review* 78(2):167-191.

Ferree, Myra Marx and Elaine J. Hall. 1996. “Rethinking Stratification from a Feminist Perspective: Gender, Race and Class in Mainstream Textbooks.” *American Sociological Review* 61(6): 929-50.

Lena, Jennifer C. “Social Context and Musical Content of Rap Music, 1979-1995.” *Social Forces* 85(1): 479-495.

**\*Table of Correspondence for Proposal Due\***

**Week 11: (November 13th):** Doing Research: Quasi-Experimental Designs

*Read:*

Lauster, Nathanael, and Adam Easterbrook. 2011. “No Room for New Families? A Field Experiment Measuring Rental Discrimination against Same-Sex Couples and Single Parents.” *Social Problems* 58(3):389-409.

Helland, Eric and Alexander Tabarrok. 2007. “Does Three Strikes Deter? A Nonparametric Estimation.” *The Journal of Human Resources* 42(2):309-30.

Van Gundy, Karen, Beth A. Morton, Hope Q. Liu and Jennifer Kline. 2006. “Effects of Web-Based Instruction on Math Anxiety, the Sense of Mastery and Global-Self Esteem: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Undergraduate Statistics Students.” *Teaching Sociology* 34(4):370-88.

Pager, Devah, Bart Bonikowski, and Bruce Western. 2009. “Discrimination in Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment.” *American Sociological Review* 74(5): 777-799.

**Week 12: (November 20th):** Doing Research: Ethics and Controversies

Adler, Patricia and Peter Adler. 1983. “Shifts and Oscillations in Deviant Careers: The Case of Upper-Level Drug Dealers and Smugglers.” *Social Problems* 31(2):195-207.

American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (Find at ASA webpage)

Homan, Roger. 1980. “The Ethics of Covert Methods.” *The British Journal of Sociology* 31(1):46-59.

Couzin-Frankel and Jackie Grom. 2009. “Plagiarism Sleuths.” *Science Magazine* 324(22):1004-1007.

\***Content Analysis Assignment Due\***

**Week 13 (November 27th):** Proposing Empirical Research/Publishing Research

**Week 14 (December 4th):** Final Exam

**Week 15 (December 11th):** Research Proposal Due