

Advanced Sociological Research Methods
Sociology 7200
Fall 2015
Course Time: Tuesday 5:30- 9:10
Course Location: State Hall 323

Instructor: David M. Merolla, Ph.D

Office: 2253 FAB

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

Office Hours:

Wednesday 3pm-5pm, Thursday 11am-12pm, 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. Please 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 debates and controversies with social science regarding the strengths and weaknesses of particular research methodologies, the appropriate role of sociology in society, and different perspectives on sociology as a science. Finally, the course will introduce students to the processes of proposing and publishing empirical research.

Student Learning Objectives

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.
2. Students will understand the logic of causation, and understand how causation applies or does not apply to specific sociological research questions and methods.
3. Students will understand how the process of conceptualization and measurement is approached in research designs, and how conceptualization and operationalization relates to theory.
4. Students will understand sampling and how sampling strategies affect the generalizability of research

designs.

5. Students will understand the processes of publishing and proposing empirical research.
6. Students will understand different perspectives on sociology as a profession.
7. Students will understand the nature of research and professional ethics in sociology.

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. Please contact me immediately if you cannot consistently be in class and ready to begin at 5:30pm.

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, it is possible that the citation in the syllabus is erroneous. **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 than 20 minutes of time, please schedule an appointment.

Focus. Students are expected to be focused on class discussions 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 17th). 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 15th) you cannot withdraw from the course and will receive a letter grade. Incomplete 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 February 1 2015. 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 noon of each Tuesday. Discussion questions will be evaluated and graded. 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. Mid-term Exam (25%)

There will be a take-home midterm exam that will require you to answer essay questions based on the course readings; this exam will be described in detail in class.

5. Research Proposal (25%)

Each student will complete an empirical 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 (September 8th): Introduction to the Course and Course Requirements

Week 2 (September 15th): Understanding Social Science: The logic of (social) science and the research process

Readings:

Zald, Mayer. 1991 "Sociology as a Discipline: Quasi-Science and Quasi-Humanities." *The American Sociologist* 22(3/4): 165-187.

Smelser, Neil. 2015. "Sources of Unity and Disunity in Sociology." *American Sociologist*. 46: 303-312.

Boelen, W.A. Marianne. "Street Corner Society: Cornerville Revisited." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 21(1): 11-51.

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 (September 22th): Understanding Social Science: The Nature of Sociological Knowledge"

Read:

Woolcock, Michael and Joshua Kim. 2000. "Can what is right with Sociology Fix what is wrong with Sociology?" A view from the 'Come-back' Generation. *American Sociologist* 31(1): 15-31.

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

Reed, Isaac. 2010. Epistemology Contextualized" Social Scientific Knowledge in a Postpositivist Era. *Sociological Theory* 28 (1): 20-39.

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

Week 4 (September 29th): Experiments and the Logic of Causation

Read:

- Marini, Margaret Mooney and Burton Singer. 1988. "Causality in the Social Sciences." *Sociological Methodology* 18: 347-409.
- Holland, Paul W. 1986. "Statistics and Causal Inference." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81(396): 945-960.
- Sampson, Robert. 2008. "Moving to Inequality: Neighborhood Effects and Experiments Meet Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(11): 189-231.
- Vanderweele, Tyler and Whitney Robinson. 2014. "On the Causal Interpretation of Race in Regressions Adjusting for Confounding and Mediating Variables." *Epidemiology* 25 (4): 473-484.
- Kaufman, Jay. 2014. "Race, Ritual, Regression and Reality." *Epidemiology* 25(4):485-487.
- Glymour, Clark and Madelyn Glymour. 2014. "Race and Sex are Causes." 25(4):488-490.
- Vanderweele, Tyler and Whitney Robinson. 2014. How to Reduce Racial Disparities? Upon What to Intervene?" *Epidemiology* 25(4):491-493.
- Howe, Kenneth. 2004. "A Critique of Experimentalism." *Qualitative Inquiry* 10 (1): 42-61.

Week 5 (October 6th): 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." *Social Science Research*, 40(2): 523-537.
- Massey, Doug and Nancy Denton. 1988. "The Dimensions of Residential Segregation." *Social Forces* 67(2):281-315.
- Chen, Gilad, Stanely Gully and Dov Eden. 2001 "Validation of a New General Self-Efficacy Scale." *Organizational Research Methods* 4(1) 62-83.
- 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 13th): 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 20th): EXAM 1: No Class

Week 8 (October 27th): Doing Research: Doing Research: Sampling and estimation

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

Simmons, Alicia and Lawrence Bobo. 2015. "Can non-full-probability Internet Surveys Yield Useful Data? A Comparison with Full-Probability Face-to-face Surveys in the Domain of Race and Social Inequality Attitudes." *Sociological Methodology* 45: 357-387.

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.

Week 9 (November 3rd): 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.

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

Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "How many cases do I need? 'On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research." *Ethnography* 10(1): 5-38.

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

Flick, Uwe. 2015. "Qualitative Inquiry- 2.0 at 20? Developments, Trends and Challenges for the Politics of Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 21: 599-608.

Survey Methodology Assignment Due

Week 10 (November 10th): 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.

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.

Brown, Hana. 2013. "Race, Legality, and the Social Policy Consequences of Anti-Immigration Mobilization." *American Sociological Review* 78(2): 290-314.

Table of Correspondence for Proposal Due

Week 11: (November 17th): 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 24th): 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.

Content Analysis Assignment Due

Week 13 (December 1st): Proposing and Publishing Empirical Research

Week 14 (December 8th): Catch-up and Review

Week 15 December 15th – NO CLASS- Research Proposals Due
