

## **Sociology 4200: Research Methods** **Spring 2015 (May 11-June 24)**

Professor: Dr. Krista Brumley                      Email: [kbrumley@wayne.edu](mailto:kbrumley@wayne.edu), 313-577-2930  
Class meetings: Monday (5:30-9:20) and Wednesday (instruction via distance learning)  
Classroom: 328 State Hall  
Office Hours: Monday, 4:00-5:00, or appointment (2265 Faculty Administration Bldg.)

### **Course Description:**

This course provides students with an overview of both quantitative and qualitative methods for conducting sociological research. Students learn how to conduct research by engaging with the following techniques: (1) surveys, (2) in-depth interviews, (3) observations, and (4) content analysis. We review and critique published research articles in peer-reviewed journals that use these data collection techniques. Students learn how to design a sociological research project, and present their project at the end of the course. We also discuss ethical considerations in research. The content and assignments are designed to prepare students for the Capstone course (SOC 4996), a course 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 responsible for completing a variety of assignments in this course; each assignment is designed to increase understanding of the diversity and complexity of sociological research. We go through topics quickly; students must enter this course willing to keep up with readings and assignments. Course requirements are outlined below.

**\*\*\*This is a hybrid course – we meet in-person only once a week on Monday evenings; other class instruction is provided via distance learning.**

<b>LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR SOCIOLOGY 4200</b>
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The basic learning outcomes for Sociology 4200 include, but are not limited to:

1. Identify basic methodological approaches and describe the general role of methods in building sociological knowledge;
2. Compare and contrast the basic methodological approaches for gathering data;
3. Design a research study and explain why various decisions were made; and
4. Critically assess a published research report and explain how the study could have been improved.

<b>REQUIRED READINGS</b>
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Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2011. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Boston, MA: Pearson.

This **required book** is available at Wayne State University, or through online sources.

Also required are five (5) journal articles and two (2) book chapters – all will be posted in PDF on the blackboard. Two articles are for assignments; all other readings are for class discussions.

## **Course Requirements (see blackboard for assignment guidelines and rubrics):**

**Class Participation:** Participation is essential to success in this course. I expect students to engage in discussions and demonstrate their understanding of readings and concepts. Active participation means voicing ideas, asking questions, and carefully listening. I expect students to respond to questions I ask in class. Students should try to create an environment that encourages everyone's participation, regardless of ideology or personality. Students who dominate the conversation will be asked to refrain from doing so to allow others to participate. Students who never participate will be called on. Regular attendance and participation should get students most points. Excessive absences, tardiness, and leaving early jeopardize the participation grade. I record attendance at all sessions. It is students' responsibility to ensure I record them as "present." Class participation is worth 5% of your final grade.

**Methods Journal:** Students are required to write a journal entry on assigned readings. Students must answer at least three (3) questions listed below. Entries are not required for every week, so pay close attention to the syllabus for when the entries are scheduled. Also note that all entries are due before class, except for the first one, due a few days after class instruction.

- (1) What are 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) What is the most important point you took away from this week's readings and why? Explain.
- (4) What is the most confusing or most boring part of the readings and why? Explain.
- (5) Did you learn anything new this week about research methods? If so what? Explain.
- (6) After reading this week's readings, do you lean more towards quantitative or qualitative research or both, and why? Explain.
- (7) How are this week's readings different and/or similar to previous readings? Explain.

You will receive credit for submitting your journal on designated weeks and for answering at least three of the above questions in your 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. Journal entries should be submitted as a WORD document and sent as an attachment to my email. **Your first journal entry is due on May 13<sup>th</sup>.** Methods journal is worth 10% of your final grade (2.5% for each entry).

**Article analysis:** Students analyze two articles from peer-reviewed journals – one uses quantitative techniques and the other one qualitative. Students are to answer a set of questions based on the assigned articles. All articles will be available on the blackboard as PDF documents. Article analyses are worth 20% of your final grade (10% each analysis).

### **Research activities (30% of course grade) (this is the "doing" of the different techniques!):**

*Survey:* Working together as ONE team, students will create a survey focused on an agreed upon topic. All students will collect data – the number of surveys each student is responsible for is dependent on the number of students in class. Students will submit data to me, and we will analyze results in class. Students are expected to think about their experiences with this project in relevant weeks for methods journal. Survey project is worth 10% of your final grade.

*In-depth interview:* Students will conduct an interview related to a theme jointly decided among all students. Students may record the interview, but do not have to transcribe it. Students will submit a brief research report about the themes that emerged and your experience with this data collection technique. In-depth interview and report is worth 10% of your final grade.

*Observation fieldnotes:* Students will engage in an observation exercise at a location of their choice (with my approval). This exercise involves two points of observation, typing up the handwritten field notes, coding the data, and a brief report on the themes that emerged and your experience with this data collection technique. Please note that I will select some notes to use in class for a coding activity. Fieldnotes and report are worth 10% of your final grade.

**NOTE:** Under no circumstances can students use data collected during these research activities for any current and future unpublished or published reports. The assignments are for course use only!

**Content analysis project:** Students, working in teams of two, will conduct a small content analysis focused on some aspect of gender. Students can analyze gendered images in the media (print, television, film, online), or gendered products (online or print catalogs). Students may use social media like Facebook, Twitter, Hashtags, etc. All students will focus on gender so we can compare the findings, even though students may use different data sources. Students should be creative, but must have their project approved by me in advance. I will meet with students during the week of June 1<sup>st</sup> to discuss the project; students must submit a brief one-page outline at least the day before we meet – including topic, overall research question, research objectives, and plans for data collection. The final product is a power point presentation on the data analysis and research experience. Students will present their content analysis on the last day of class, Wednesday, June 24<sup>th</sup>. Content analysis project is worth 35% of your final grade.

<b>Grade evaluation:</b>	<b>%:</b>
1. Class participation	5
2. Methods journal	10 (2.5 points for each journal entry)
3. Article analyses	20 (10 points each)
4. Research activities	
a. Survey project	10
b. In-depth interview	10
c. Observation	10
5. Content analysis project	
a. Research design outline	5
b. Data-coding sheets-analysis	10
c. Presentation	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 points</b>

**Grade Chart:**

100% = A+	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	67-69% = D+	50-59% = F
94-99% = A	84-86% = B	74-76% = C	64-66% = D	
90-93% = A-	80-83% = B-	70-73% = C-	60-63% = D-	

**Course Policies:**

Course policies are designed and implemented to ensure a quality learning environment. As your professor, my responsibility is to create an environment so students can learn; students are responsible for respecting policies and completing all assignments.

- Professor contact information:** Best way to contact me is by email. If I do not respond within 24 hours, assume I did not receive your email and send it again. You can leave a message in the department, but the ONLY number to call is a central number for the sociology department. If you need a quick response, use email.
- 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#5 below).*

3. **Blackboard and course communication:** I manage all course information through Blackboard. Not checking BB regularly is not an excuse for missing relevant assignments or information. Students are responsible for all announcements made during class, all information relayed during lecture, and all discussions we have as a group. 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. **There is now a WSU Blackboard app.** See: <http://computing.wayne.edu/blackboard/>
4. **Email etiquette:** All students have a WSU email account so if you decide to use a different account you need to forward the WSU email to that alternative account, or minimally ensure my emails are forwarded. **DO NOT EMAIL AS IF YOU WERE SENDING A TEXT MESSAGE.** I expect emails to be professional, including spelling and grammar. Students must indicate their name and what course they are enrolled in so that I know who is sending the email. Do not address me as "Ms." or "Mrs." – these are titles for teachers in K thru 12. Use either "doctor" or "professor." I will not engage in discussions of substance via email, particularly regarding grades and class issues. It is too easy for emails to be taken out of context and the "tone" and meaning received may not be what the sender intended.
5. **Cell phones, pagers, iPhones, iPads, iTouches, and laptops:** All electronic devices should be turned off (or turned to a silent ringer option) before class begins. Students should also refrain from texting, facebooking, tweeting, or surfing the web during class time. If you are using a laptop during class, 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 grade if students are online or on their devices during class time.*
6. **Assignment Format and Late Policy:** Students must submit assignments electronically via email **BEFORE** class (unless otherwise specified). A paper version may also be required depending on the assignment. Students lose five (5) points (*from total possible points before converted to 0-100 scale*) if assignment is late, and 1 point for each additional overdue day.
7. **Concerns about the course and grades:** 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'. If you have questions about your grade, plan to come to office hours or set up an appointment. It's the students' responsibility to keep all graded assignments until completing the course. If you believe you have been graded unfairly, you should check with me to see if it was a simple oversight. If not and you still believe you have been graded unfairly, you must submit a written explanation of why you believe the grade should be re-evaluated. Be very specific by providing evidence from course readings, along with your original graded assignment. However, a written statement of what you believe is an unfair grade does not automatically mean a grade change. If you are able to show you were graded unfairly then I will gladly change your grade, but keep in mind the grade can stay the same or go down as a result of the second review. If you are still not satisfied you must go through proper channels in the Department of Sociology. A third party reviews the assignment. Again, based on the third party review, the grade(s) may go up,

remain, or decrease. **Incomplete grades are rarely given and only in very limited circumstances to students who are passing the course. DO NOT PLAN ON IT!**

8. **Problems with Writing?** Grades for written assignments depend partially on students' ability to write a coherent, well-organized, and grammatically sound 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>. 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.
9. **Plagiarism:** All university rules about plagiarism and cheating are in effect during this course. I expect students to abide by the academic honor code. Any quoted material must be placed in quotation marks with proper references to the author. You may use statistical data or paraphrase other published works in the text, but ONLY if you provide the complete citation (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 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. **Student Disability Services:** If you have a documented disability requiring accommodations, you must register with Student Disability Services (SDS), located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department; telephone is [313-577-1851](tel:313-577-1851) or [313-577-3365](tel:313-577-3365) (TTY phone is for hearing impaired students only). Once accommodations are in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during 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 WSU.
11. **WSU Registration/Withdrawal policies:** Students must complete registration by May 10<sup>th</sup>. After this date, students cannot add this course unless the professor and department approve it. The last day to drop the course is May 17<sup>th</sup> (with tuition cancellation). If dropped by this date, the course does not appear on the academic record. If dropped between May 18<sup>th</sup> and May 24<sup>th</sup>, the course does not appear on the academic record, but students are liable for tuition. Students can drop the course between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 14<sup>th</sup>, but this requires professor approval and "Smart Check" (WP or WF will appear on the academic record). **ALL registration and withdrawals are initiated by students through pipeline.** After **June 14<sup>th</sup>** students cannot withdrawal from the course and will receive a grade. See for policies: <http://wayne.edu/students/calendar/2014-2015/>
12. **Changes to the syllabus:** I reserve the right to make adjustments throughout the course. Please pay close attention to all announcements in class and on the Blackboard.

## Course Schedule (due dates are tentative)

*In-person sessions are Mondays; other instruction/activities via distance learning*

Date	Readings and Assignments
<b>Foundations (week one)</b>	
May 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 1: Why do research?</li> <li>▪ Chapter 4: The meanings of methodology</li> <li>▪ Chapter 5: How to review the literature and conduct ethical studies (<i>only read pages 123-143, stop at "ethics in social research"</i>)</li> <li>▪ Feel free to read/skim chapters 2 and 3, but they are not required</li> </ul>
May 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Methods journal entry #1 due by midnight (chapters 1, 4, &amp; 5)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Planning and Preparation (week two):</b>	
May 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 6: Strategies of research design</li> <li>▪ Chapter 7: Qualitative and quantitative measurement</li> <li>▪ Chapter 8: Qualitative and quantitative sampling</li> <li>▪ <b><u>In class activity:</u> discuss research idea for content analysis; write research question/hypotheses for class survey project; consider research question for class interview project</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Method journal entry #2 due before class (chapters 6, 7, &amp; 8)</b></li> </ul>
May 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Submit 5 survey questions related to topic decided by class by midnight, May 22<sup>nd</sup> (send via email and I will post on BB)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis, Part I (week three)</b>	
May 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>NO CLASS – WSU reassigns class to Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup></b></li> </ul>
May 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 9: Experimental research</li> <li>▪ Chapter 10: Survey research</li> <li>▪ Chapter 11: Nonreactive research and secondary data analysis</li> <li>▪ Journal article #1 – on BB – pay close attention to hypotheses</li> <li>▪ <b><u>In class activity:</u> finalize survey for class project</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Method journal entry #3 due before class (chapters 9, 10, &amp; 11)</b></li> </ul> <p><b><i>NOTE: WE MEET IN-PERSON ON WEDNESDAY instead of Friday!</i></b></p>
May 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Conduct team survey (submit answers in excel spread sheet by Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup> by midnight)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis, Part II (week four)</b>	
June 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 12: Analysis of quantitative data</li> <li>▪ Chapter 5: Ethics section (pages 143-160)</li> <li>▪ <b><u>In class activity:</u> analysis of survey data from class project; decide on topic for in-depth interview (<i>recommended: decide on who you will interview in preparation for final interview guide</i>)</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Content analysis teams should be drafting one-page project plan</b></li> </ul>

June 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meet in my office for consultation on content analysis research project</li> <li>▪ <b>Quantitative Article Analysis DUE by midnight – on BB</b></li> </ul>
<b>Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis, Part I (week five)</b>	
June 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 13: Field research and focus group research</li> <li>▪ Chapters 5 and 8 from Hesse-Biber &amp; Nagy book (on BB)</li> <li>▪ Journal article #2 – on BB – pay close attention to themes/constructs</li> <li>▪ <b><u>In class activity: coding exercise with in-depth interview (data from professor) and write interview guide for class project</u></b></li> <li>▪ <b>Method journal entry #4 due before class (chapters 13 in Neuman, and 5 &amp; 8 in HBL)</b></li> </ul>
June 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Conduct in-depth interview (report/notes by midnight on June 12<sup>th</sup>)</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Conduct two observations – these can be started at any time once your site location is approved</b></li> </ul>
<b>Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis, Part II (week six)</b>	
June 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 15: Analysis of qualitative data</li> <li>▪ Journal article #3 – on BB (ethnography)</li> <li>▪ <b><u>In class activity: analysis of interview data from class project; share coding of interviews</u></b></li> <li>▪ <b>Observations due by 9:00 a.m. – typed up fieldnotes</b></li> </ul>
June 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Qualitative Article Analysis DUE by midnight – on BB</b></li> </ul>
<b>Collecting Data and Reporting Results (week seven)</b>	
June 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapter 16: Writing the research report and the politics of social research</li> <li>▪ <b>Draft presentation due <u>via email</u> by Monday at 9:00 a.m. (but you may submit your draft before this date)</b></li> </ul>
June 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Research Project Presentations</b></li> </ul> <p><i>Last day of class</i></p>