

"Whatever sociology may be, it is the result of constantly asking the question, what is the meaning of this?"
C. Wright Mills

Methods of Social Research

SOC 3200

Wayne State University

Detroit, MI

Winter 2019

3 Credit Hours

Monday / Wednesday 2:30pm – 3:45pm

State Hall, Room 0213

Instructor: Michael Sabbagh

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Kik: MichaelSabbaghWSU

Campus Office Hours:

Monday: 12pm – 2pm & by appointment

Office Location: 2264 Faculty Administration Building

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REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

The Basics of Social Research 7th Edition by Earl Babbie ISBN: 978-1-305-503307-6

NOTE: Students pressed for cash are welcome to purchase the 6th edition of the textbook (around \$20 used on various book reseller websites), as very little has changed.

Students may also piece together readings through the free online textbook, *Principles of Sociological Inquiry – Qualitative and Quantitative Methods* found here:

<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/BookDetail.aspx?bookId=139>

Additional readings to be passed out in class or available on Canvas.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome! Course description from the catalog:

“An elementary research methods course that covers the process of doing social research, including research design, data collection techniques, processing and analysis of data, as well as the interpretation of data.”

This course provides students with an overview of both quantitative and qualitative methods for conducting sociological research. 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. Students will learn how to conduct research by engaging with quantitative and qualitative techniques. 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. Students are

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, and assignments tend to build on each other. Therefore, **students must enter this course willing to keep up with readings and assignments as they are given – otherwise, it can be very easy to quickly fall behind.**

GOALS

This is a broad survey class intended to introduce undergraduate-level students to the most common approaches to social research. With new paradigms and perspectives emerging all the time, there are so many methods and so little time, so this course is not designed to explore all nuances of each methodological approach—otherwise, you would never get out of here! That said, this is an advanced-level undergraduate sociology course. I expect that most of you are here because you are pursuing a sociology major/minor (or another social science field). I understand that at the undergraduate level, it may be very difficult to get excited about a course on methods, especially if you do not use some of these specific skills in your future career. I also understand that many, if not all, of you have not yet had exposure to the language of science and social research, and so you may struggle with the concepts and material in this course. You may become frustrated as you attempt to engage with the methods. You may run into unforeseen problems or take unexpected detours—but you may also have light bulb or “ah ha!” moments as everything starts to connect. This is the nature of scholarly scientific inquiry. Unlike the cleaned up accounts of methodology that you will read in peer-reviewed scholarly articles, research is a messy but rewarding process. I advise you to keep in mind that lots of students before you have survived a methods class—and that methodology (the actual “doing” of research) *can* be fun!

Learning outcomes for this course

Upon completion of this class, you should be able 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. Understand and account for ethical dilemmas that may arise in the research process.
4. Formulate research hypotheses and conceptualize/operationalize variables on a basic level.
5. Collect and/or analyze data using various methods at a basic level.
6. Critically assess a published research report and explain how the study could have been improved.

EXPECTATIONS

Overview of Student Expectations

1. The core of all expectations for this course is **respect**. I expect that you will respect yourself, your fellow classmates, ideas presented in the classroom, diversity, the instructor and any guests to the classroom. Likewise, I pledge to respect you and your ideas.
2. I consider this classroom to be a safe space free of any types of hate. Any form of racism, sexism, misogyny, classism, ableism, fat/homo/transphobia or other kinds of bigotry will NOT be tolerated.
3. You are expected to **actively attend each scheduled class**. This means that you are to prepare thoroughly for each class, participate in the class discussion, actively listen and take notes.

4. **You will write your own assignments and cite all external sources.**
5. **All assignments will be completed with care and scholarly diligence.** Please use complete sentences, and run spelling/grammar check before turning in any assignments.

Note on Opinions vs. Facts

There may be times in class where it seems like we are having simple political conversations, just like one might have with their friends at the bar or while casually hanging out. In this class, you are not entitled to *opinions*; you *are* entitled to *facts* with evidence. Often our common-sense understandings of various social problems are, in fact, misaligned with reality. It is natural to have blinders towards others' struggles, which is something we all have to work to actively dismantle. I ask that you always stay open-minded to look at the issues discussed from different angles than you may be used to.

Instructor Expectations

I pledge to...

1. Be respectful of myself, students, ideas presented in class and classroom guests
2. Always be prepared for every class and to arrive on time
3. Offer a wide array of opportunities for students to be successful in this course
4. Exude excitement for topics presented in the course
5. Present, and be respectful of, differing viewpoints that I may personally disagree with
6. Offer my support
7. Be fair and reasonable
8. Be flexible when needed
9. Give more than adequate feedback on your performance in the class

NOTE: Please let me know by email if your preferred pronouns or name are different than what is on the class roster. Every student deserves to be addressed in the way they prefer.

Attendance Expectations

According to the Norwegian pop band D'Sound, "Bein' there is half the walk." Class discussion in this course is just as important as the readings and assignments, and, alas, if you are not in class, you cannot participate in class discussions. Students are expected to be in class on each day **on time**. See below for attendance and participation assessment for this course.

Number of Preparation Hours

As with any undergraduate course you will take, the calculation to determine the amount of time you need to spend on a course to be successful is to spend two hours outside of class for every hour in class. This is a three credit hour class, which means students should expect to spend **at least** six hours per week outside of class on readings, studying, assignments and journals.

Technology

Canvas and Email

The use of Canvas and Email is mandatory for this course. Using Canvas, students are required to watch videos, take quizzes and exams, upload assignments and check their grades. Likewise, WSU email is the primary way I will communicate with you between class sessions. Please let me know if you have trouble with either of these platforms.

Phones

Don't be annoying. Put your phone on vibrate or turn it off during class. Don't even think about FaceTiming during class, though I may allow a stray selfie here and there. It is obvious when you're texting or looking at cat photos online with your phone in your lap. Please don't. It is annoying and disruptive. Please leave the classroom if you need to make or receive a call.

Laptops and Tablets

I do not encourage students to use laptops or tablets for notetaking during class. This isn't because I am opposed to technology in general, but these devices can be flirtatious monsters, inviting students to engage in non-class activities such as visiting other websites or checking e-mail, which can distract you and the people around you from what's going on in the classroom.

Voice Recorders

Personally I do not mind lectures being recorded but you will need to notify me before class starts if you'll be recording so I can announce it to the class.

OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENTS

If you are having difficulty in any stage of writing your essays for this or any of your courses, it is highly suggested that you use the resources WSU has to offer. Please visit the Writing Center in the Undergrad Library for assistance:

Writing Center

David Adamany Undergrad Library
Second Floor, Room 2310

Website: <http://www.clas.wayne.edu/writing>

Online appointment scheduling:

<http://www.clas.wayne.edu/writing/OnlineSchedulingInstructions>

Attendance and Participation

Lectures will only cover *some* of the reading material that is assigned; it's imperative that you keep on top of assigned material and attend class in order to fully understand the material we will be discussing. Class is an interactive experience. Attendance and participation are both crucial to doing well in the course. An attendance sheet will be passed out in the beginning of class, which is your responsibility to sign. **You will be allowed to miss four class sessions throughout the semester without excuse.** See below for full description of how this class is assessed. Consult with me directly if you think this will be a problem. Attendance is worth 5% of your final grade and is an all-or-nothing mark.

Annotated Bibliography

This assignment serves as the foundation for the "doing" of the different data collection techniques. One of the most important skills for research is the ability to comprehend, assimilate, and describe the literature on a specific topic. The first steps in any research project are to determine what you want to know, and what we already know about the subject. Students will write an annotated bibliography summarizing three articles related to their proposed project – summary of the research questions, methods, main findings, and how the article links to your topic. Further assignment details will be handed out in class. The annotated bibliography is worth 15% of your final grade. ***Topic idea due by email by Friday January 25.***

Quantitative Research Project

Students will create a survey focused on the topic from their annotated bibliography. We will not administer the surveys. This assignment is meant to help students learn the “art” of survey writing. Students will transform concepts into operational variables. The short report submitted with the survey should include the research questions, hypotheses, unit of analysis, sampling frame, sample (characteristics and size), and limitations. Further assignment details will be handed out in class. Survey project is worth 20% of your final grade.

Qualitative Research Project

In-depth interview: Students will conduct an interview related to their topic. 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. Further assignment details will be handed out in class. In-depth interview and report is worth 20% of your final grade.

Note on Data Collection

The data collection assignments are for pedagogical/course use only. They CANNOT be used as data for any current or future research reports! Use of these data are limited strictly to this classroom. If you are interested enough in your topic that you want to create a full research project from it, you will need to seek human subjects approval from WSU’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Exams

There will be two exams in the semester – the midterm and the final. The midterm will cover all of the class material covered up until that point in class, while the final will be cumulative, meaning that it will require you to be able to refer to any information discussed throughout the entire semester. The midterm and final account for 20% of your final grade each (40% total).

Students should make every effort to take each of the exams on scheduled dates. In the event that a student needs to miss a quiz or exam for a documented reason, the student will need to alert the instructor ahead of time to work out a make-up date. This will be completed on an agreed upon date with the student and instructor, and handled on a case-by-case basis.

Late Assignments

I will accept late assignments but they will have a penalty of five points taken off for being late. Make sure and stay on top of your readings and assignments so you don’t fall behind! Five points may not seem like much, but it will add up quickly, not to mention the stress of catching up.

Note on Extra Credit

This class does not offer extra credit by default, though some opportunities may be presented during the semester. Students are advised to get their assignments in on time, take care in the preparation of assignments, and reach out to the instructor for help if they are struggling.

Honors Section Students

I will be contacting students registered for honors section of this class with details on additional requirements. Each honors student will have a customized plan to fulfill honors requirements for the class, based on their research interests.

EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENTS

Your performance in this course will be evaluated in the following manner:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percent of overall grade</u>
Participation/ Attendance:	10	5%
Annotated bibliography:	30	15%
Quantitative methods project:	40	20%
Qualitative methods project:	40	20%
Midterm Exam:	40	20%
Final Exam:	40	20%
 Total:	 200	 100%

Grading Scale

100-93	A	89-87%	B+	79-77%	C+	69-67%	D+
92-90%	A-	86-83%	B	76-73%	C	66-63%	D
		82-80%	B-	72-70%	C-	62-60%	D-

Anything below sixty percent will receive a failing grade in the course.

I will be diligent about getting grades up on Canvas in a timely fashion. It is up to each student to keep track of her or his marks as the semester goes on. Let me know if you have concerns about your point total or if you are having problems in the course. Do not wait until the last minute to inquire about your grade.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Accommodation Statement

If you have a disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services 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 to discuss your 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.” Please refer to the SDS website for further information about students with disabilities and the services provided for students: <http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/>

Plagiarism Statement

Assignments that have been copied from another student or another source will not be scored. All papers will be run through the plagiarism detection system on Canvas which detects attempts at copying text. “Academic misbehavior means any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution or subvert the education process. All forms of academic misbehavior are prohibited at Wayne State University, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.” (*WSU Dean of Students Office Statement, 2014*). The following website gives the university’s full policy on academic integrity: <http://doso.wayne.edu/academic-integrity.html>

I understand there are many gray areas when it comes to plagiarism. Don’t hesitate to contact me or stop by during office hours if you have questions or need guidance. When in doubt, cite it!

A Final Note

Due to the nature of this course, some topics discussed in class may be controversial, uncomfortable or lead to heated debates. Learning something new isn’t always comfortable and often our personal judgments cloud our ability to learn to the fullest. Please try to keep those judgments outside of the ‘classroom’ and focus on gaining new knowledge while in class or reading the assigned texts. If you have strong feelings about anything brought up in class by either your fellow classmates or me, please feel free to make an appointment to come speak with me. I am more than willing to listen to your concerns.

The instructor may make changes to this course outline as needed during the semester. Please be attentive for possible modifications and regularly check your Wayne State email.

COURSE TIMELINE: Research Methods Winter 2019 WSU

Legend for readings: Babbie textbook **(B)**; Canvas content **(C)**
 All assignments/exams due by midnight on the dates noted below

DATE	TOPIC	READING/ASSIGNMENT
<i>Week 1</i>		
Mon Jan 7	Introductions + Syllabus Review	<NONE>
Wed Jan 9	Overview: empiricism in the social sciences	Readings on Canvas (C)
<i>Week 2</i>		
Mon Jan 14	Human inquiry and science	Chapter 1 (B)
Wed Jan 16	Paradigms, theory and research	Chapter 2 (B)
<i>Week 3</i>		
Mon Jan 21	NO CLASS/MLK Day University Holiday	<NONE>
Wed Jan 23	Ethics and politics of social research	Chapter 3 (B)
Fri Jan 25	Research topic due via email	
<i>Week 4</i>		
Mon Jan 28	Writing and research workshop	<NONE>
Wed Jan 30	Reading and understanding social research	Chapter 15 (B)
<i>Week 5</i>		
Mon Feb 4	Research design	Chapter 4 (B)
Wed Feb 6	In class workshop for annotated bibliography	<NONE>
Fri Feb 8	Annotated bibliography due via Canvas	
<i>Week 6</i>		
Mon Feb 11	Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement	Chapter 5 (B)
Wed Feb 13	Sampling	Chapter 7 (B)
<i>Week 7</i>		
Mon Feb 18	Experiments	Chapter 8 (B)
Wed Feb 20		
<i>Week 8</i>		
Mon Feb 25	Surveys	Chapter 9 (B)
Wed Feb 27	Survey Writing Workshop	<NONE>
Fri Mar 1	Quantitative/survey research project due via Canvas	
<i>Week 9</i>		
Mon Mar 4	In class review for midterm	<NONE>
Wed Mar 6	Midterm exam on Canvas	
<i>Week 10</i>		
Mon Mar 11	SPRING BREAK WAHOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!	
Wed Mar 13		
<i>Week 11</i>		
Mon Mar 18	Qualitative field research	Chapter 10 (B)
Wed Mar 20		
<i>Week 12</i>		
Mon Mar 25	Unobtrusive research	Chapter 11 (B)
Wed Mar 27	Evaluation research	Chapter 12 (B)

<i>Week 13</i>		
Mon Apr 1	Qualitative data analysis	Chapter 13 (B)
Wed Apr 3	Quantitative data analysis	Chapter 14 (B)
<i>Week 14</i>		
Mon Apr 8	Critiques of research methods in the social sciences	Readings on Canvas (C)
Wed Apr 10	In class workshop on interview project	<NONE>
<i>Week 15</i>		
Mon Apr 15	Flex week – No class, work on any unfinished assignments	<NONE>
Wed Apr 17		
Fri Apr 19	Qualitative research project due via Canvas Last day to turn in assignments	
<i>Week 16</i>		
Mon Apr 22	Review for final	<NONE>
Wed Apr 24	Final exam on Canvas	

IMPORTANT DATES

January 18	Last day to drop course without tuition penalty
January 21	University Closed: MLK Day
March 6	Midterm Exam
March 24	Last day to drop course with instructor approval
March 11-16	University Closed: Spring Break
April 19	Last day to submit assignments
April 24	Final Exam