

Course Syllabus for Sociology 3200 (Formerly 4200)
Methods of Social Research (Undergraduates)
Winter 2020

Instructor Cheng Wang, PhD
2257 Faculty Administration Building
Phone: (313)577-2930 (main office)
Email: chengwang@wayne.edu (Best way to reach me)

Time and Place M/W 2:30 – 3:45 PM at Old Main 0103

Office Hours W/TH 1:00 – 2:00 PM and by appointment.

Course Description

This class is designed to provide an overview of research methods in social science. We will briefly cover topics including: (1) Theory development and hypothesis formation; (2) Research ethics; (3) Literature review; (4) Research design and proposal construction; (5) Measurements and its validity and reliability; and (6) Data collection techniques – experimental, survey, observational, and electronic.

Required Reading

Babbie, Earl. 2016. *The Basics of Social Research (7th Edition)*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Read, interpret and critically evaluate social research.
- Use theory and previous research to create research questions and hypotheses and to identify and analyze the appropriate method and variables needed for research questions.
- Recognize the ethical issues involved in research, and practice ethical research standards.
- Understand, explain, and apply the basic concepts of social research, such as conceptualization, operationalization, variables, sampling, reliability, and validity.
- Collect and analyze data using a variety of methods.
- Describe the strengths and weaknesses associated with various research designs.
- Construct a coherent research proposal that includes an abstract, introduction, literature review, research design and methods, analytical plan, and ethical considerations.

In-Class Conduct

1. Classroom format.

We will use a variety of learning styles. Often I will do lectures with PowerPoint presentations, usually asking questions or inviting comments as I talk. You will often break down into small groups. At the end of the semester you will present your research proposal with your partners.

2. Reading and taking notes are critical!!!

I strongly recommend that you complete the assigned readings prior to class and take notes wherein you attempt to capture the main ideas in each chapter/reading. These notes will not only help you as you complete exams but will also facilitate your final research proposal.

3. Laptops are allowed but phones are generally discouraged.

You can use your laptop to check the PowerPoint presentations and take notes. But phones are generally discouraged, as I doubt that you can do many useful things with them in class.

4. Academic integrity.

You are expected to maintain academic integrity and therefore, cheating of any sort will result in failure of this course. For additional information on academic integrity and related issues refer to the student code of conduct at <https://doso.wayne.edu/pdf/student-code-of-conduct.pdf>.

5. Non-discrimination/Inclusion.

Wayne State University is working to build a community that is inclusive and welcoming to all people. In this class we will not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. We are bound to cover topics that people might look at from different points of view. Please respect the views, experiences, and opinions of others. Treat others as you would like to be treated; avoid destructive criticism and offer constructive criticism instead. Following these guidelines will make it more enjoyable for everyone.

6. Student with disabilities.

If you are a person with a documented disability and need any type of accommodation in order to participate, please advise me and we will work with the Student Disability Services (SDS) office (<http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/>) to make appropriate arrangements.

Components of Final Grade

Your academic performance will be evaluated in the following ways.

| Item | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| CITI training | 10% |
| Exam 1 (in-class – 2/10/2020) | 20% |
| Exam 2 (in-class – 3/30/2020) | 20% |
| Presentation of final research proposal | 10% |
| Final research proposal (due at the end of the semester) | 40% |
| Total | 100% |

Grade Rubric

| | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 95%-100%=A | 87%-89%=B+ | 77%-79%=C+ | 67%-69%=D+ |
| | 83%-86%=B | 73%-76%=C | 63%-66%=D |
| 90%-94%=A- | 80%-82%=B- | 70%-72%=C- | 60%-62%=D- |

1. CITI training.

You must individually take the CITI Training at <https://www.citiprogram.org/> after class and your certificates are due on **1/29/2020**.

2. In-class exams.

Each exam has 50 multiple choice questions. The first exam will be on **2/10/2020**, with a review session on 2/5/2020. The second exam will be on **3/30/2020**, with a review session on 3/25/2020.

Students who miss an exam will automatically receive 0 point for that exam, except that you have one of the four legal excuses, including:

- (1) Illness. I will need official certification from your doctor.
- (2) Funeral attendance. I will need proof of funeral attendance with the date clearly listed.
- (3) Mandatory courtroom appearance. I will need a copy of your official court summons with the date of your required attendance clearly listed.
- (4) Wayne State athletic event participation. I will need a signed letter from your coach.

Missed exam will be made up under these extenuating circumstances.

3. Final research proposal.

The culminating experience in this course is a research proposal on a topic of scientific significance. This proposal may be for research that you intend to complete (e.g., for another advanced sociology course) or not. It is not necessary that you follow up by actually doing the research. Carefully planning, thinking through, and documenting the design of the project are the focus of this assignment.

You must find two partners to form a 3-person research team and work on a group project. At the end of the semester, your research team will pick a time slot and make a 10-minute presentation of your final research proposal to your class, with 5 minutes for Q&A session.

If you prefer a solo project or plan to work on a larger project by recruiting more members, please see me to get my permission.

The final research proposal will consist of **a 12- to 16- page plan** (12-point font, double line spacing, 1" margin on all four sides, references not included) for an original research. Here are the sections that it will include:

- (1) Title page (1 page): Title, authors, affiliation, and date.
- (2) Abstract (1 page): Mention the body of literature or theory that you are addressing. What is your sample size? Who and how many people do you plan to interview? What methods do you plan to use (Experiment, survey, or field research)?

(3) Introduction (1 page): Introduce your research topic. Why is it important? Make sure you state your research question(s). In a couple of sentences tell the reader what methods you will use. (For example: In order to answer these questions, we plan to conduct 10 interviews and 20 hours of field research with...)

(4) Literature review (3-4 pages): What have other scholars written about your research topic? Cite **at least 12** studies. Some of you who take honors section of this course need to cite **at least 15** studies. The minimal number of citations will **not** decrease if some of you prefer solo project or are in a 2-person team. For a research team with more than 3 members, cite **at least 4** more studies for each additional member taking the regular session of this course and **at least 5** more studies for each additional member taking the honors section of this course.

(5) Research design and methods (3-4 pages): Describe the overall research design by building upon and drawing examples from your review of the literature. Consider not only methods that other researchers have used but methods of data gathering that have not been used but could be. Unlike the abstract and the introduction, this is the section where you need to be more specific about your methodology. Describe the population and sample. How do you plan to enter the field? How will you recruit your respondents? How will you collect your data? How many interviews do you plan to conduct? How and where will you conduct them? Do you plan to conduct field research? How many hours? How will you take notes? Do you plan to conduct surveys? How do you plan to administer the surveys? In person, on-line, mail, or phone? What kind of questions will you ask? What are the strategies you think of using to improve response rate? How can you assure the reliability and validity of your study? Those who take honors section of this course must provide a complete measurement instrument such as a fully developed questionnaire or a list of questions for qualitative interview/focus group as appendix.

(6) Preliminary analytical plan (1-2 pages): What is your plan to code and analyze your data?

(7) Ethical considerations (1-2 pages): What are the ethical issues you may encounter when conducting your research? What are your strategies to deal with these ethical issues?

(8) Conclusion (1 page): The conclusion reiterates the importance or significance of your proposal and provides a brief summary of the entire study. This section should be only one or two paragraphs long, emphasizing why the research topic is worth investigating, why your research study is unique, and how it should advance existing knowledge.

(9) References: As with any scholarly research paper, you must cite the sources you use.

4. *Extra credits.*

(1) Attendance. Attendance is expected of all students every time the class meets. However, I assume that you must have a good reason to miss a class, come to a class late, or leave a class early. For example, if you are sick, stay home and get better but I do not need to see your doctors' notes if this is the case, except for the two in-class exams. But be aware that excessive absences, tardiness and leaving class early might make it difficult for you to do well in this course. In cases in which you cannot attend class, you are responsible for obtaining missed information from a classmate. I will not reiterate lectures for individual students during office hours. In the case of an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible. While you will not lose points for missing class, I will keep your attendance records and refer to it for extra credit on your final grade. For example, if your grade is borderline (70%, C-) and you have had a **perfect** attendance record I will make an advantageous adjustment to your final grade (C). If you have missed class, arrived late, and/or left early on multiple occasions, there will be no adjustments made to your final course grade.

(2) Questions appropriate for in-class exams. Before each in-class exam you can provide questions that you think are appropriate for the exam. You will earn one extra credit point for each question I decide to include in the exam.

(3) Well-designed measurement instrument. If you are **not** taking honors section of this course, you are not required to provide a complete measurement instrument such as a fully developed questionnaire or a list of questions for qualitative interview/focus group. But if you do include it as an appendix in your research proposal, 1 to 3 extra credit points will be reflected on your final grade.

(4) Primary data. If you not only develop your measurement instrument but use it to collect some primary data from your respondents and include analytical results as another appendix in your research proposal, 1 to 3 extra credit points will be reflected on your final grade.

Class Schedule

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Topic</i> | <i>Reading</i> |
|--------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1/6 | Course introduction | No reading |
| 1/8 | Human inquiry and science | Chapter 1 (Babbie) |
| 1/13 | Theory and hypothesis | Chapter 2 (Babbie) |
| 1/15 | Research ethics | Chapter 3 (Babbie) “Avoid Plagiarism” in Chapter 15 (Babbie, pp. 464-467) |
| 1/22 | Literature review | Chapter 15 (Babbie, pp. 447-462) Appendix A (Babbie) |
| 1/27 | Research design | Chapter 4 (Babbie) |
| 1/29 | Measurements | Chapter 5 (Babbie) |
| 2/3 | Sampling | Chapter 7 (Babbie) |
| 2/5 | Review session | No reading |
| 2/10 | In-class exam 1 | No reading |
| 2/12 | Experiments | Chapter 8 (Babbie) |
| 2/17 | Surveys | Chapter 9 (Babbie) |
| 2/19 | | Chapter 6 (Babbie) |
| 2/24 | Quantitative data analysis | Chapter 14 (Babbie) |
| 2/26 | Computer lab | No reading |
| 3/2 | | |
| 3/4 | Qualitative research | Chapter 10 (Babbie) |
| 3/16 | Qualitative data analysis | Chapter 13 (Babbie) |
| 3/18 | Unobtrusive research | Chapter 11 (Babbie) |
| 3/23 | Evaluation research | Chapter 12 (Babbie) |
| 3/25 | Review session | No reading |
| 3/30 | In-class exam 2 | No reading |
| 4/1 | Writing social research | Chapter 15 (Babbie, pp. 462-471) |
| 4/6 | Successful research proposal | Sample research proposals (On Canvas) |
| 4/8 | Group project presentation | No reading |
| 4/13 | Group project presentation | No reading |
| 4/15 | Group project presentation | No reading |
| 4/20 | Group project presentation | No reading |

Special Notes

1. This course was previously offered as SOC 4200. Please make sure that you have not already taken this course under the previous course number.
2. The honors section of this course is a different course with different requirements from the non-honors section. To switch sections, you need to drop the honors section and add the non-honors section. Students cannot change sections after the regular drop/add deadline and will be graded based on the section that they are officially enrolled in.