
Sociological Research Methods
Sociology 318S-2 (70286)
University of Montana
Fall 2016
MWF, 2:00-2:50pm
Liberal Arts 306

INSTRUCTOR: Rayna Sage, PhD
Social Science 315
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9-10:30am; Wednesdays, 3-4:30pm and by appointment
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REQUIRED TEXT: Chambliss, Daniel F. and Russell K. Schutt. 2015. Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation (5th Edition) ISBN-10: 1483380610

No computers are allowed in this class, so find yourself a great notebook and set of pens.

ADDITIONAL READINGS: Additional reading and viewing materials will be provided on Moodle.

DESCRIPTION: This class provides instruction and experiential learning in the wide variety of methodologies used by sociologists. At the successful conclusion of the course you will feel confident in your ability to collect and analyze data to respond to most requests made by agencies and firms located in the public and private sectors. Additionally, you will craft a research grant proposal which meets professional standards. Finally, you will have the knowledge and skills needed to review and critically assess the research work of your peers and of scholars in the field.

Often, sociological research results from a desire to explain particular social problems or to assess prevention and intervention efforts in order to get the most “bang for the buck.” Issues of research design become prevalent whenever theoretical ideas are to be put to a reality test. In many respects, the methods of social inquiry discussed in this course form the social scientist’s toolbox for collecting data on the social world. Paralleling their wide-ranging substantive interests, social scientists actually use a wide range of techniques for observing social reality: experiments, surveys, field observation, content analysis or comparative and historical methods are among the most important. Prior to conducting research through any of these techniques, however, empirical researchers have to face the fact that their toolbox does not contain a “one size fits all” method that provides adequate answers to each and every question that may legitimately be asked. As none of the techniques is a panacea, researchers need to be aware of the potentials, limitations and pitfalls that come with different methods of inquiry in order to be able to responsibly conduct empirical research that results in useful and accurate observations of the social world.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1 Familiarize students with a variety of social science research methods.
- 2 Develop critical consumers of research claims and media representation of those claims.
- 3 Identify and develop problem-based research questions.
- 4 Apply knowledge of methods to develop a proposal to address selected problem.
- 5 Learn and engage in quality and useful peer review activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES: The instructor and TAs are responsible for:

- Treating students with respect and professionalism
- Coming to class on time, prepared, and ready to *actively* participate
- Presenting material in a clear, concise manner
- Responding to email promptly

- Being available for consultation during office hours
- Providing students with constructive feedback
- Returning graded exams and assignments in a timely manner

The students are responsible for:

- Treating instructors and other students with respect and professionalism
- Coming to class on time, prepared, and ready to *actively* participate
- Presenting material in a clear, concise manner
- Responding to email promptly
- Meeting with the instructors if he/she has any problems/concerns
- Providing instructors with constructive feedback
- Completing all exams and assignments on time
- Being aware of all course policies

FORMAT:

Lecture, reading, discussion, guest lectures, and in- and out-of-class activities.

- Assigned readings will be critical to class discussion and many of the in-class activities.
- Concepts presented in class and in the assigned readings are possible exam material, therefore, completion of assigned readings, regular attendance AND active participation contributes to your likelihood of success.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance and participation is strongly encouraged. If students miss a class (regardless of whether or not it was a documented excused absence) it is their responsibility to contact a classmate for the missed material. Attendance will be monitored through in-class activities that will count for up to 50 points extra credit (5%).

HOW DO I EARN MY GRADE?

FIRST, read this syllabus! Make sure you understand course requirements, policies, assignments, and your responsibilities as a student. Ask questions if you are confused about anything on the syllabus. Bring your syllabus to class and check it often! Write your class assignments down in a planner or calendar.

There are 4 ways to earn points in this class:

A RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL AND PRESENTATION (40% of your overall grade)

This project will be broken down into smaller submissions, each building on the previous. Here is a brief overview of important dates. More to come!

- ☆ September 2 Student Information Sheet (10 points)
- ☆ September 7 Idea Map, Tree Diagram, and research question in at least 3 formats (40 points)
- ☆ September 28 Thesis-Seeking Essay with description of 8 sources, including how they fit in Bizup's BEAM schema (100 points)
- ☆ November 14 Recommendation Memo (100 points)
- ☆ December 2 Draft Proposal and Draft Presentation (100 points)
- ☆ December 14 Final Proposal and Presentation (50 points)

PEER MENTORING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (20% of your overall grade)

Each of you will sit on a committee consisting of 3 or 4 people and will be responsible for providing feedback on at least two of your peers' work. This type of peer review is very common in research and grant writing and will strengthen your final project. See below for important dates.

- ☆ September 7 Introduction to Peer Reviewing (50 points)
- ☆ October 5 Peer Review of Thesis-Seeking Essay with description of 8 sources (50 points)
- ☆ November 21 Peer Review of Recommendation Memo (50 points)
- ☆ December 9 Peer Review of Draft Proposal and Draft Presentation (50 points)

IN-CLASS "QUIZZES" (30% of your overall grade)

There will be 6 in-class quizzes over materials covered in class (readings, lectures, discussions, movies, etc.). These will be presented in a variety of formats, including, but not limited to multiple choice, short answer, in-class individual and group activities, and team oral arguments. Your lowest quiz score will be omitted and the quiz topics below are not exhaustive. These will be held on:

- ☆ September 12 #1: Good science (60 points)
- ☆ September 21 #2: Bias, reflexivity, and public sociology (60 points)
- ☆ October 7 #3: Conceptualizing, operationalization, sampling, and experiments (60 points)
- ☆ October 17 #4: Surveys (60 points)
- ☆ October 28 #5: Qualitative research, interviews, focus groups, and ethnography (60 points)
- ☆ November 18 #6: Existing documents, evaluation (60 points)

CLASS PARTICIPATION (10% of your overall grade)

These points are earned through non-extra credit random in-class activities. There will be several opportunities to earn these points.

EXTRA CREDIT (UP TO 50 POINTS – 5% POSSIBLE)

There will be random in-class activities and other opportunities throughout the semester for you to earn a maximum of 50 points extra credit (5%).

EVALUATION

Points will be earned as follows:

ASSIGNED MATERIAL	POINTS	% OF TOTAL GRADE
RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL See instructions for point breakdown	400	40%
PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE	200	20%
IN-CLASS "QUIZZES" *LOWEST GRADE DROPPED	300 5 @ 60 pts	30%
CLASS PARTICIPATION	100	10%
TOTAL	1000	100%

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT
A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	70-76%
D	60-69%
F	59% and below

Note: Moodle does not always calculate grades correctly until all assignments are in at the end of the semester. To keep track of your grade, calculate your grade percentage (divide the total current points by the total points possible at any one point in the semester).

CLASS SCHEDULE*

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading/Assignment
M 8/29	Introduction to course	
W 8/31	Asking a Good Question	Chapter 1
F 9/2	What is "Good" Science?	Student Information Sheet due by 8pm
M 9/5	No Class	
W 9/7	Introduction to Peer Reviewing	Chapter 2 Research Project: Idea Map, Tree Diagram, and research question in at least 3 formats due in class
F 9/9	What is "Good" Science?	
M 9/12	Biases & Reflexivity	Chapter 3 In-Class Quiz #1
W 9/14	Ethics and Politics	
F 9/16	Ethics and Politics	
M 9/19	Public Sociology	Buroway (Moodle) Tittle (Moodle) Nielsen (Moodle)
W 9/21	Getting Started with Research	Chapter 4 In-Class Quiz #2
F 9/23	Conceptualization & Operationalization	
M 9/26	Sampling and Generalizability	Chapter 5
W 9/28	Sampling and Generalizability	Thesis-Seeking Essay with description of 8 sources, including how they fit in Bizup's BEAM schema due in class
F 9/30	Choosing a Method: Experiments	Chapter 6
M 10/3	Experiments	Lovaglia (Moodle) Bertrand & Mullainathan (Moodle)
W 10/5	Peer Review Committee Meeting	Peer Review of Thesis-Seeking Essay and description of 8 sources due in class
F 10/7	Choosing a Method: Surveys	Chapter 7 In-Class Quiz #3
M 10/10	Surveys	
W 10/12	Surveys	Chandra et al. (Moodle) Park (Moodle) Rivadeneira & Lebo (Moodle)
F 10/14	Basics in Quantitative Analysis	Chapter 8

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading/Assignment
M 10/17	Choosing a Method: Approaches to Qualitative Research	Chapter 9 McCaslin & Wilson Scott (Moodle) In-Class Quiz #4
W 10/19	In-depth Interviewing and Ethnography	
F 10/21	Interviewing and Focus Groups	
M 10/24	Urban Ethnography and Participant Observation	Wacquant (Moodle)
W 10/26	Rural Ethnography and Participant Observation	Sherman & Sage (Moodle)
F 10/28	Basics in Qualitative Analysis	Chapter 10 In-Class Quiz #5
M 10/31	Choosing a Method: Using Existing Documents	Chapter 11
W 11/2	Choosing a Method: Historical/Comparative	
F 11/4	Content Analysis and Historical/Comparative	
M 11/7	The Case Study	Zainal (Moodle)
Tu 11/8	Election Day! Don't forget to vote!	
W 11/9	The Case Study	
F 11/11	No Class	
M 11/14	Research in Action: Evaluation	Chapter 12 The Kellogg Foundation (Moodle) Recommendation Memo due in class
W 11/16	Evaluation	
F 11/18	Evaluation	In-Class Quiz #6
M 11/21	Peer Review Committee Meeting	Peer Review of Recommendation Memo due in class
W 11/23	No Class	
F 11/25	No Class	
M 11/28	Grant Writing 101	TBA (Moodle)
W 11/30	Writing a Budget and Finding Potential Funders	
F 12/2	Presenting Your Proposal	Draft Proposal and Draft Presentation due in class
M 12/5	Critical Review of Proposals	
W 12/7	Round Tables and Other Presentation Formats	
F 12/9	Peer Review Committee Meeting	Peer Review of Draft Proposal and Presentation due in class
M 12/12	No Class – Work on your presentations	
Th 12/15	1:10-3-10pm: Round Table Presentation of Proposals	Final Proposal and Presentation due in class

*The schedule and procedures outlined in this syllabus are subject to change in the event of circumstances beyond the instructor's control or in response to ongoing assessment learning. Students are responsible for noting these changes.

CLASS, DEPARTMENT & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

QUIZZES

Be here on the day of a quiz. If you miss a quiz, remember that your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments turned in after the due date will not receive credit.

CONCERNS WITH GRADING

When it is a matter of simple math errors or mismarking a correct answer, write a brief email outlining the problem and turn it. If you have a problem with the content of an exam or the validity of the grading procedure, please wait 48 hours and submit an email outlining your grievance to the instructor and TA.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Please be on time for class and prepared to participate in the full class session. Students who leave during the class interrupt learning activities and disrupt the focus of those around them. Schedule appointments at times when classes are not in session. Everyone benefits from your presence. It is very disruptive for everyone if you come into class late, or leave early.

Please be considerate of others by remaining quiet while your professor and others speak.

All grades will be posted on BbLearn, and will be updated regularly by the TA. IF you have a discrepancy with a grade that is posted (for example, if you completed a reading quiz and did not receive credit), you have 2 weeks from the posted date in which to contest this grade. After that, no changes will be made. It is also important to keep your assignments until you verify the correct grade has been recorded.

LAPTOPS

The use of laptops is not allowed in this class.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

All emails to the instructor and TA need to have the subject line that identifies your class number and section, and your name. This is VERY important so that we can address your concerns in a timely manner. Please include appropriate salutations, as well as a description of why you are emailing. I have over 200 students in 2 different classes, so this information is very important!

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The [Code is available for review online \(http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php\)](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you think you may have a disability that is adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommason Center 154 or (406) 243-2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Additional Readings on Moodle (listed in the order in which we will be reading them):

- Buroway, Michael. 2005. "2004 ASA Presidential Address: For Public Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 70(1):4-28.
- Tittle, Charles R. 2004. "The Arrogance of Public Sociology." *Social Forces* 82(4):1639-1643.
- Nielsen, Francois. 2004. "The Vacant 'We': Remarks on Public Sociology." *Social Forces* 82(4):1619-1627.
- Lovaglia, Michael J. 2003. "From Summer Camps to Glass Ceilings: The Power of Experiments." *Contexts* 2(4):42-49.
- Bertrand, Marianne, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2004. "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination." *American Economic Review* 94(4):991-1013.
- Chandra, Anita et al. 2008. "Does Watching Sex on Television Predict Teen Pregnancy? Findings From a National Longitudinal Survey of Youth." *Pediatrics* 122(5):1047-1054.
- Park, Alice. 2008. "Sex on TV Increases Teen Pregnancy, Says Report." *Time*, November 3 Retrieved January 4, 2012 (<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1855842,00.html>).
- McCaslin, Mark L., and Karen Wilson Scott. 2003. "The Five-Question Method for Framing a Qualitative Research Study." *The Qualitative Report* 8(3):447-461.
- Wacquant, Loic. 2002. "Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography: Sidewalk; Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City; No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City." *American Journal of Sociology* 107(6):1468-1532.
- Sherman, Jennifer, and Rayna Sage. 2011. "Sending Off All Your Good Treasures: Rural Schools, Brain-Drain, and Community Survival in the Wake of Economic Collapse." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 26(11).
- Zainal, Zaidah. 2007. "Case Study as a Research Method." *Jurnal Kemanusiaan* (9):1-6.
- The W. K. Kellogg Foundation. 2004. *The W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook*. Battle Creek, MI: The W. K. Kellogg Foundation Retrieved January 4, 2012 (<http://www.wkcf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2010/W-K-Kellogg-Foundation-Evaluation-Handbook.aspx>).
- The W. K. Kellogg Foundation. 2004. *The W. K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide*. Battle Creek, MI: The W. K. Kellogg Foundation Retrieved January 4, 2012 (<http://www.wkcf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2006/02/WK-Kellogg-Foundation-Logic-Model-Development-Guide.aspx>).

SOCI 318 CLASS ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

Due date	Assignment	Points earned
9/2 (8pm)	Student Information Sheet	____/ 10
9/7 (in class)	Idea Map, Tree Diagram, & Research Questions	____/ 40
9/7 (done in class)	Introduction to Peer Reviewing	____/ 50
9/12 (done in class)	Quiz #1	____/ 50
9/21 (done in class)	Quiz #2	____/ 50
9/28 (in class)	Thesis-Seeking Essay and 8 sources	____/ 100
10/5 (in class)	Peer Review of Thesis-Seeking Essay and 8 sources	____/ 50
10/7 (done in class)	Quiz #3	____/ 50
10/17 (done in class)	Quiz #4	____/ 50
10/28 (done in class)	Quiz #5	____/ 50
11/14 (in class)	Recommendation Memo	____/ 100
11/18 (done in class)	Quiz #6	____/ 50
11/21 (in class)	Peer Review of Recommendation Memo	____/ 50
12/2 (in class)	Draft Proposal and Draft Presentation	____/ 100
12/9 (in class)	Peer Review of Draft Proposal and Presentation	____/ 50
12/14 (in class)	Final Proposal and Presentation	____/ 50
TOTAL		____/ 900

Class Participation (100 points total, plus an opportunity to earn up to 50 points extra credit)

Date	Activity	Points earned?	Date	Activity	Points earned?
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____