

Sociological Research Methods – SOCI 318

Spring 2018

Monday, Wednesday, & Friday, 2:00 pm – 2:50 pm, Liberal Arts 105

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: Monday, 11:00 – 12:00 (and by appointment)

Course Overview

This course is about examining the world around us with scientific rigor. It is a call to re-evaluate our everyday methods of gathering information and drawing conclusions. It is also an invitation to begin using theory, causal modeling, and carefully collected information to arrive at more complete and better supported explanations of events. Throughout the semester, we will examine the logic of causality, measurement, and sampling, and talk about research ethics. We will also discuss different ways of collecting data, such as experiments, surveys, and observation. By the end of the semester, you should have a new perspective on what people "know" and many new intellectual tools for assessing information about the world.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Things to Do in the First Week of Classes

Know Your Responsibilities

The best way to learn about research methods is to use them, so we will spend as much time as possible applying what we read. Therefore, your primary responsibility in this course is to read carefully and come to class ready to use what you have learned from the readings. If you do not understand the reading, then you should come to class with questions.

Get the Readings

The only required book for this class is:

Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research*. 11th ed. Wadsworth. 2007.

Some additional required readings will be available through the course website.

Explore the Course Website on Moodle

The course website on Moodle will serve as the definitive source of information about the course. Please refer to its pages for the most up-to-date information, links to assignments, supplementary material, and much more.

Write the Exam Dates on Your Calendar

We will have three exams this semester. They will require you to recall, understand, and apply material that we have covered. Since the material we cover in each class builds upon previous material, the exams are cumulative. Barring extreme and unforeseen circumstances, the exam dates will not be changed, so make sure you will be in class on the scheduled dates.

Other Information

Written Assignments

Written assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. They should all be typed, double-spaced, and stapled. (Drawings and diagrams may be done by hand.)

Quizzes

Over the course of the semester, we will have seven pop quizzes. If you want to do well on the quizzes, make sure to do the reading when it is assigned and come to class every day. All quizzes will take place during the first five minutes of class. If you arrive after the quiz has been distributed, you will not be given the opportunity to take the quiz. There will be no make-ups for quizzes, but I will automatically drop your two lowest quiz grades to allow for unforeseen emergencies.

Grading

Grades for the course will be based on the following:

6 (of 8) Quizzes	10%
4 Written Assignments	30%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	20%
Final Exam	25%
Total	100%

Final grades for the course are based on the following scale:

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	93 to 100
A-	90 to 92
B+	88 to 89
B	83 to 87
B-	80 to 82
C+	78 to 79
C	73 to 77
C-	70 to 72
D+	68 to 69
D	63 to 67
D-	60 to 62
F	59 and below

Course grades are not rounded up to the next letter grade.

Classroom Courtesy

Please plan to arrive on time for all class sessions and to stay for the entire class. If you **must** arrive late or leave early, please notify me in advance and sit near the door so as not to disturb your classmates. Cell phones should be turned off before entering the classroom. When class begins, please put away all newspapers. Laptops may not be used unless you have a documented disability that requires the use of a laptop, as these devices are distracting for other students. Finally, wait until the end of class before putting away your books.

Make-Up Exam Policy

Make-up exams will be given at the instructor's discretion. The only times in which a make-up exam will be considered are when the student experiences a serious illness or family situation that prevents him or her from being physically present during the exam. Note that a broken alarm clock, cold, out-of-town event, etc. will **NOT** merit a make-up. Please understand that offering a false rationale for a make-up exam is an act of academic dishonesty and amounts to cheating on an exam. In all cases, it is the student's responsibility to contact the professor to request a make-up. The failure of the student to request the make-up within 24 hours of the missed exam will be sufficient cause for the professor to deny the request. If the request is denied, then a score of zero is entered for that exam. If the instructor elects to permit a make-up, then the format of the make-up exam may vary from the original exam and must be taken as soon after the missed exam as possible.

Academic Honesty

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. A few examples of academic dishonesty are copying answers from another student during an exam or quiz or giving a false excuse for failing to show up for an exam. Students who assist other students in academically dishonest acts are in violation of the policy of academic honesty. All students must be aware of and carefully adhere to the provisions defining and prohibiting academic misconduct in the UM Student Conduct Code (see http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.) The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense.

Course Outline

Monday 1/22

Welcome to Sociology 318

Get a copy of the syllabus and learn about the course.

Wednesday 1/24

In Search of Truth in Everyday Life

Read Babbie Chapter 1 & "Health Statistics May be Bad for Our Mental Health"

Question of the Day: Why do people often come to believe things that are not accurate?

Friday 1/26

Paradigms, Theories, Hypotheses, & Reasoning

Read Babbie Chapter 2

Question of the Day: What is a theory? Give an example of something that is not a theory.

Monday 1/29

Research Ethics

Read Babbie Chapter 3

Wednesday 1/31

Research Ethics (continued)

In-Class Video: *A Class Divided*

Friday 2/2	<p>Causation and Modes of Explanation</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 4 (pp. 87-94)</p> <p><u>Questions of the Day:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is the difference between deterministic and probabilistic reasoning? 2) What are the advantages of ideographic and nomothetic explanations? 3) Why is a wet street not proof that it has rained? <p><u>For Reflection After Class:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Why is drawing a causal diagram of an argument helpful? 2) Why is it important to interpret causal diagrams in words?
Monday 2/5	<p>Research Design: Units of Analysis</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 4 (pp. 94-101) & "Unit of Analysis"</p> <p>See course website for more comments on units of analysis.</p> <p><u>Question of the Day:</u> What do you learn by using football teams rather than football players as the unit of analysis?</p>
Wednesday 2/7	<p>Research Design: Types of Studies</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 4 (pp. 101-117)</p> <p><u>Question of the Day:</u> What kind of question would require a panel study to answer?</p> <p>Assignment 1 Due: Causal Diagrams and Written Descriptions</p>
Friday 2/9	<p>Research Design: Types of Studies (continued)</p> <p>No new readings today</p>
Monday 2/12	<p>Conceptualization & Measurement</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 5 & "Four Million Adolescents Smoke: Or Do They?"</p> <p><u>Questions of the Day:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is the difference between reliability and validity? 2) Does the article by Kovar raise questions about reliability or validity?
Wednesday 2/14	<p>Catch-Up & Review for Exam 1</p>
Friday 2/16	<p>Exam 1</p> <p>This exam covers material from Chapters 1-5. See the course website for a study guide.</p>
Monday 2/19	<p>Presidents' Day: No Class</p>

Wednesday 2/21	<p>The Logic of Scales and Indexes</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 6</p> <p><u>Questions of the Day:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How can you tell if an index is any good? 2) When is it appropriate to use a scale rather than an index?
Friday 2/23	<p>The Logic of Scales and Indexes (continued)</p> <p>No new readings today</p>
Monday 2/26	<p>The Logic of Sampling</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 7 (pp. 179-202)</p> <p>Also, in preparation for today's class, please gather and evaluate data about fashion at UM. See course website for details.</p> <p><u>Questions of the Day:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How is sampling bias related to sampling frames? 2) If people draw conclusions based on personal experience, why is their sample biased?
Wednesday 2/28	<p>Taking Samples</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 7 (pp. 202-216)</p> <p>See the course website for supplementary information about sampling.</p> <p><u>Question of the Day:</u> Why do researchers sometimes use stratified samples?</p>
Friday 3/2	<p>Experiments</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 8</p> <p><u>Questions of the Day:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are internal and external validity? 2) How can the type of experiment (laboratory or natural) affect internal and external validity?
Monday 3/5	<p>Experiments (continued)</p> <p>In-Class Exercise</p>
Wednesday 3/7	<p>Survey Research</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 9</p> <p><u>Question of the Day:</u> What does it mean to have answers that are mutually exclusive and exhaustive?</p>
Friday 3/9	<p>Survey Research (continued)</p> <p>In-Class Exercise</p>

Monday 3/12	<p>Qualitative Field Research</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 10 & "Ethical Concerns in Field Research"</p> <p><u>Questions of the Day:</u></p> <p>1) When is qualitative analysis more appropriate than quantitative analysis?</p> <p>2) Why are ethical issues harder to avoid in field research than in survey research?</p>
Wednesday 3/14	<p>Qualitative Field Research (continued)</p> <p>Guest Speaker</p> <p>Assignment 2 Due: Evaluating & Writing Survey Questions</p>
Friday 3/16	<p>Unobtrusive Research</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 11</p> <p><u>Question of the Day:</u> Why would anyone choose to unobtrusive research when they could observe or interview real people?</p>
Monday 3/19	<p>Unobtrusive Research (continued)</p> <p>In-Class Exercise: Content Analysis</p>
Wednesday 3/21	<p>Catch-Up & Review for Exam 2</p>
Friday 3/23	<p>Exam 2</p> <p>Exam 2 is cumulative, but it focuses on material from Chapters 6-11. See the course website for a study guide.</p>
Monday 3/26	Spring Break: No Class
Wednesday 3/28	Spring Break: No Class
Friday 3/30	Spring Break: No Class
Monday 4/2	<p>Evaluation Research</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 12</p> <p><u>Question of the Day:</u> Why are ethics and politics especially important in evaluation research?</p>
Wednesday 4/4	No Class: Use this time to gather and analyze data for Assignment 3
Friday 4/6	No Class: Use this time to gather and analyze data for Assignment 3
Monday 4/9	<p>Evaluation Research (continued)</p> <p>Assignment 3 Due: Making, Recording, & Interpreting Observations</p>
Wednesday 4/11	<p>Univariate Analysis</p> <p>Read Babbie Chapter 14 (pp. 405-419)</p> <p><u>Question of the Day:</u> If the mean, median, & modal age for a group of people are all identical, does this mean that all the people are the same age?</p>

Friday 4/13	Bivariate Analysis Read Babbie Chapter 14 (pp. 419-427) <u>Question of the Day:</u> What is the point of bivariate analysis?
Monday 4/16	Catch-Up No new readings today
Wednesday 4/18	Measures of Association Read Babbie Chapter 16 (pp. 450-470) <u>Questions of the Day:</u> 1) How do you know what measure of association to use? 2) What are tests of statistical significance designed to do? 3) What does it mean if a bivariate table (heart disease by male) produces a Chi-square of 12.7 and a p-value of .001?
Friday 4/20	The Elaboration Model Read Babbie Chapter 15 <u>Question of the Day:</u> What is the basic purpose of the elaboration model?
Monday 4/23	The Elaboration Model (continued) In-Class Exercise: Use the elaboration model to examine real data
Wednesday 4/25	The Elaboration Model (continued) Assignment 4 Due: Interpreting Two-Way & Three-Way Tables with the Elaboration Model
Friday 4/27	Catch-Up No new readings today
Monday 4/30	Use Your Skills to Evaluate a Sales Pitch In-Class Exercise: Evaluate a sales pitch aimed at prospective college students
Wednesday 5/2	Use Your Skills While Listening to Friends & Family In-Class Exercise: Examine Table 1 from "Poverty in America" & explain how you could test the accuracy of people's beliefs about poverty
Friday 5/5	Catch-Up & Review for Final Exam

FINAL EXAM: Monday, May 7, 3:20 pm - 5:20 pm, Liberal Arts 105

The final exam is cumulative, but it will emphasize material from Chapters 12-16. See the course website for a study guide.