

Sociology 312-1
Elements of Sociological Research

Tues, Thurs 2:00-3:40, Spring 2008; Faner 3514

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Office hours:	Tues and Thurs from 1:00-2:00 and 3:40-5:30 or By Appointment

I. Student Learning Objectives

In this course, students are introduced to a variety of research methods in the social sciences including the use of the library, techniques of observation, elementary steps in quantitative and qualitative measurements and analyses, and an understanding of the utility of such methods.

On completion of this course, students will:

1. have an understanding of a variety of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and be able to demonstrate that they understand the strengths and weaknesses of each.
2. be able to explain the connection between theory and research and show evidence of this in their writing.
3. learn the techniques of collecting, analyzing, and presenting research results.
4. be knowledgeable of the ethical concerns associated with scientific research and to practice within these guidelines.

II. Required Textbooks:

Stier Adler, Emily and Roger Clark. 2008. *How It's Done: an Invitation to Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

III. Course Requirements:

The largest point value for a single assignment will be assigned to the end of semester paper, in which students will propose a topic for research, review literature relevant to that topic, and describe the methods they would use to carry out the proposed investigation. Though this is the largest point total for a single assignment, throughout the semester, there will also be assignments worth smaller quantities of points assigned.

Additionally, students should come to class with materials for taking notes, the course textbook, and having read or completed whatever assigned reading and work is due that day.

IV. ATTENDANCE:

Attendance as such will NOT be taken for this course. However, a portion of the points for the semester are based on participation in class, and can not be gained if not present in the classroom.

V. ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be assigned several smaller assignments throughout the semester which build toward the completion of their final paper. These assignments are oriented toward teaching the skills necessary for completing the final paper, as well as providing an opportunity for students to understand my expectations as an instructor. Each assignment will be worth a small fraction of the total grade, but combined, they will represent a very significant proportion of the total points.

VII. FINAL PAPER

As described by the course objectives, this course is designed to teach the skills and techniques associated with conducting social research. The most important of these skills is the ability to communicate the process and results of research in writing. In order to assess your grasp of the techniques and rules of writing research papers which are conventional to the social sciences, students will be expected to produce a research proposal paper. This will have the parts of a paper considered to be typical, excluding a results section, as data analysis will not be expected to be included. More detailed instructions about this paper will be forthcoming in separate handouts.

VIII. PRESENTATIONS

An important part of conducting research is presenting that research to other people, whether they are academics at a research conference, students at a university, or other employees in the company you work for. To practice this skill, students will prepare a semi-formal presentation on their paper, including what they discovered in existing literature, their approach to the topic and why they chose it, and the results they anticipate, should the research ever be completed.

IV. CLASSROOM RESPECT:

Because many of the topics covered in sociology tend to be controversial in nature, a comfortable atmosphere is VERY important. Therefore, I ask and warn you that RESPECT to everyone is expected. There will be many sensitive issues raised and many different opinions given that all deserve attention. We should honor, celebrate, respect, and learn from diversity in the classroom and on this campus. Even when criticizing others' work, maintaining a level of professional decorum is critical to carrying on successful research.

X. GRADING SCALE:

900 -1000 A	<u>Assignments</u> (1000 total pts)
800 - 899 B	5 Paper Building Assignments (100pts each)
700 - 799 C	Homework(100 pts)
600 - 699 D	Participation (50 pts)
Below 600 F	Presentation (50 pts)
	Final Paper (300 pts)

XI. PLAGIARISM:

Many students arrive at college not understanding what plagiarism means. It means taking work by other people and passing it off as your own. If in writing your paper you borrow sentences from other sources---say the textbook, or even your roommate—and don't put them in quotation marks and site your source, you're plagiarizing. You're even plagiarizing if you borrow the basic content of your sentences from someone else, changing the exact wording, without citing and referencing your source. You should familiarize yourself with what plagiarism means before you start your paper so you can avoid it. Penalties for plagiarism range from receiving a zero on the assignment, a failing grade for the course, or being expelled from the university.

XII: Emergency Procedures:

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on the BERT'S website at www.bert.siu.edu , Department of Public Safety's website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Tentative Schedule: Spring 2006**Week 1:**

Jan 15 --- Introductions

Jan 17 --- Ways of Knowing and the Uses of Research; Choosing an area of interest

Week 2:

Jan 22 --- Theory and Research; Making the Abstract Concrete

Jan 24 --- Ethics; Can I fake this part?

Area of Interest Due

Week 3:

Jan 29 --- Selecting Researchable Topics and Questions; So Many Questions, So Little Time

Jan 31 --- Developing a Researchable Question; Holes in the Literature

Week 4:

Feb 5 --- Sampling; People as Points

Feb 7 --- Sampling continued; An Imperfect Universe

Narrow Topic Area Due

Week 5:

Feb 12 --- Measurement; Let's Play Operation(alization)!

Feb 14 --- Measurement Continued; Various Variables

Week 6:

Feb 19 --- Nonexperimental Designs; Research in the Real World

Feb 21 --- Experimental Designs; Is the Blue Button a Food Pellet or an Electric Shock?

Week 7:

Feb 26 --- Questionnaires; On a Scale From 1 to 7, How Useful Are Questions Like This?

Feb 28 --- Structured Interviews; Blah Blah Blah

Annotated Bibliography Due

Week 8:

Mar 4 --- Qualitative Interviewing; Can You Tell Me What You Mean By That?

Mar 6 --- Observational Techniques; They Listen, You Know.

Week 9:

Mar 11 --- Break

Mar 13 --- Break

Week 10:

Mar 18 --- Pre-Existing Data; Not As Easy As It Sounds

Mar 20 --- Content Analysis; Making Meaning Meaningful

Written Literature Review Due

Week 11:

Mar 25 --- Content Analysis Continued

Mar 27 --- Applied Research; Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger

Week 12:

Apr 1 --- Quantitative Data Analysis; the Kronbach's alpha and the Beta

Apr 3 --- Qualitative Data Analysis; Data Is More Than Numbers

Method Section Due

Week 13:

Apr 8 --- Presenting Research

Apr 10 --- Research Day: No Class Meeting

Week 14:

Apr 15 --- Catch Up

Apr 17 --- Catch Up

Final Paper Due

Week 15:

Apr 22 --- Paper Meetings

Apr 24 --- Paper Meetings

Week 16:

Apr 29 --- Presentations

May 1 --- Presentations

Week 17:

Final Exam: Presentations

**Note: The instructor reserves the right to make changes/corrections to this schedule at any time.