

Sociology 205: Research Methods for Sociology
Winter 2011; MWF 9:30-10:50

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- Office hours: Mondays 2-3pm; Fridays 8-9am

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This course is designed to introduce:

- research design, data collection, and data analysis
- for various research methods used by sociologists: survey research, content analysis, comparative/historical research, case studies, field observation, and qualitative interviewing

Given the range of methods covered, this introduction is brief, but sociology majors and minors explore methods in greater depth in their junior/senior research seminars.

Our exploration of the research process is anchored in a community-based research project here in Lewiston/Auburn, supported by a community-based learning assistant. The assistant's main role is to help facilitate the logistics of the community-based data collection efforts, but general support related to the course material and assignments is also available.

Two required books should be available at the bookstore. There are also various article or book chapter readings, available through the course's Lyceum page.

📖 Chambliss and Schutt, MAKING SENSE OF THE SOCIAL WORLD (3rd ed., 2010)

📖 Wagner, USING SPSS FOR SOCIAL STATISTICS AND RESEARCH METHODS (2nd ed., 2009)

***IMPORTANT NOTE:** It is your responsibility to be thoroughly familiar with the course requirements and evaluation procedures outlined below, and to keep track of various assignments and activities that are required. Please refer to this syllabus regularly to keep up-to-date with reading and other requirements.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Course requirements and evaluation procedures are designed to evaluate students on their knowledge and skills, as well as to promote advance preparation and active learning.

- ✓ **Quizzes (25%):** 4 @ 6.25% each
- ✓ **Class Data Collection/Analysis Work (20%)**
Data Collection Activities: 3 @ 5% each ; Group Data Analysis Presentation: 1 @ 5%
- ✓ **Formal Written Work (55%)**
Research Proposal: 1 @ 20%; Research Report: 1 @ 35%
- ✓ **Informal Assignments:** These are assessed only for completion, and are designed to apply and reinforce skills covered in the course. Any not handed in on-time and complete will result in a 10 point per day late penalty and 33 point maximum deduction from final course grades (which are calculated on a scale of 1000).
- ✓ **Attendance and Participation:** Class sessions are often used as working meetings for the community-based project, and thus regular attendance is essential. After the second absence, each absence results in a 10 point deduction from final course grades unless arrangements are made to make up the missed time (and in some cases that requires make-up work much later in the semester). Unusually high or low quality of participation in informal exercises and assignments, in-class group work, and preparedness for class activities may result in adjustments of up to +/- 33 points to the course grade (again, on a scale of 1000).

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week of January 10: Introduction to the Course and the Community-Based Project

- **Monday**- Introduction to course and community-based project
- **Wednesday**- Food insecurity and Community Food Assessments
Reading: Jacobson, Maxine. 2007. "Food Matters: Community Food Assessments as a Tool for Change." Journal of Community Practice 15: 37-55.
- **Friday**- Social Research, overview
Reading: Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 1 ("Science, Society, and Social Research")

Week of January 17: Research Design: Reviewing the Literature; Conceptualization and Measurement

- **Monday**- MLK Jr. Day, no regular class session, attend MLK events
Reading: there is a lot of reading for Wednesday so you may want to get ahead!
- **Wednesday**- Research design and reviewing literature
Readings:
1) Chambliss and Schutt, Chapters 2 ("The Process and Problems of Social Research") and 3 ("Ethics in Research") plus selection from Chapter 12 (pages 307-312) and all of Appendix A ("Finding Information")
2) Scanlan, Stephen J. 2009. "New Direction and Discovery on the Hunger Front: Toward a Sociology of Food Security/Insecurity." Humanity & Society 33: 292-316.
- **Friday**- Conceptualization & measurement
Readings:
1) Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 4 ("Conceptualization and Measurement")
2) Coleman-Jensen, Alisha. 2010. "U.S. Food Insecurity Status: Toward a Refined Definition." Social Indicators Research 95: 215-230.
Assignment (Informal): SocIndex exercise due (specifics covered in previous class)

Week of January 24: Sampling

- **Monday**- Quiz 1; Sampling
Quiz: covering Chambliss and Schutt 1-4
Reading: Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 5 ("Sampling")
- **Wednesday**- Sampling (continued)
Readings:
1) Alkon, Alison Hope and Kari Marie Norgaard. 2009. "Breaking the Food Chains: An Investigation of Food Justice Activism." Sociological Inquiry 79: 289-305.
2) Gollust, Sarah E. and Paula M. Lantz. 2008. "Communicating Population Health: Print News Media Coverage of Type 2 Diabetes." Social Science & Medicine 69: 1091-1098.
- **Friday**- Sampling (continued)
Reading: none

Week of January 31: Data Collection Methods

- **Monday-** Surveys & Content Analysis
Readings:
 1) Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 7 (“Survey Research”)
 2) *Faculty methods spotlight:* Chirayath, Heidi and Ashley Wentworth. 2008. “Constraints to Caring: Service to Medically Indigent Patients by Allopathic and Osteopathic Physicians.” Journal of Health Care for The Poor and Underserved 19: 500-11. [skim and bring a copy to class]
Guest: Professor Heidi Chirayath (tentative)
- **Wednesday-** Data Collection workshop for content analysis
Reading: none
- **Friday-** Data Collection workshop for survey
Reading: Chambliss and Schutt, Appendix B (“Secondary Data Sources”)
Assignment (Informal): ICPSR search result due (specifics covered in previous class)

Week of February 7: Data Collection Methods

- **Monday-** Quiz 2; Observation and Interviewing
Quiz: covering Chambliss and Schutt 5 and 7
Readings:
 1) Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 9 (“Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating, Listening”)
 2) *Faculty methods spotlight:* Kane, Emily W. 2009. “‘I Wanted a Soul Mate’: Gendered Anticipation and Frameworks of Accountability in Parents’ Preferences for Sons and Daughters.” Symbolic Interaction 32: 372-389. [skim and bring a copy to class]
- **Wednesday-** Data Collection workshop for observation
Reading: Bailey, selections from Chapter 3 (“Data Collection in the Field”) from A Guide to Field Research (1996, Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks CA)
- **Friday-** Data Collection workshop for interviewing
Reading: Rubin & Rubin, Chapter 7 (“Structuring the Interview”) from Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (2005, Sage, Thousand Oaks CA)
Assignment (Graded): Completed content analysis coding sheets at 269 P’gill by 4pm

Week of February 14: Data Collection Methods

- **Monday-** Comparative and Historical Methods; Case Studies
Reading:
Faculty methods spotlight: Duina, Francesco and Jason Buxbaum. 2008. “Regional Trade Agreements and the Pursuit of State Interests: Institutional Perspectives from NAFTA and Mercosur.” Economy and Society 37: 193-223. [skim and bring a copy to class]
Guest: Professor Francesco Duina
- **Wednesday-** Comparative and Historical Methods; Case Studies (continued)
Reading: none
- **Friday-** Data Collection Workshop
Reading: none; final versions of all data collection instruments discussed; content analysis intercoder reliability
Assignment (Informal): Literature Review worksheet due in class

Week of February 21: February BreakWeek of February 28: Finalizing Data Collection

- **Monday**- Data collection workshop; interview training
Reading: none
Faculty methods spotlight: methods in criminology and sociology of law
Guest: Professor Sawyer Sylvester
- **Wednesday**- Data collection workshop
Reading: none
- **Friday**- Catch up/Transition from Data Collection to Data Analysis
Assignment (Graded): Research Proposal due in class
Assignment (Graded): One hour field observation completed sometime this week; typed field notes turned in within 48 hours of observation

Week of March 7: Qualitative Data Analysis

- **Monday**- Qualitative data analysis; NVivo
Readings:
1) Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 10 (“Qualitative Data Analysis”)
2) Rubin and Rubin, excerpt from Chapter 10 (“The First Phase of Analysis”) from Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (2005, Sage, Thousand Oaks CA)
- **Wednesday**- Quiz 3; Qualitative data analysis workshop
Quiz: Chambliss and Schutt 9-10 plus Bailey, Rubin & Rubin selections
Reading: none
- **Friday**- Qualitative data analysis workshop (continued)
Reading: none
Assignment (Informal): Preliminary NVivo output from practice coding (specifics covered in previous class)
Assignment (Graded): One interview completed sometime this week; typed transcript turned in within 48 hours of interview

Week of March 14: Quantitative Data Analysis

- **Monday**- Overview of quantitative data analysis
Reading: Chambliss and Schutt, Chapter 8 (“Elementary Quantitative Data Analysis”)
- **Wednesday**- Introduction to SPSS
Reading: Wagner, Chapters 1, 2, 4 & 5
- **Friday**- Bivariate analysis in SPSS; application work
Reading: Wagner, Chapters 6 & 8

Week of March 21: Quantitative Data Analysis (continued)

- **Monday**- Bivariate analysis in SPSS
Reading: none
Assignment (Informal): SPSS output from selected aspects of Wagner reading (specifics covered in previous week's class)
- **Wednesday**- Regression
Readings:
 1) Wagner, Chapter 7
 2) Babbie, excerpt from Chapter 16 ("Social Statistics"), pages 455-459 in The Practice of Social Research (2007, Wadsworth, Belmont CA)
 3) do a quick skim of whatever you originally highlighted when you read the "U.S. Food Insecurity Status: Toward a Refined Definition" article, and bring the article along to class
- **Friday**- Quantitative data analysis workshop/catch up; key findings presentation group work begins
Reading: brief selection from Chambliss and Schutt Chapter 12, pages 318-321; *note- this is the last day with any class reading assigned*
Assignment (Informal): come to class prepared with a multivariate hypothesis based on the literature we have read collectively; specifics covered in previous class

Week of March 28: Preliminary Reporting on our Class Project

- **Monday**- Quiz 4; key findings presentation group work continues
Quiz- Chambliss and Schutt 8, regression readings, plus interpreting SPSS output
- **Wednesday**- Data Analysis Group Presentations
Assignment (Graded): group presentation on key findings by method
- **Friday**- Data Analysis Workshop; extracting themes from across group presentations
Assignment (Informal): Completed theme worksheet due

Week of April 4: Putting it All Together

- **Monday**- Data Analysis Workshop, continued
Assignment (Informal): theme-based analysis group presentations
- **Wednesday**- Final Research Report Planning
Assignment (Informal): Preliminary tables for quantitative analyses to be used in final research report due (specifics covered in previous class)
- **Friday**- Optional Data Analysis/Reporting workshop

Finals Week: Research Report Due (by end of time slot for our final exam; Tuesday April 12 at 12:30pm)