SYLLABUS: Soc 357 Research Methods
Section 6 8:00-9:15 AM Tues, Thur
Section 7 9:30-10:45 Tues, Thur

Fall Semester 2008

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Office Hours:—TR11-12:30 or by appointment

INTRODUCTION

Sociology 357 is an introduction to the practice of social science research. It will provide skills required to conduct research yourself, as well as to evaluate the research of others.

At the completion of this course, students will be able to...

- Describe and compare various research techniques used in the social sciences.
- Assess the usefulness of research methods for answering a variety of empirical questions.
- Evaluate/critique published research articles on the basis of methodological merits.
- Construct a testable research hypothesis.
- Design an appropriate analytical approach for testing this hypothesis.
- Write up results of quantitative analyses in a manner consistent with professional research.

This should not be thought of as a statistics course, and requires no background in methods. I intend it to be useful for majors in sociology as well as non-majors. Ideally, you will learn to think more critically about scientific research, in addition to being poised for job opportunities that require familiarity with basic social research techniques. You will use a small amount of statistics in your assignments, which will be easier if you have already had elementary statistics, but you can learn what you need to know for these projects in this course without much difficulty. If you have already taken any other research methods course, please talk to me, as this course will probably cover what you already know.

COURSE MATERIALS

There is one required book for the course, which can be bought at the University Bookstore. It is: Babbie, Earl. The Practice of Social Research. Eleventh Edition.

There is also a series of required readings available online via the course sections’ Learn@UW interface. In addition, I will distribute in class readings. After we have used them, I will add them to the learn@uw website.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS (400 Total Points)

- Two quizzes, administered in the class-- [100 points possible, 50 points each (25%)]
  - These will cover the first two months of class only. There will be no Cumulative final.
- Three individual assignments [150 points possible, 50 points each (37.5%)]
  - These will be introduced in class and posted on the course website several weeks in advance.
- In-class assignments/presentations. [25 points possible] (6.25%)
  - This has two components. 1) You will be assigned a class date on which you will present a news clipping relevant to the course. 2) In groups you will lead discussion on an assigned article. The dates and guidelines for this will be posted on the website.
- Class attendance and participation (As defined by the instructor). [50 points (12.5%)]
  - This is meant to encourage attendance, punctuality, and active participation in class discussions and lectures.
- Final Project [75 points possible (18.75%)]
  - This will be a take-home, individual project simulating a research scenario. It will require several hours of preparation and a substantial write-up. Detailed objectives will be posted on the website.

COURSE POLICIES:

- Late assignments will be penalized 5 points each day late. This policy will be strictly enforced. By definition, "late" means any assignment submitted after the scheduled class period.
- Late examinations will only be given for students who have a legitimate excuse (as defined by the instructor) and who contact the instructor before the scheduled examination date. All make-up examinations will be significantly different from the regularly scheduled examination. Failure to notify the instructor before the scheduled examination will result in a failing grade.
- Extra credit will not be allowed in this course.
- Grades are not negotiable.
- Instructions for assignments and due dates will be given in class.
- All university-wide academic regulations will be followed in this course.

Academic regulations are available at: http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html

- You are expected to attend all scheduled class periods. Habitually late arrivers will receive only partial attendance credit.
- You are expected to do all required reading and participate in all course exercises and labs.
- The instructor will not loan his books to students. However, books will be placed on reserve in the library.
- Proper spelling, grammar, and citation should be used in all assignments.
ADA COMPLIANCE

It is the intention of the University of Wisconsin, as well as myself, to work toward full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to make facilities and instructional programs accessible to all people, and to provide reasonable accommodations according to the law. No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability, and all individuals shall have the right to enjoy full and equal goods, services, facilities, privileges, and advantages of accommodations. Please see me as early in the semester as possible to discuss special arrangements that may be needed to help you succeed in this course. You should contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center (263-2742) for assistance and evaluation. Please note: to receive accommodation for a disability, the McBurney Center must certify you as a “qualified disabled person.” I cannot provide any accommodations without certification from the McBurney Center.

ESSAY/EXAM EVALUATION CRITERIA:
The following criteria will be used for evaluating written assignments and exams:
[1=Poor; 2=Average; 3=Good; 4=Excellent]
- Did you cover all relevant materials/questions?
- Did you take each issue to task?
- Did you draw connections between issues?
- Was the paper readable and well organized?
- Did you use appropriate reading and other course materials in your work? [note: cite everything appropriately]
- How did your work compare to the rest of the class?
- Did you follow directions?

FINAL GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percent of points possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>[93-100%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>[88-92%]</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>[83-87%]</td>
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<td>BC</td>
<td>[77-82%]</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>[70-76%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>[60-69%]</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>[0-59%]</td>
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DUE DATES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #1</td>
<td>Research Ethics: September 25 in Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
<td>Article Critique: November 20 in Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #3</td>
<td>Lab Assignment December 2 in Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>Sept 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>Due December 15 by 7 pm; This date is set in stone with no exceptions.</td>
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TENTATIVE CALENDAR

NOTE: The schedule below is flexible and subject to change throughout the semester. If the syllabus changes, I will notify you and provide an electronic copy of the changes.

Part I: The Logic and Ethics of Research

Week 1
T Sept 2 - Introduction to the class
Th Sept 4 - Scientific Knowledge
    Read: Chapter 1

Week 2
T Sept 9 – Paradigms, Theories and Social Research
    Read: Chapter 2
Th Sept 11 - Paradigms, Theories and Social Research
    Read: Revenge of the Nerds

Week 3
T Sept 16 – Objectivity and Ethics
    Read: “Professors and their politics”
Th Sept 18 – Social Research Ethics
    Read: Chapter 3
    Read. UW Madison Human Subjects Protections Tutorial, modules 2 and 3.
    http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/research/compliance/humansubjects/tutorial/

Part II: Conducting Research- Gathering Data

Week 4
T Sept 23: Research design
    Read: Chapter 4
Th Sept 25 - The Logic of Research: Conceptualization, Operationalization, Measurement
    Read: Chapter 5
Week 5
T Sept 30 - Scales and Indexes
   Read: Chapter 6
   Read: Rubin, "Measurement of Romantic Love"
Th Oct 2  – Quiz 1
   - Sampling Principles and Conventions
   Read: Chapter 7

Week 6
T Oct 7 - Survey and Interview Research
   Read: Chapter 9

Th Oct 9 - Survey Questions
   Read: The Science of Asking Questions

Week 7
T Oct 21 - Field Research: Introduction to Field Research and Observation
   Read: Chapter 10

Th Oct 23 - Qualitative Field Research
   Read: Farming For Us All. (2 Parts)

Part III Conducting Research-Analysis

Week 8
   Read: Babbie, Ch. 11

Th Oct 30—Quiz 2 – In Class
   Read: “The Portrayal of Blacks in U.S. Children’s Picture Books…”

Week 9
T Nov 4 – Analyzing Qualitative Research
   Read Chapter 13

T Nov 6 - Analyzing Qualitative Research
   Read:”Validity: How Might You Be Wrong?”

Week 10
T Nov 11 – Quantitative Data Analysis
   Read: Chapter 14

Th Nov 13 - Computer Lab: Introduction to Statistical Software
   Read: TBA

Week 11
T Nov 18 – Quantitative Data Analysis - Continued
   Read: TBA

Th Nov 20 - Computer Lab
Week 12
T Nov 25 – Computer Lab – Open Session for Assignment Preparations
Th Nov 27 ***NO CLASS THANKSGIVING***

**Part IV: Experiments and Applied Research**

Week 13
T Dec 2 - The Logic of Experiments
   Read Chapter 8.
T Dec 9 - Experiments in the Social Sciences
   Read: Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record”

Week 14
T Dec 9 Evaluation Research
   Read: Chapter 12
Th Dec 11 – Final Class - Review, Writing Social Research
Read: Chapter 17