Methods Of Sociological Inquiry
Sociology 357
Spring 2011
Lecture 2: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 - 2:15 PM
Lecture 3: Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 AM - 12:15 PM

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Course Description and Goals
This course is designed to introduce you to the basic methods that sociologists use in their research. To those of you considering a career in sociology, the value of this course (I hope) seems obvious. But what is the value to those of you who are interested in other fields? The truth is that social science research will be presented to you in almost any career you choose – business, education, and law to name a few. On top of that, social science research is used everyday by politicians, journalists and others who want to convince us of their point of view. Thus, one of the best ways for us to accomplish our jobs in our careers and as citizens is to be thoughtful consumers of social science research. We can become better consumers by understanding how this data is produced. In this class, we’ll discuss the various ways in which sociologists study the world around us; more importantly, you’ll have a chance to get your feet wet and try your hand at actual sociological research.

Thus, there are three major goals that I have for you in this course. First, I want you to understand the process that sociologists go through when studying the world around us and why they use the various methods they use. Second, I want you to get experience with these methods. Third, I want you to develop your critical thinking skills, so that you can analyze social scientific data thoughtfully.

Course Requirements
In order to succeed in this class, there are three things that you must do:

1) Attend class regularly.
2) Do all assigned readings before the day that they are listed on the syllabus. AND
3) Complete all assignments on time.
**Texts and Materials**

The textbook for this course is *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done* 4th. Ed.
Emily Stier Adler and Roger Clark

This book is available at the University Book Store.

There is also a Reader for this course, which is available at the Social Sciences Copy Center as well as on reserve in the Social Sciences Reading Room.

All Readings from the textbook are labeled (T), all readings from the reader are labeled (R).

You will also need paper or cards in the 3x5 size. This is the smallest size note card, and is also a standard size note pad. You will need about 30 of these for the course (one for each day of class). You may also make them yourself, or recycle cards that have been written on one side.

**Requirements and Grading**

The largest share of your grade is based on three major data collection projects and an article analysis. The data collection projects are a structured field observation, a simple questionnaire and a field experiment; these are worth 20% each. A detailed analysis of a professional research article is your take-home exam in this class and is worth 20%. Two exercises, one on ethics and another on sampling are worth 5% each. You will be expected to contribute to an online discussion forum, this is worth 5%. The last 5% is based on giving daily feedback on the class sessions.

The exercises in this class are not real research. As you will learn, real research is much too time consuming to fit into a course. You will be doing scaled-down projects that teach you important lessons about research without taking so much time. Everything you do in this class is solely for your education. You are not part of anybody's research project.

Late Work: The data collection exercises, article analysis, and ethics and sampling problems are due by the beginning of class on the date listed below. Any work received after that time on the same day will receive a 10% point reduction. Any work received after that day but before the end of the next class period will receive a 50% point reduction. Any assignments received later than that will not be accepted. This applies in all cases except for severe illness or family emergencies; in this case, be prepared to tell me why you had to miss and document it if necessary. *Note*: Work cannot be delivered via e-mail unless you have made arrangements with me *prior* to the due date. (Exception: The ethics and sampling exercises.)
Improving

This is a skills course, and if you work hard enough you can learn to do something you didn't get right the first time. You may redo any of the first four research projects in an attempt to improve your work. Redoing an exercise means starting completely over and doing all new work; it is not just correcting the mistakes on the first exercise. You must do better work to get a better grade: this is not extra credit and effort does not count. If you do more than one version of an assignment, your best grade will count. You must allow a week for the grading of any assignment. You must submit the old (graded) exercise and any grade sheets when you submit new work for re-grading. I strongly suggest that you speak with me to clarify these instructions before redoing any exercise.

Attendance and Daily Reactions

Attendance will be recorded every day. You will do so by filling out an index card to be turned in at the end of class with any questions and/or comments you have on the day’s lecture. For grading purposes, you are allowed two absences. Any subsequent absences will affect your grade. Please note that these two absences include things such as minor illnesses and job interviews, so use your absences wisely. If you are absent, remember that it is your responsibility to make sure that you have the relevant notes and handouts.

At the end of each class, submit on a 3x5 card your name, the date, and at least one sentence of reaction to that day's class, indicating what you learned, or something you liked or did not like, found interesting or controversial, found clear or too simplistic, or found confusing and in need of further (or better) explanation; you may also submit comments on the course in general. You can submit a reaction only if you were actually in class. You cannot make up a reaction, but tell me (in writing) if you are forced to miss several classes due to illness or another problem, and I will make an appropriate adjustment. Reactions are counted but not graded; if you do it you get credit. If you do 93% or more of the cards, you will receive an A for that portion of your grade; if you do 59% or less, you will receive an F; totals between these extremes will receive intermediate grades. I read these after each class, but do not normally return them or comment on them.

Online Discussion Forum

The questions you answer in the online discussion forum offer you practice on major skills that are directly relevant to the graded exercises, particularly the article analysis. They are intended to stimulate critical thinking and discussion both online and in the classroom. It is very important that you have read the articles we will discuss before you come to class; otherwise you will not be able to follow or benefit from the instruction in class. It is not necessary for you to write a lot: a short paragraph is usually plenty. It is not necessary that you have studied the reading enough to master it before class. All you need to do is to have read it over so that when I start dissecting the methods in an article, you can follow what I am talking about. The questions on the forum are a warm up to get you thinking.
Your posts are read and counted but not graded; if you do it you get credit. If you do 93% or more of the homework, you will receive an A; if you do 59% or less, you will receive an F; totals between these extremes will receive intermediate grades. **Your post must be submitted BEFORE class to receive full credit.** Posts submitted by the next class session will be given half credit; after that it will not be accepted at all. Missing class is not an excuse for late posting. The only exception is illness or other circumstances beyond your control (or a religious holiday), which you should explain in writing when you submit the late homework. Posts are due on most days when there is a reading – you can also check the syllabus below for days that posts are due.

Here’s how to post your answers:

1. Go to https://learnuw.wisc.edu/
2. Log in with your UW net ID and password.
3. Click on the link to the “soc357” class under the “Spring ‘11” heading.
4. Click on “Discussion” in the top left corner.
5. Click on the question you want to answer’s link for the appropriate date.
6. Click “Compose” on the left hand side.
7. Type your question or comment, and click “Post.”

**Procedural Matters**

**Email:** Email is the best way to contact me about any questions or concerns you have about the class or to set up an appointment if you cannot make regularly scheduled office hours. I will respond to your emails within 48 hours under most circumstances.

**Please bring your assigned readings and a copy of any submitted homework to class.**

**Your final article analysis is due on Friday, May 13 by 9:45 AM.** This is also the last time for submitting any re-done exercises. Early papers will be gratefully accepted and time permitting, graded early. If you wish to have your paper returned to you, please include a written note stating that you give permission for your graded assignment to be left in the hallway outside my office or set up a time to pick it up from me.
Course Calendar

Reading and posting due dates given in the syllabus are correct, even if I do not
remind you in class, unless a written note on the blackboard or a written schedule
change sheet alters them.

Posting is DUE on the date noted. That means the posting listed for 1/27 is due
BEFORE CLASS on the 27th.

Part I : The Logic and Ethics of Research

T Jan 18 Introduction to the Class.

Th Jan 20 Social Research and Science. What is social research? What is science?
How is science different from other forms of knowledge? Is social science
"science"?

Read (for today): Chapters 1 and 2 (T)

T Jan 25 Intro to Ethics.

Read: Chapter 3 (T)
1. Go to the Online Ethics Center’s case studies on deception in the Social Sciences at
http://www.onlineethics.org/cms/4777.aspx. Read the three cases and take notes to answer the
questions accompanying each case. (We will discuss these cases in class; the notes are intended to
be a warm-up to get you thinking, not extended answers to each question). Note that as a
member of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) you should use the three principles discussed in
Box 3.3 as a basis for determining whether the proposed deception was justifiable.

Th Jan 27 Ethics cont'd.

182-189 of the personal journal (R); Humphreys, “Tearoom Trade” and
“Methods” (R) and Ethics Assignment Instructions (R).

Posting due today!

NOTE 1: The Humphreys article contains some fairly explicit but not graphic
descriptions of male homosexual sex. Past classroom debates about ethics have
concerned the privacy issues of doing the research, and the question of whether
gay men and lesbians are helped or hurt by articles like this one; there is also the
concern that I am contributing to gay-bashing in assigning this kind of article in
times like these. The ethical issues in the Zimbardo article are less controversial
today, but are still important. I believe that vigorous discussion and debate about
these issues is vital.
T Feb 1 The Elements of Research: Units of analysis, variables, relations, hypotheses, measurement, validity & reliability.

Read: Chapters 4 and 6 (T).
Posting due today!

Th Feb 3 The Logic of Research: Hypothesis testing and Causality. How to read published research.

Read: Doob & Gross, “Status of Frustrator as an Inhibitor of Horn-honking Responses”, and “How We Did It” (R).
Posting due today!

Part II: Observation of the Social World

T Feb 8 Field Research: Introduction to Field Research and Observation

Read: Chapter 11 (T) and Adler & Adler, “Shifts and Oscillations in Deviant Careers,” and “Stability and flexibility: Maintaining Relations Within Organized and Unorganized Groups” (R).
Posting due today!

Th Feb 10 Observation Assignment: Introduction to the project, time to form groups.

Read: Observation Assignment (R). Review previous readings as necessary to be comfortable with the research terms used in this assignment.
Ethics Assignment due today.

T Feb 15 Observation Assignment: How to write up your report, how to prepare a statistical table summarizing results. Workshop with teammates.

Th Feb 17 Sampling Theory I: Sampling principles and terminology. How professional samples are done. What to look for in evaluating a sample. Sampling terminology exercise assigned and explained.

Read: Chapter 5 (T) and Sampling Assignment Instructions (R).
Posting due today!

T Feb 22 Sampling Theory II: Continue sampling lectures.

Observation Assignment Due. Each group should be prepared to give a short summary of your group's findings
Part III: Asking Questions

Th Feb 24 Intro to Survey Research and Interviewing. Comparing open and close-ended questions.

Read: Chapters 10 (T) and Ransford, “Isolation, Powerlessness, and Violence,” and the personal journal (R).
Posting due today!

T Mar 1 Survey and Interview Research. Survey instrumentation and use.

Read: Chapter 9 (T).
Posting due today!

Th Mar 3 Questionnaire Assignment. Assignment explained; class used to form groups and brainstorm project topics.

Read: The Questionnaire Exercise (R) so you know what it involves. Start to think about possible project topics.
Sampling Exercise Due.

T Mar 8 Question Writing Workshop. Class will be a workshop on writing questions. I will give some general principles. You will sit with your groups and work on questions in class. Plan to collect your data as soon as possible after this class.

Th Mar 10 Evaluating Survey Research.

Read: Rubin, “Measurement of Romantic Love” and journal (R).
Posting due today!

T Mar 15 and Th Mar 17: Spring Break

T Mar 22 Coding up Questionnaire Data

Read: Chapter 15 (T).
1. Bring completed questionnaires to class. You will develop a coding scheme and code data together in class, so that it is ready to be entered into a spreadsheet.

Th Mar 24 Computer Lab Workshop: Creating Your Dataset in SPSS.

T Mar 29 Computer Lab Workshop: Producing Statistical Results.
**Th Mar 31 Workshop: Analyzing your Questionnaire Data.** We will go through your statistical results together.

**Part IV: Experiments**

**T Apr 5 The Logic of Experiments.** Why experiments are the best way to establish causal relations. The logic of randomization and experimental control. Introduction of experiment exercise.

*Read:* Chapters 8 (T).
*Posting due today!*

**Th Apr 7 Workshop: Setting Up Your Experiment.** Class will be devoted to forming groups and initial planning of your experiment. With experiments, you need to figure out everything in advance.

*Read:* Experiment Assignment (R).
*Questionnaire report due.* Each group should be prepared to give a short summary of its findings.

**T Apr 12 The Problem of Internal Validity.** Threats to internal validity. Setting up your experiment right. You should leave the class knowing how to do your data collection. The actual data collection will not take long, but you need to allow enough time for advance planning and for writing up the report. Checklist of things you need to know that are not usually obvious:

1. What a manipulated independent variable is and how to do it.
2. What randomization is and how to do it.
3. How to measure the dependent variable in a way that gives good experimental control.

**Th Apr 14 Workshop Day**

**T Apr 19 Writing Up Experimental Results.**

*Read:* Darley and Batson, “From Jerusalem to Jericho” and the personal journal; and Golberg “Misogyny and the College Girl” and the personal journal. (R)
*Posting due today!*

**Th Apr 21 Exploring the Literature.** Advanced lecture on social science library searches.
Part V: Analyzing Published Articles

**T Apr 26 Analyzing Published Articles.** Introduction to assignment.

**Read:** Article Analysis instructions (R).

**Experiment Assignment Due.** Be prepared to give a short summary of your findings.

**Th Apr 28 Workshop Day**

1. Email me or show me your article by today.

**T May 3 Analyzing Articles:** Practice analysis of articles.

**Read:** Oliver, “If You Don't Do It, Nobody Will” (R) and your article for the assignment.

1. Read your own article at least TWICE before coming to class. We will make time in class for you to discuss the methods with a partner.
2. In class, we will go over the Oliver article in fine detail, as if we were doing the article analysis.
   Jot down notes on the following:
   a. the theoretical hypotheses
   b. how each variable was actually measured
   c. whether you think these measures are valid
   d. details of sampling & how generalizeable you think the findings are.

**Th May 5 Last Class.** Wrap-up and Evaluations.

**Article Analysis due Friday, May 13 by 9:45 AM**

**Special Needs or Concerns**
I am always available to talk to you about any needs or concerns you have about the class or college in general. If you need to miss class because of a religious commitment, I require at least a week’s notice.

If you have learning disabilities, I am more than willing to make the appropriate accommodations. Please contact me with your McBurney Center VISA by the second week of class.

**Academic Misconduct**
I define academic misconduct in the same manner as the university does: http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html. I take academic integrity very seriously and all cases will be dealt with in the manner prescribed at the above website. If you have any questions about what is acceptable collaboration, don’t hesitate to ask.

I reserve the right to make any changes to the syllabus as deemed necessary over the course of the semester.