Sociology 357 - Methods of Sociological Inquiry  
Fall 2008

Instructor: Kaelyn Stiles, 8144 Social Science, kaelyn.stiles@gmail.com, 263-3857  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:15-3:15pm (Please let me know if you plan to stop by!)  
Course website: http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~kstiles  
LEC 2 (9:30-10:45am) 6322 SOC SCI -- Class email list: soc357-2-f08@lists.wisc.edu  
LEC 3 (1:00-2:15p) 6113 SOC SCI -- Class email list: soc357-3-f08@lists.wisc.edu

INTRODUCTION

Sociology 357 is a basic course on how to do social science research and how to evaluate the research of others. This is a course where you will learn by doing. After an introduction to the elements of research, you will spend most of the semester working on a variety of projects, applying the concepts we cover early on as you conduct your own research, and as we evaluate the research of others. Many heads are better than one when it comes to designing and evaluating social research, so the course will involve a lot of discussion. Coming prepared and being willing to participate are key prerequisites for joining the class.

My goals in teaching this course are (1) to introduce you to the language and logic of research design in order to provide you with a good foundation for future learning; (2) to teach you how to read a research report with a critical eye; (3) to expose you to a variety of research methods that you may encounter in the future; (4) to convince you that social scientific research is not a highly esoteric activity, but rather a relatively straightforward, systematic set of procedures that will allow you to answer your questions about the world; (5) to have you learn first-hand about the successes and problems of research by trying out several data collection methods on a small scale; (6) to show you that research is both an intellectual and emotional activity that can be fun and highly rewarding.

Soc 357 is not a statistics course and assumes no background in methods. You will do a small amount of statistics in your projects, which will be easier if you have already had elementary statistics. However, 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.

In addition to keeping up with daily readings and assignments, you should plan NOW to set aside substantial blocks of time outside of class to work on projects during the semester. A detailed schedule of due dates is included below.

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. Go to www.wisc.edu. Click on My UW. Choose the “academic” tab. See your course list. Click on Sociology 357. A hard copy will also be available at the Social Science Reference Library (8th floor of Social Science Building).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Your grade in this course is made up of the following:

- Attendance/ Participation in lecture  10%
- 12 Reading Response cards (1% each)  10%
- 4 Assignments (15% each)  60%
- 2 Quizzes  20%

Grading is as follows:
A(93-100), AB(88-92), B(83-87), BC(78-82), C(70-77), D(60-69), F(59 and less)

(1) Class participation: I will take attendance every day during lecture. You will get 2 free absences before you are penalized. There are no “excused” absences, so you’ll have to plan on using your 2 absences if you have to go out of town, have a doctor’s appt., etc. If you have an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances, please let me know. As for participation, you will be graded on your contributions to class discussions and level of engagement with in-class activities. Classes about research methods can be difficult, and rarely do students fully learn the material the first time it is presented. It is important to ask questions if you don’t understand something the first time, not only for your own sake, but also because other students are probably in the same position as you. Just as importantly, classes where no one but the instructor speaks are insanely boring. You have the power to prevent the class from being boring, just by participating!

Your participation grade for lectures will be based off of 1) attendance, 2) appropriate talking in class, 3) sitting up front and paying attention.

(2) Reading Response cards: You will be graded on answers to questions and short writing assignments that I will ask you to turn in on 3x5 cards throughout the semester. On the cards you turn in, I may ask questions about the readings, the lecture, personal experiences, etc. Some of these will be longer, and some will be quite short. You must turn in these assignments if you are physically present in class. You cannot make up these participation cards if you miss class for any reason. Again, you may miss two cards before you are penalized. This is meant to help you if you happen to be absent on a day that a participation card is handed out, or if you don’t have time to do the reading. There will be at least 12 of these throughout the semester but only 10 will count towards your grade.

(3) Exercises: The largest share of your grade is based on three major data collection projects and an article analysis. The data collection projects are 1) a structured field observation, 2) a questionnaire and 3) a field experiment. More details about each assignment will be given to you later in the semester. Each exercise is worth 15 percent of your final grade.

(4) Quizzes: There will be two in-class, closed-book quizzes. These are not cumulative. These quizzes will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions covering material from both the readings and the lectures. Check your schedule ahead of time to make sure that you will be able to attend class on quiz days. Quizzes will test your knowledge of the lecture material as well as material from the readings. Quizzes will not test your knowledge of the material that we cover on the quiz day itself.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Class Email:
I have set up two class email lists, which I will use to send updates on assignments, deadlines, clarifications of lecture, etc. Please only use this email list for information about this class. If you’d like to engage in a respectful discussion with your peers about topics that come up in class, or arrange study groups, this is an excellent way to communicate.
Contacting me:
The best way to contact me is to talk to me after class or during my office hours. If neither of those times
is convenient for you, please let me know and we can set up another time to meet. You should feel free to
email me short questions, but I don’t check my email more than once a day.

If you are having trouble in the course, please come see me! I am more than willing to help you grasp the
concepts from class. If you can’t make it to my office hours, we can set up another time to meet. Please
don’t wait until it’s too late—come talk to me as soon as you think you’re having trouble with the
material.

EXPECTATIONS
• Please come to class prepared. Complete all readings and be prepared to discuss them in class.
  Be ready to take notes.
• Tardiness: Be on time to class. Coming late to class is disruptive to your classmates and to me. If
  you must leave class early for some reason, please sit near the door and leave as quietly as
  possible.
• Attendance at lectures is essential to a good grade in this class. Lectures will cover information
  that is not available in the book; you are responsible for this information on the exam, quizzes, and
  as part of your participation grade. If family or work responsibilities make it difficult for you to
  attend classes, please speak to me immediately, and we will discuss whether this class is
  appropriate for you at this time. Please let me know during the first two weeks if you have any
  potential class conflicts for religious or cultural observances.
• If you miss class… please get the information from one of your classmates. I will provide plenty
  of opportunities for you to meet and exchange contact information with your peers. Unless there
  are special circumstances, please do not email me to ask whether or not you missed anything in
  class. You are responsible for asking someone else to get you the handouts and/or notes for that
  class period. If you need additional clarification about the material you missed, I’d be happy to
  meet with you during my office hours.
• Cell phone etiquette: Turn off all cell phones and pagers before class begins. You are not allowed
  to answer phone calls, text messages, or pages during class, except in an emergency. If I see you
  texting or using your cell phone in class, I reserve the right to ask you to leave.
• Do not use your computer during class.
• Take tests on the assigned day. You will not be allowed to make up exams unless you have a
  college-approved excuse and inform me ahead of time, if medically possible.
• Respect: Be respectful of other students and me. Remember to listen, and do not interrupt when
  others are speaking. Try to understand where others are coming from, and do not judge what they
  are saying before you listen to them. Remember, others may have very different experiences from
  you, and you may learn something valuable from them. I will ask you to leave if they are being
  disruptive during class. This includes listening to music, using your cell phone, talking, doing
  email, playing video games or surfing the web on your computer, etc.

Academic Misconduct/Cheating

Students enrolled in this course are presumed to be familiar with university policies regarding cheating
and academic misconduct. The University of Wisconsin-Madison takes academic dishonesty very
seriously. Any dishonesty will result in no credit for the specific assignment or exam, and may result in an
F for the entire course and/or academic suspension. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:
• Cheating on an exam, quiz, or other assignment.
• Plagiarism, which is defined as using another’s written work without recognition and/or citation,
the use of another student’s work, the purchase and/or use of a paper that has already been prepared, borrowing of an idea or phrase or the paraphrasing (rewording) and/or summarizing of an idea without proper documentation.

- Giving or receiving assistance during an exam.
- Falsification, forgery, or alteration of an academic record.
- Obtaining or attempting to attain copies of an exam I have not passed out in class.

Please don’t cheat! Nothing in this class is hard enough to justify using someone else’s work as your own. If you’re not sure what academic dishonesty is, or aren’t sure if you are engaging in it, ASK! It’s better to be sure than to face serious consequences when you are caught!

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.
CALENDAR

Part I: The Logic and Ethics of Research

Week 1
T Sep 2 - Introduction to the class

Th Sep 4 - Scientific Knowledge
Read: Chapter 1

Week 2
T Sep 9 - Introduction to ethics
Read: Chapter 3

Th Sep 11 - Ethics cont'd
Read: Humphreys, "Tearoom Trade" and "Methods."
Read: UW Madison Human Subjects Protections Tutorial, modules 2 and 3.
http://info.gradsch.wisc.edu/research/compliance/humansubjects/tutorial/

Week 3
T Sep 16 - The Elements of Research: Research design
Read: Chapter 4

Th Sep 18 - The Logic of Research: Conceptualization, Operationalization, Measurement
Read: Doob and Gross, “Status of Frustrator as an Inhibitor of Horn-honking Responses,” and
"How We Did It." [S&S 3]

Part II: Observation of the Social World

Week 4
T Sep 23 - Field Research: Introduction to Field Research and Observation

Th Sep 25 - Qualitative Field Research
Read: Chapter 10

Week 5
T Sep 30 (Rosh Hashanah) – Qualitative Data Analysis - Observation Assignment
Read: Appendix to Sidewalk

Th Oct 2 - Sampling Theory I: Sampling principles and terminology
Read: Chapter 7

Week 6
T Oct 7 - Sampling Theory II: Continue sampling lectures
Quiz #1

Part III: Asking Questions

Th Oct 9 (Yom Kippur) - Intro to survey research and interviewing.
Week 7
T Oct 14 - Survey and Interview Research
Read: Chapter 9

Th Oct 16 - Questionnaire Assignment
Read: TBA

Week 8
T Oct 21 - Question Writing Workshop
Read: TBA

Th Oct 23 - Evaluating Survey Research
Read: Rubin, "Measurement of Romantic Love"

Week 9
T Oct 28 - Coding up Questionnaire Data
Read: Chapter 14

Th Oct 30 - Computer Lab Workshop
Read: TBA

Week 10
T Nov 4 - Computer Lab Workshop: Producing Statistical Results.
Read: TBA

Th Nov 6 - Workshop: Analyzing your questionnaire data.
Read: TBA

Part IV: Experiments

Week 11
T Nov 11- The Logic of Experiments
Read: Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record.”

Th Nov 13 - Workshop - Setting Up Your Experiment
Read: Chapter 8

Week 12
T Nov 18 - The Problem of Internal Validity
Read: Darley and Batson, "From Jerusalem to Jericho" and the personal journal

Th Nov 20 - Writing Up Experimental Results
Read: TBA

Week 13
T Nov 25 - Workshop

Th Nov 27 - Thanksgiving!
Part V: Analyzing Published Articles

Week 14
T Dec 2 - Analyzing Published Articles
   Read: Stern, Ch. 4.

Th Dec 4 - Workshop
   Quiz #2

Week 15
T Dec 9 - Analyzing Articles
   Read: Chapter 17

Th Dec 11 - Analyzing Articles

The above schedule and procedures in this course are flexible and are subject to change throughout the semester. If the above syllabus changes, I will notify you and provide an electronic copy of the changes.