In this course you will learn how to do social science research and how to evaluate the research of others. We will spend much of our time learning by doing, whether it is identifying our own research questions, analyzing existing research or doing field work. Classroom time will be spent in a range of different ways, including lectures, discussions, team work, advancing projects, and developing specific research skills.

By the end of this class you should be able to:
- identify scientific research questions and paths to answering them
- create and administer surveys and analyze the results
- practice ethnographic field work and analyze the results
- be able to evaluate the research of others, their methodologies, methods and conclusions

**Course Materials**

The course textbook is: *The Practice of Social Research* by Earl Babbie, 12th Edition. It is available at the University Bookstore and will be on reserve at the Helen C White Library.

There are also required readings from articles and other books. They will be posted on learn@uw. Please print them out and bring them to class.

**Course Resources**

**My office hours.** Please see me during my office hours if you have questions regarding class content, readings or assignments, or if you want to discuss any part of the class. If you have class during my scheduled office hours we can arrange another time, but I am not usually available at the last minute – so plan ahead. Be proactive. *Make sure that you get help before problems arise.*

**My email.** You can contact me by email – but it is not usually a good tool for long explanations. If you email me, *please write “SOC357” in the subject line.* Please allow 24-72 hours for replies to your emails.

**Your classmates.** Their emails are available through learn@uw.

**The Writing Center** is also a valuable campus resource: [http://writing.wisc.edu/](http://writing.wisc.edu/)

**The Social Science Computing Cooperative** can provide assistance with software/statistical analysis questions: [http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/sscc/helpdesk.htm](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/sscc/helpdesk.htm)
Course Requirements

Attendance, participation and preparedness 15%
In addition to being physically present in class, I expect that you will do the readings and be prepared to engage in discussions of the readings. If I feel that students are not coming to class prepared as expected, I may begin administering pop quizzes. You are expected to be on time and not leave early. You are expected to refrain from behavior which is distracting to the class. You are allowed to miss 3 classes without penalty. Contact me if there are extenuating circumstances.

You are responsible for contacting your classmates and catching up if you do miss class.

Please bring your syllabus, your assigned readings, and homework to class.

IRB completion 5%. This is mandatory for all students in the class. If you do not complete this, you will not be allowed to do the assignments and you will fail the course. **Due Monday February 6th**

Test 5%. This short answer test covers part I of the course.

There are 4 class assignments over the course of the semester. Each assignment will have related homework that represents incremental steps in each assignment. It is essential that these steps are done or you will fall behind in the assignments. These assignments, especially the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} ones that require data collection, are time consuming so please plan accordingly. The homework is graded pass/fail and will contribute to the grade of the assignment. I would ask that you submit it to learn@uw and bring a copy to class as we will often work from it.

**Assignment 1: From research questions to research design (15%). Due Wednesday Feb 29\textsuperscript{th}**

**Assignment 2: Survey design and analysis (20%) Due Friday March 23\textsuperscript{rd}**

**Assignment 3: Ethnographic research (20%). Due Friday April 20\textsuperscript{th}**

**Assignment 4: Evaluating research (15% paper; 5% presentation) Due Friday May 11\textsuperscript{th}**

Late assignments and homework will not be accepted. This course has a lot of requirements and falling behind not a good idea. If you see a problem coming, please talk to me.

**Alternative assignment option – for those who are passionate about research!**
There will be the option of working on a research project on student attitudes towards activism, advocacy and charity. This project will help inform the strategies of a community organization that I have worked with for several years now, Community Shares of Wisconsin, and The Morgridge Center. This project requires more team work, responsibility, planning and commitment but it is extremely rewarding to support organizations through research! In case you choose this option, the course assignments will all fit together as part of one larger research project and we will decide together on the necessary changes I will provide more details on this in class. Please speak to me if you are intrigued! Pursuing this option is at my discretion.

Grading
A (93-100); AB (88-92); B (83-87); BC (78-82); C (70-77); D (60-69); F (59 and less)
Academic Integrity

I expect you to work hard to succeed in this class. In order to respect the work that you and your classmates put into this course, I will not tolerate academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is any practice which gives you an unfair and unearned advantage over your classmates. Cheating on tests, plagiarizing on written assignments, falsifying data or helping a classmate do any of these are examples of academic misconduct.

Repercussions for cheating include failing the assignment, the class or possible expulsion. Not knowing what academic dishonesty is, is not an excuse. A more expansive definition will be distributed on the first day of class.

The Writing Center on Campus has prepared a helpful handout called "Acknowledging, Paraphrasing, and Quoting Sources." It will also be distributed in class.

Turnitin will be used to help monitor for plagiarism.

More information on academic misconduct can be found here: http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html. If you have any questions, ask me or contact the Writing Center: http://writing.wisc.edu/.

After class today review the addition material distributed in class. Complete and return the final sheet to me in class on Wednesday. This is mandatory. If this is not done, I can refuse to accept assignments from you.

Accommodations

Please contact me by the end of the week:
• If you need accommodations due to a disability. (see www.mcburney.wisc.edu)
• If class requirements conflict with religious holidays.

Changes to the syllabus

Changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and posted on learn@uw. You are responsible for keeping up with changes to the syllabus.
PART I: THINKING LIKE A RESEARCHER

Monday January 23 - Session 1: Class introduction and discussion of academic honesty

Wednesday January 25 - Session 2: Scientific research and components of a research project

**Before class:** Read syllabus, handout on “Acknowledging, Paraphrasing and Quoting Sources,” and the definition of Academic Honesty. Complete attached sheet and bring it to class.

Pick a newspaper article and bring it to class. Find an article that makes knowledge claims (empirical, values, personal experience etc.). Most articles make knowledge claims. What do you trust or not about these claims and why? Be prepared to discuss this in class.

Monday January 30 - Session 3: Assumptions behind the research

**Read:** Harding, S. (1987) *Feminism and Methodology.* Indiana University Press. pp 1 - 5 and 181 - 190
Babbie. Skim the different paradigms 32-46.

**Before class:** Which of these paradigms/methodologies do you most associate with and why? Which make the least sense to you and why?

Wednesday February 1 - Session 4: Ethics and Politics of Research

**Read:** Babbie. pp 77-83
http://scholarcitizen.williamcronon.net/2011/03/15/aec/
http://scholarcitizen.williamcronon.net/2011/03/24/open-records-attack-on-academic-freedom/
Wahlberg, D. 2012. “UW bird flu scientist to stop research for 60 days” in *Wisconsin State Journal.*
http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/health_med_fit/uw-bird-flu-scientist-to-stop-research-for-days/article_144740d6-4394-11e1-af4f-001871e3ce6c.html#ixzz1kEV9Cxhr

**Before class:** What are the ethical and political considerations surrounding the Cronon and Avian Flu research cases (from our own university)? Skim the cases – you do not need to know them in detail, but you need to be able to discuss these questions.

Monday February 6 - Session 5: Ethics – the IRB

**Read:** Humphreys, L. “Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places” (skim) and “Methods: the Sociologist as Voyeur” (read)
(opt) Babbie. pp 63-76

**Before class:** In reading the Humphreys article, you do not need to focus on his research findings, so feel free to skim certain parts. I want you to think about how he conducted his research and what the ethical implications are. Come to class prepared to talk about whether what he did was right and why.

**Homework:** Start the IRB training: [https://my.gradsch.wisc.edu/citi/index.php](https://my.gradsch.wisc.edu/citi/index.php) under topic 2: Human Subjects Protection for Social and Behavioral Research. **Finish this by the end of the day today and post your certificate on learn@uw.**
Presentation of Assignment 1 and related homework

Wednesday February 8 - Session 6: Defining research questions
Before class: Using the method recommended in the readings, identify a research question that you are interested in. We will work on these in class.

Monday February 13 - Session 7: Defining research questions – the literature
In class: library workshop (location to be announced)

Wednesday February 15 - Session 8: Research design – key concepts
Read: Babbie. chpt 4 (to 112)

Monday February 20 - Session 9: Research design – key concepts
Read: Babbie. chpt 5

Wednesday February 22 - Session 10: Research design – key concepts
Read: Babbie. chpt 7 (to 217)

Monday February 27 - Test

PART II: MOVING TO PRACTICE - DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Wednesday February 29 - Session 12: Introduction to data collection
Assignment 1 due
Presentation of Assignment 2 and related homework

Monday March 5 - Session 13: Research methods (1) – Survey Research
Before class: Come to class prepared to discuss the challenges, strengths and weaknesses of survey research, based on these articles.

Wednesday March 7 - Session 14: Surveys – construction and administration
Read: Babbie. pp 253-267

Monday March 12 - Session 15: Surveys – construction and administration
Read: Babbie. pp 267-281 and 283-285; 420-426

Wednesday March 14 - Session 16: Surveys – analysis
Read: Babbie. chpt 14

Monday March 19 - Session 17: Surveys – analysis
In class: STATA workshop (location to be announced)
Wednesday March 21 - Session 18: Surveys

Assignment 2 is due by Friday March 23rd

Monday March 26 - Session 19: Research methods (2) Content analysis and other non-obtrusive research methods

Read: Babbie. chpt 11 (332-344 only)

Before class: Come to class prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of content analysis. What other research projects could you apply this to?

Wednesday March 28 - Session 20: Research methods (3) Ethnographic research (interviews, focus groups, and observations)

Read: Babbie. chpt 10


Before class: How does this interview compare to the survey interview? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?

Presentation of Assignment 3 and related homework

Spring break – Hurray! You deserve it!

Monday April 9 - Session 21: Ethnographic research


Before class: What are the strengths and challenges of this approach? How does the “person” who is the researcher matter? What do we do about it?

Wednesday April 11 - Session 22: Ethnographic research – data collection


Monday April 16 - Session 23: Ethnographic research – data analysis

Read: Babbie 394-405


Wednesday April 18 - Session 24: Ethnographic research – data analysis

Assignment 3 is due by Friday April 20
Monday April 23 - Session 25: Research methods (4) Experiments

**Read:** Babbie chpt 8
pp937-975

**Before class:** Come to class prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the experimental approach, as seen in Pager's work. What other ways could this have been studied? What are the ethical challenges of this approach?

**PART III: READING AND WRITING RESEARCH**

Wednesday April 25 - Session 26: Reading and Writing Research

**Read:** Babbie 508-513

**Presentation of Assignment 4 and related homework**

Monday April 30 - Session 27: Presentations

Wednesday May 2 - Session 28: Presentations

Monday May 7 - Session 29: Presentations

Wednesday May 9 - Session 30: Presentations

**Assignment 4 is due by Friday May 11th**