

Syllabus

Methods of Social Research, SYA 4300-8, Fall 2008 **Florida State University, Department of Sociology**

M & W, 9:30-10:45 a.m.
HCB, Room 214

Last Updated: 9/17/2008

Instructor: Dr. Annette Schwabe

Office: 425 Bellamy Building

Office Hours: **T**, 11-12:30; **W**: 11:-12:30
or by appointment

Note: You may leave printed materials for me in the Department of Sociology office, Bellamy 526 or slide them under my office door.

E-mail: aschwabe@fsu.edu

Phone: 644-4456 (my office)
or 644-6416 (Sociology Dept.)

Teaching Assistant (TA):

- Ben Kail 227 Pepper Center. Office hours: T, 3:00-4:15; F, 9:30-10:45 & by appt.

TA contact: Blackboard e-mail link or <http://www.sociology.fsu.edu/people/graduateStudents.html>

INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OBJECTIVES

Welcome to this course on Methods of Social Research! Why do sociologists use scientific methods to research questions and issues about social life? What are those methods? You will learn the answers to these questions and receive “hands on” training in this course so you learn the fundamentals of doing your own research. In the process, you will also be introduced to tools that will allow you to become more critical consumers of research findings. Your full participation in lecture and sections is essential to make this a dynamic and engaging course.

Most of you probably take this course because it is required for sociology majors. My goal is to transform your outlook on research methods. I hope you will come to view it not as a “requirement”, but as one of the more useful courses you will take. By the end of the session, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of methods and specific techniques used by social scientists to conduct research;
- Construct a sociologically-relevant research question and develop an hypothesis;
- Analyze and interpret data that answer the research question and test the hypothesis;
- Evaluate the appropriateness of different research designs for particular research goals;
- Assess the advantages and disadvantages of several research methods used in sociology;
- Interpret research findings to assess the merit of sociologically-based hypotheses.

TEXTBOOK & READINGS

Text: Adler, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. 2008. *How it's Done: An Invitation to Social Research*, Pine Forge Press (ISBN 0-7619-2928-2).

Readings (all posted on Blackboard under “Required Readings”):

Berkowitz, Alexandra and Irene Padavic. 1999. “Getting a Man or Getting Ahead: A Comparison of Black and White Sororities.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 27:530-557.

Dreifus, Claudia. 2007. “Conversation with Zimbardo: ...Capacity for Evil.” *New York Times*.

Murphy, Alexandra K. and Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh. 2006. “Vice Careers: The Changing Contours of Sex Work in New York City.” *Qualitative Sociology*, 29:129-154.

Roth, Louise Marie. 2004. “Engendering Inequality: Processes of Sex-Segregation on Wall Street.” *Sociological Forum*, 19:203-228.

Stepanikova, Irene, Stefanie Mollborn, Karen S. Cook, David H. Thom, and Roderick M. Kramer. “Patient’s Race, Ethnicity, Language, and Trust in a Physician.” *Journal of Social Behavior*, 47:390-405.

COURSE CONTENT AND OUTLINE

Part I: Foundations of Social Research: Process, Problems and Theories

Week 1, August 25 & 27

- Course review, the social science approach, types of social research.
- Uses of Research: basic/applied, quantitative/qualitative, subtypes.
- Social research goals: validity, generalizability, and authenticity.

Reading: *Adler and Clark*, Chapter 1: Uses of Social Research.

Week 2, September 1 & 3

- Where for art thou, research question? Developing a researchable question.

Reading: *Adler and Clark* text, Chapter 4: Selecting research questions

Week 3, September 8 & 10

- Connecting methods and social theory.
- Concepts, variables and Hypotheses
- Deduction, induction.

Assignment 1 DUE by class time on WEDNESDAY, September 10th

Reading: *Adler and Clark* text, Chapter 2: Theory and Research.

Week 4, September 15 & 17

- Ethics.
- Reference searches: hands on and logic (TBD).

Reading: *Adler and Clark* text, Chapter 3: Ethics.
Dreifus article.

Film: "A Deadly Deception" about the Tuskegee syphilis study.

Week 5, September 22 & 24

- Sampling, methods and distributions.
- You're studying what? How? Concepts and measurement.

Assignment 2 DUE by class time on WEDNESDAY, September 24th.

Reading: *Adler and Clark* text, Chapter 5: Sampling and Chapter 6: Measurement.

Week 6, September 29 & October 1

- Getting on track: past assignment reviews, introduction of SPSS (logic of files).

Reading: SPSS information
Articles from literature review

Week 7, October 6 & 8

- Discussion of Assignment 3 – processes and procedures – conveying methods
- Quiz or class activity

Reading: Stepanikova et al article. Note outline, flow of this quantitative article.

Week 8, October 13 & 15

- Correlation does not prove causation: research design & causal explanation.

Reading: *Adler and Clark* text, Chapter 7: Cross-Sectional, Longitudinal, Case Study.

Week 9, October 20 & 22

- Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Methods: Data sources and basic methods.

Reading: Adler and Clark text, Chapter 15: Qualitative/Quantitative Analysis.
Assignment 3 DUE by class time on MONDAY, October 20th

Week 10, October 27 & 29

MONDAY, Oct. 27 MIDTERM EXAM

- Quantitative, Survey research, Structured Interviews
- Lab preparation: Basics of SPSS.
- Reporting research.

Reading: Adler and Clark text, Chapter 9: Questionnaires/Structured IVs.

---SPSS labs might be scheduled for this week and next---

Week 11, November 3 & 5

- Secondary data analysis: using available data.

Reading: Adler and Clark text, Chapter 12: Using Available Data.

Week 12, November 10 & 12

NO CLASS ON TUESDAY, 11/10: Use class period to work on analyses.

- Qualitative methods

Reading: Adler and Clark text, Chapter 10: Qualitative Interviewing.

Readings to prep for Qualitative section of course and projects:

Roth article
Murphy and Venkatesh article
Berkowitz and Padavic article

Assignment 4 DUE by class time on WEDNESDAY, November 12th

Week 13, November 17 & 19

- Experimental designs

Reading: Adler and Clark text, Chapter 8: Experimental Research.

Week 14, November 24 & 26

- Observational and Applied Research

NO CLASS WEDNESDAY, 11/26: Use class period to work on qualitative IVs.

I will be available to help during office hours or by appointment

Reading: Adler and Clark text, Chapters 11: Observational & 14: Applied Research.

QUALITATIVE Assignment 5 DUE by class time on WEDNESDAY, November 26th

Week 15, December 1 & 3

- Comparing methods.

W, Dec. 6 LAST DAY OF CLASS

FINAL QUANTITATIVE Assignment 6 DUE by class time on WEDNESDAY, December 3rd

Reading: Adler and Clark text, pp. 379-383 in Chapter 13.

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, December 10, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Blackboard. Mandatory participation in the online discussion forums if requested by the instructor. Students need to check Blackboard regularly to keep up with newly posted information and changes to the syllabus.

Reading assignments: Lectures will highlight and/or build on the readings so you should finish assigned readings *prior to* coming to class. Being prepared for class will also enhance your learning experience and allow you to ask questions about the material during the lecture on the assigned topic. I suggest you make your reading time productive by: 1) skimming section headings within each chapter or article before reading to get a “map” of the concepts covered; 2) write down a brief summary of what you’ve read; 3) jot down things you don’t understand so you can re-read that part of the text, bring it up in study sessions or ask me to clarify in class.

Examinations. Exams will include multiple-choice, definitions, and short answer format items. *Mid-term exam* will not be cumulative as it will cover the prior section of the course that it follows. The *final exam* will emphasize the last section of the course, but will include some questions that tap into key concepts and findings from the entire course.

Unless we get behind in covering topics and need to move an exam to a day or so later than scheduled, exams will be held in class on the dates specified in the syllabus calendar, above.

Note: The date and time for the final is set by the university, please check the registrar’s schedule. (http://registrar.fsu.edu/dir_class/fall/exam_schedule.htm)

I will administer make-up exams ONLY for emergencies or for extenuating circumstances. In order to get credit for the exam, you may need to take a different form of the exam (possibly with essay questions) AND give me a valid written excuse that I can keep for my records. If you know you will not be able to attend class on one of these dates, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with me to take the exam before the date scheduled. DO NOT SCHEDULE trips, flights, interviews, medical appointments, or any other events on exam dates.

You will not be excused from the final exam if you have decided to leave town before or on the scheduled date. Please see Florida State University’s policy on final exams, which instructors and students are mandated to follow:

http://registrar.fsu.edu/dir_class/fall/exam_schedule.htm

Assignments.

I will post all assignments on Blackboard. Be sure to read them over well before the due dates and ask me any questions you have about them. I have listed the content and point value of the assignments below:

NOTE: I will deduct 3 points the first day that an assignment is late, 3 more points on the second day after the due date and after 3 days I will give you a zero for that assignment.

If you get behind on assignments in this course, you will probably feel under a lot of pressure as the semester goes on and not do your best on your assignments. If you are not sure how to approach an assignment, please come and speak to me and/or Ben Kail early on. No question is too basic! I also encourage you to meet with your classmates to discuss approaches to the assignments and to clarify things you do not understand from the book, readings or lecture.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

POINT DISTRIBUTION	
Component	Points Possible
QUIZ/In-class assignments	15
Assign. 1. Introduction/specification of a research topic.	10
Assign. 2. Reviewing & summarizing the literature relevant to your topic, theoretical frame/s used. Research question.	30
Assign. 3. Research proposal: data source, specification of concepts, variables, and hypotheses	35
MIDTERM EXAM	40
Assign 4. Research plan: Method of data collection, description of sample, method of analysis, limitations.	40
Assign. 5. Data analysis & write up of findings.	40
Assign. 6. Qualitative Reaction paper	30
Assign. 7. Research Paper: Describe the strengths and limitations of your study, whether your findings supported the hypotheses or not and conclusions. Combine this assignment with edited versions of all assignments above, into a comprehensive, connected paper.	35
FINAL EXAM	45
TOTAL POINTS	320

Extra Credit: I will not give any extra credit in this course. If you attend regularly, keep up with readings, study for exams and complete assignments on time, you will not need to do extra credit.

ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY

Students are expected to abide by the Academic Honor Policy of the Florida State University, including the statement on Values and Moral Standards published in The Florida State University General Bulletin. The Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of these expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty throughout the process. Please see the following website for a complete explanation of the Academic Honor Policy:

<http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/honorpolicy.htm>

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students must abide by the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or an "F" for the course, at the instructor's discretion. Any student who plagiarizes, cheats on exams, or otherwise behaves in a dishonest way may be reported to the university administration for further disciplinary action as specified in the Academic Honor Policy (<http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/forms/honorpolicy.pdf>).

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact:

Student Disability Resource Center, 108 Student Services Bldg., Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167, (850)644-9566 (voice), (850)644-8504 (TDD)
E-mail: SDRC@admin.fsu.edu
Website: <http://www.fsu.edu/~staffair/dean/StudentDisability/>

CLASSROOM COURTESY

Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. This means no cell phones, talking during lectures (unless recognized by the professor or discussion leader), reading newspapers, etc. during class. If you must have a cell phone to receive emergency calls about children or other family members, keep it on vibrate.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students will be allowed to miss class due to observance of religious holidays but they are still responsible for all materials assigned outside and covered in class on the day(s) missed. You must talk with your instructor in advance of missing a class for religious holiday observance reasons.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

The following and only the following absences are eligible to be excused: Religious holidays, as specified in FSU policy; absences due to representing FSU at official functions, including intercollegiate debating or varsity sports events; verified emergencies and/or medical illness. Medical illness refers to conditions that are serious in nature and require treatment by medical professionals and/or surgical or other treatments. Documentation is required for an absence to be excused.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

Missing work or uncompleted assignments are insufficient reasons for a grade of Incomplete. An Incomplete grade will not be given except under extenuating circumstances at the instructor's discretion. Note that College of Social Science guidelines require that students seeking an "I" must be passing the course.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY: This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.