Sociology 3030: Introduction to Research Methods
Fall Semester 2016
Tuesday / Thursday, 2:30 – 4:00 PM
Seigle Hall 109

Instructor: Peter B. Owens
Office: Seigle Hall 226
Email: peter.b.owens@wustl.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday / Thursday, 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM, or by appointment

Primary Text


Additional Readings

Additional readings from social science journals are available via the JSTOR or Sociological Abstracts databases on the WUSTL Library website. Readings selected from printed volumes will be made available via the course Blackboard website; all volumes will also be on reserve at Olin Library.

Course website

Available via http://bb.wustl.edu/

Course Description

This course is intended to provide a general overview of research methods commonly used to investigate sociological phenomena, all of which are understood as partial (but nonetheless useful) representations of what really goes on in the world. The most common methods used, which are the focus of this overview, are experiments, surveys, ethnographic field research, and analyses of existing data. The course also explores general issues in sociological research, such as research design, conceptualization and measurement, reliability, validity, sampling, ethical conduct, and the differences between qualitative and quantitative research traditions. We will review applications of research methods in specific sociological studies and analyze how research results are communicated to a broader scholarly community. This is a core course in the study of sociology. It has no specific prerequisites but some familiarity with sociological analysis is recommended.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should:

- Be familiar with methods used to collect sociological data, including surveys, experiments, field research, and use of existing data.
• Understand the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods, including their appropriateness for investigating different kinds of research questions.
• Know basic concepts and terminology pertaining to sociological research.
• Understand the relationship between empirical evidence and sociological theory including the role of research methods and statistics in social scientific investigation.
• Be able to formulate testable research questions and evaluate what empirical evidence might imply for these questions.

Grading

Exams and assignments
Midterm 15%
Final exam 15%
Assignment 1, journal article summary assignment 10%
Assignment 2, survey design project 20%
Assignment 3, field research project 20%
Assignment 4, archival data analysis 15%
Attendance and participation 5%

Course grades will be assigned using the following ranges
A ≥ 93.50 > A- ≥ 90.00
90.00 > B+ ≥ 86.50 > B ≥ 83.50 > B- ≥ 80.00
80.00 > C+ ≥ 76.50 > C ≥ 73.50 > C- ≥ 70.00
D+ ≥ 66.50 > D ≥ 63.50 > D- ≥ 60.00 > F

Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam. These are necessary evils, intended to make sure you are doing the reading and learning the key terms discussed. Exams are closed book and without notes. If you are ill and must miss an exam, you must contact me before class on the day of the exam.

Assignments

The class assignments are intended to give you a sense of the logic and implementation of the methods covered in the course. All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of lecture on the due date. Late assignments will receive a 5% grade reduction for each day late (including a reduction of 5% for assignments turned in after lecture has started, and including weekend days). Assignments that are more than one week late will not be accepted.

Assignment Due Dates

Assignment 1: Thursday September 29th
Assignment 2: October 27th
Assignment 3: November 17th
Assignment 4: December 8th
Academic Honesty

Washington University’s statement on academic honesty for undergraduates can be found at: http://wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html. You are expected to read and understand this policy as it pertains to work for this course. Any violations of this policy will be pursued following official guidelines and procedures.

All work you turn in, including research projects, short assignments, and exams must be your own. On projects that are to be done individually, even if you consult with other students about a project, the final written product that you turn in must be your own. On projects where teamwork is an option, all team members are expected to contribute equally to all phases of the project.

Class Schedule and Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading (from primary text unless otherwise noted)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday 8/30</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome and introduction</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purposes of the course</td>
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<td>The social sciences as representations of the social world</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday 9/1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Why study research methods?</td>
<td>Chapter 1, pp. 1 – 5</td>
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<td>The process of social research</td>
<td>Chapter 1, pp. 5 – 12</td>
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<td>Different relations between theory and evidence</td>
<td>Chapter 2, pp. 15 – 35</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Tuesday 9/6</strong></td>
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<td>Overview of research design: Initial steps</td>
<td>Chapter 4, pp. 75 – 82</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday 9/8</strong></td>
<td>Concepts and operationalization of measurement</td>
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| **WEEK 3** | **Tuesday 9/13** | Approaches to Organizing Social Data; Coding and Visualization | Chapter 12, pp. 354-368  
|         | | | Chapter 13, pp. 397-416 |
| **Thursday 9/15** | Reviewing sociological literature; structure of written reports | Chapter 14, pp. 429 – 445 |
| **WEEK 4** | **Tuesday 9/20** | Ethical conduct in social research | Chapter 3, pp. 38 – 54  
| **Thursday 9/22** | Politics in Social Research | Chapter 3, pp. 58 – 63, 65 – 70 |
|         | In class film: Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment | |
### WEEK 5

**Tuesday 9/27**  
**Populations, samples, and statistical inference**  
Chapter 6, pp. 137 - 161

**Non-probability sampling and case studies**  

**Thursday 9/29**  
**Theoretical sampling**  

**Short Assignment #1 due**

### WEEK 6

**Tuesday 10/4**  
**Experiments in social science**  
Chapter 7, pp. 173-200

**“Natural” Experiments**  

**Thursday 10/6**  
**Survey implementation and construction**  
Chapter 8, pp. 204-222

*Discussion of Survey Assignment (#2)*

### WEEK 7

**Tuesday 10/11**  
**Designing Survey Questions**  
Chapter 8, pp. 223-230

Thursday 10/13
Survey Implementation; Strengths and Weaknesses
Chapter 8, pp. 230-241

In class we will design several batches of questions for use in Assignment #2, and will also go over procedures for analyzing results using SPSS (software available in Arts & Sciences computer labs)

WEEK 8

Tuesday 10/18
NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

Thursday 10/20
MIDTERM
Covers all readings up until this point in class

WEEK 9

Tuesday 10/25
Field Research and Observation
Chapter 9, pp. 242-265

Thursday 10/27
Field Research, cont’d
Chapter 9, pp. 266-284

Constructing Fieldnotes using Observational Data


Survey Assignment #2 due

Discussion of Field Research Assignment (#3)

WEEK 10

Tuesday 11/1
Focusing Qualitative Data

In-class field note exercise

Film: Dark Days (2000)
Thursday 11/3
Using existing records and data; Comparative-historical research

In class exercise: accessing and preliminary analysis of General Social Survey (GSS) data

Chapter 10, pp. 288-293; 313-324

WEEK 11

Tuesday 11/8
Sociology and history

Thursday 11/10
Assessing historical data sources

Discussion of Historical Data
Assignment #4

WEEK 12

Tuesday 11/15
Special Collections trip for Assignment #4
Meet in Olin Library Special Collections (First Floor, near main staircase)

Thursday 11/17
Research Using Multiple Methods
Chapter 11, pp. 328-348

Field Research
Assignment #3 due

WEEK 13

Tuesday 11/22
Using multiple methods in practice

Thursday NO CLASS –
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>11/24</td>
<td>THANKSGIVING BREAK</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 14</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>The Qualitative –</td>
<td>King, Keohane, and Verba, <em>Designing Social Inquiry</em> (1994), Chapter 1</td>
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<td>11/29</td>
<td>Quantitative “Divide”</td>
<td>(pp. 3-33). <a href="#">Available online through WUSTL Library website</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Bridging the “Divide”?</td>
<td>Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2006. “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting</td>
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<td>12/1</td>
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<td>Quantitative and Qualitative Research.”</td>
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<td><em>Political Analysis</em> 14(3):227-249.</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 15</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>New Developments:</td>
<td>Griffin, Larry, and Charles C. Ragin. 1994. &quot;Some observations on formal</td>
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<td>12/6</td>
<td>Formal Qualitative</td>
<td>methods of qualitative analysis.&quot; <em>Sociological Methods &amp; Research</em></td>
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<td>Methodology</td>
<td>23(1):4-21.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Final discussion and</td>
<td>Review for Final in class</td>
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<td>12/8</td>
<td>charting the</td>
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<td>*Historical Data</td>
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<td>Assignment (#4) Due</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td><strong>FINAL EXAM</strong></td>
<td>Cumulative - covers all readings in class, with emphasis on readings</td>
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<td>12/21</td>
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<td>after midterm</td>
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