

Sociological Research

Sociology 3660, CRN #21989 – Fall 2014

MWF 8:30-9:20 a.m.—Room SS 44

Professor: Carla Koons Trentelman, Ph.D.

Office: SS 134

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Office hours: Mon. 9:30-10:30 a.m., Tues. 8:00 – 8:30 a.m., Wed. 9:30-10:30 a.m., Th. 8:00 – 8:30 a.m.
or by appointment if needed.

Required Text:

Babbie, Earl. 2011. *The Basics of Social Research*. 5th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.
(ISBN 978-0495812241)

New and used copies available in bookstore: New—\$66.70; Used—\$40.00; used copies, eTextbooks/Kindles, and rentals also available through online sources.

Course Description: This course examines the scientific foundations of sociology and methods of sociological research.

Expected learning outcomes: Students will develop or improve:

1. an understanding of the variety of social science research methods
 - a. how they work
 - b. what methods work best for different research goals
 - c. critical thinking skills for evaluating the use and application of methods and their findings
2. an understanding of ethical issues related to social science research and various research methods—we will return to this discussion throughout the course
3. an awareness of political issues with research and its use—we will also return to this discussion throughout the course
4. skills in employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods, gained through a number of hands-on exercises
5. the ability to critically assess the research they are exposed to, both inside and outside of academia

Course Format and Expectations:

Just as there are a variety of methods we can use to conduct research, some of which are more effective at particular tasks than others, the same is true for methods of learning. This class will use a variety of learning methods, including lectures, classroom activities, discussion, reading, out-of class observations, exercises, written assignments and exams. Most of these learning methods require attendance to be of benefit.

- **Lectures** supplement, *but do not replace*, **required reading** from the text and other sources
 - Students will be held responsible for material presented in the readings, lectures, and by guest speakers. Readings should be completed before lectures and class discussions.
 - Exams will include material from the reading we will not have time to cover in class.
- In order to assess your understanding of the material, there will be three **exams** to test your knowledge of the material. We will discuss each exam ahead of time to help you prepare.
- **Research activities** – Students will practice doing research activities throughout the semester, both with class exercises as well as observations and written assignments that will be done outside of class. These assignments will make up a substantial part of your grade. I encourage you to work together on these exercises, although each student will be required to hand in his or her own assignment.
 - There will also be a longer course paper where you can demonstrate your understanding and practice a number of the skills we will be working on throughout the semester.

Course Format and Expectations (cont.):

- **Written skills** - You should see progress in your ability to write like a social scientist over the semester. In addition to working on writing well (e.g. proper spelling, punctuation, etc.), social scientists structure their writing to make a logical argument, typically related to theory; they provide a hypothesis, present material to support their argument, as well as acknowledging limitations. They avoid basing their arguments on personal value judgments. They appropriately cite sources of ideas and quotations. You will be able to practice using this writing style throughout the semester.

On distractions: Even small, unintended disruptions like chatting with others, rustling a newspaper, or gathering your books and papers before the end of class can disturb your classmates’ learning. Coming to class late and leaving early are particularly distracting, and should be avoided if at all possible. **Please do not leave class early unless you have made prior arrangements with me.**

- Cell phones and other electronic devices need to be turned **off** at the beginning of every class.
- Please be considerate of your fellow students and your instructor.

Student and Instructor Responsibilities:

Students	Instructor
Be prepared for class	Be prepared for class
Arrive on time	End on time
Turn in assignments on time	Return graded assignments in timely fashion
Know and understand grading policy	Follow grading policy with fairness
Ask about what you don’t know or understand	Research and report back on what I don’t know or understand
Bring up problems when they occur	Bring up problems when they occur

Core Beliefs: According to the WSU Student Code, students are to “[d]etermine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with a student's core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student's request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student's beliefs” (WSU Student Code, Section IV, item D. 9; http://www.weber.edu/ppm/Policies/6-22_StudentCode.html).

Students with Disabilities: Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Service Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary. For more information about the SSD, contact them at 801-626-6413, ssd@weber.edu, or <http://departments.weber.edu/ssd>

Academic Integrity: “...As members of Weber State University academic community, students shall...maintain academic ethics and honesty.” Plagiarism, “the unacknowledged (uncited) use of any other person’s or group's ideas or work” (including purchased or borrowed papers), and cheating are specifically prohibited (WSU Student Code). Academic dishonesty of any sort is not acceptable in this course. If your writing appears plagiarized, or if sources are not documented properly, you may receive an E on the assignment. If repeated offenses occur, you will receive a failing grade for the class and I will notify the WSU Due Process Officer. For further information, see Section IV, Student Responsibilities, item D.2 of the student code referred to above (http://www.weber.edu/ppm/Policies/6-22_StudentCode.html), or talk with the instructor.

Emergency Closure: If for any reason the university is forced to close for an extended period of time, we will conduct our class through email and Canvas. Look for announcements on your Weber email and on Canvas. Code Purple is a good way to be alerted to campus closures, and you are encouraged to sign up for it.

Student Evaluation:

- To receive at least a C grade in this course, you must complete (to my specifications) and turn in each of the assignments and take each exam.
- Unless noted otherwise, all assignments must be turned in as hard copies – I do not accept emailed assignments.
- Late papers will be docked unless you have made arrangements ahead of time.
- If you have a legitimate problem with an exam date or due date, you need to talk to me as early as possible so we can make arrangements before it affects your grade.

Make-up Policies: Only those students whose absence from class has been excused will be allowed to make up an exam, quiz, class activity, or writing assignment.

- An *excusable* absence needs to be cleared with me in order for it to become *excused*.
- Excused absences need to be cleared before the next class.
- **In the case of an unexcused absence, no make up for missed work will be allowed.**
- Students who miss class for any legitimate reason, including participation in organized university activities, should notify me in advance of their absence if possible.

Summary of grading:

Percent (rounded) of course grade:

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|--|-------------|
| • 3 exams, 150 points total: | 27% |
| ○ 75 points each (about 14% of grade), drop low score | |
| • 5 Research Exercises—250 points total: | 45% |
| ○ Ethics Assignment—50 points (9% of total grade) | |
| ○ Comparative Assignment on Literature Reviews—50 points (9%) | |
| ○ Critique of Survey Questionnaire—50 points (9%) | |
| ○ Participant Observation of Public Activity—50 points (9%) | |
| ○ Original Survey Questions Assignment—50 points (9%) | |
| • Participation and Class Exercises—50 points total | 9% |
| ○ Includes attendance as well as class participation | |
| • Course Paper: Designing a Research Project—100 points total | 18% |
| • Total possible: 550 points | 100% |
- Extra credit assignments will be available, no more than 15 points total

Grades will be distributed as follows:

93% and higher (512-550) = A	80-82% (440-455) = B-	67-69% (368-384) = D+
90-92% (495-511) = A-	77-79% (424-439) = C+	60-66% (330-367) = D
87-89% (478-494) = B+	73-76% (402-423) = C	Less than 60% (329) = F
83-86% (456-477) = B	70-72% (385-401) = C-	

A denotes *exceptional* performance, B—*above average* performance, C—satisfactory performance, D—poor performance, F—failing performance

Course Schedule (subject to change):

Aug. 25th: Introduction to the course

Reading for Aug. 27th: Chapter 1—Human Inquiry & Science

❖ **September 1st: Holiday—Labor Day**

Reading for Sept. 3rd: Chapter 2—Paradigms, Theory, and Research

Reading for Sept. 10th: Chapter 3—The Ethics and Politics of Social Research

✓ **Fri. Sept. 12th: Ethics Assignment due at the beginning of class**

Reading for Sept. 17th: Chapter 4—Research Design

➤ **September 23rd through 26th: Exam 1 available – Chapters 1-4**

Week 5: Reading for Sept. 24th: Ch. 5—Conceptualization, Operationalization, & Measurement

Week 6: Reading for Oct. 1st: Chapter 6—Indexes, Scales, & Typologies—only pp. 165-196

✓ **Comparison Assignment on Literature Reviews due in class**

Week 7: Reading for Oct. 8th: Chapter 7—The Logic of Sampling

Week 8: Reading for Oct. 15th: Chapter 9—Survey Research

❖ **October 17th: Fall Break**

Week 9: Reading for Oct. 24th: Chapter 14—Quantitative Data Analysis—**only** pp. 447-469; 471

✓ **Mon. Oct. 27th – Critique of Survey Questionnaire due in class**

➤ **October 28th through 31st: Exam 2 available – Chapters 5-7 & 9**

Week 10: Reading for Oct. 31st: Chapter 10—Qualitative Field Research; **AND Chapter 13 only**
pp. 418-431; 442-444—Qualitative Data Analysis

November 4th: Last day to drop course; or to change to C/NC

Week 11: Reading for Nov. 7th: Chapter 11—Unobtrusive Research

✓ **Original Survey Questions Assignment due in class**

Week 12: Reading for Nov. 14th: Chapter 12—Evaluation Research

✓ **Participant Observation of Public Activity due in class**

❖ **Friday, November 21st: No class – catch up day**

Week 13: Reading for Nov. 24th: Chapter 15—Reading and Writing Social Research

❖ **November 28th: Thanksgiving Break**

➤ **Dec. 5th: Course wrap-up—last day of class**

✓ **Course Paper: Designing a Research Project due in class**

✓ **Last day ANY extra credit may be turned in!!!**

➤ **December 6th through 11th: Exam 3 available – Chapters 10-15**