

Instructor: Pepper Glass
 Email: pepperglass@weber.edu
 Phone: (801) 626-6914
 Website: <https://canvas.weber.edu/>
 Office: SS 133
 Office hours: Wednesdays and Fridays 2:30 – 4:00 pm and by appointment

**Sociology 4900: Senior Capstone
 Weber State University, Fall 2015**

**Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 1:30–2:20 pm
 SS 113**

Course overview and objectives

What is sociology? How do people do sociology? This course has two main aims. The first is to introduce you to the fundamentals of how research projects are built and executed. A main part of this is giving you hands-on experience in developing and completing your own project. By doing this, you will learn the fundamentals of social science research, from the beginning of the process to the end. The second aim is to give you an idea of what sociologists do, some experience doing tasks like applying for funding and research conferences, as well as an introduction to future options in education and careers within the field.

By the end of this course, you should have enhanced skills in doing social science research – including familiarity with developing research questions, conceptualization, operationalization, literature reviews and citations, measurement, human subjects reviews, write-ups and abstracts, and applying for conferences and funding. You will also gain professional skills with applying for employment and graduate school, as well as writing resumes and cover letters.

Required readings

Hoover, Kenneth R., and Todd Donovan (2013) *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning. ISBN: 978-1133607670

Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN: 978-0674048218

Additional readings found online.

Course requirements and grade percentages

<i>Assignments</i>	60%
<i>Final project</i>	25%
<i>Project presentation</i>	5%
<i>Participation</i>	10%

Assignments – In order for you to build up to a final thesis paper in the course, I have developed a series of small “scaffolding” assignments. These are designed to keep you on track and focus your research project. There are also additional assignments that involve professional experience, funding, and submitting your work to a wider audience. **See instructions on page 6-8. (12 assignments X 5% each = 60%)**

Final paper – Your final paper is the final write-up of your research project. It will be mostly assembling and streamlining elements of your scaffolding assignments. **Follow the outline on page 9. Due on Wednesday, December 16th at 2 pm** in the Sociology Department office. **(25%)**

Project presentation – In order to give you further experience clarifying and presenting your work, I am asking everyone to give a twenty minute presentation – based on their final project – to the class. Presentations will be held the final two weeks of classes. They will be graded on the quality of your preparation and performance. **(5%)**

Participation – As this class requires you to stay on track and focused, it is important that you regularly come to class and participate. I take role at the beginning of each class. Unless I have excused you beforehand, your attendance is also required at each “Workshop” (October 12-16, 19-21, 26-30, and November 23 and 25). You have three “free” days to be late or absent. After that, each time you are late or absent, you will lose 2 points from your participation grade. **(10%)**

Disclaimers

- My preferred method of contact is in person, then by email. Any other form (Canvas message, voicemail, etc.) may result in a delayed response.
- If you miss an assignment, be in touch with me as soon as possible. I am much more sympathetic to those who contact me before missing the assignment.
- I do not tolerate cheating. Plagiarism – the use of others’ words and/or ideas without clearly acknowledging their source – is also a form of cheating. I will take appropriate disciplinary action against offenders.
- If you are a student with a disability and require classroom accommodations, please meet with me to discuss arrangements (If you have not yet contacted Services for Students with Disabilities, please do so – Student Services Center, Room 181 or call (801) 626-6413).
- This syllabus, including all readings and assignments, is subject to change given the flow of the course and unforeseen circumstances. I may deliver such updates by email, so please regularly check your Weber email address or be sure that it forwards to your regular address.

Reading and lecture schedule

Part I: Doing research

WEEK ONE: Introduction

(August 31 – September 4)

- “Thinking Scientifically” (Donovan and Hoover, 1 pp. 1-11)
- “The Elements of Science” (Donovan and Hoover, 2 pp. 12-39)
- “Experimental Measurement of Clothing as a Factor in Some Social Ratings of Selected American Men” (Hoult, ONLINE)

Assignment #1 due Friday, September 4th.

WEEK TWO: Research questions, concepts, and variables

(September 9 – 11)

No class – Monday, September 7th.

- “Strategies” (Donovan and Hoover, 3 pp. 40-59)
- “What Is This a Case of, Anyway?” (Luker, 4 pp. 51-75)
- “Toward Contraceptives Among Residents of a University Housing Project” (Lewis, ONLINE)

Assignment #2 due Friday, September 11th.

WEEK THREE: Literature reviews

(September 14 – 18)

Meet at Library, Room 59 on Monday, September 14th.

- “Reviewing the Literature” (Luker, 5 pp. 76-98)

Assignment #3 due Friday, September 18th.

WEEK FOUR: Operationalization and measurement

(September 21 – 25)

- “Refinements” (Donovan and Hoover, 4 pp. 60-79)
- “An Ode to Canonical Social Science” (Luker, 3 pp. 40-50)

Assignment #4 due Friday, September 25th.

WEEK FIVE: Measurement, and operationalization, continued
(September 28 – October 2)

- “On Sampling, Operationalization, and Generalization” (Luker, 6, pp. 99-128)
- “How to Write an Abstract” (UCUR, ONLINE)

Assignment #5 due Friday, October 2nd.

WEEK SIX: Ethics and human subjects
(October 5 – 9)

- Skim “Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics” (ASA, ONLINE)
- “Sociologists To SCOTUS: All Valid Science Affirms Same-Sex Parenting” (Zack Ford, ONLINE)

Assignment #6 due Friday, October 9th.

WEEK SEVEN: Workshops
(October 12 – 16)

Assignment #7 due Wednesday, October 14th.

WEEK EIGHT: Workshops
(October 19 – 21)

No class – Friday, October 23rd.

WEEK NINE: Workshops
(October 26 – 30)

- “Getting Down to the Nitty-Gritty” (Luker, 7, pp. 129-154)

WEEK TEN: Careers in sociology and job searches
(November 2 – 6)

- “What are they doing with a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology?” (Spalter-Roth and Van Vooren, ONLINE)
- Browse - <http://www.weber.edu/careerservices/resumes.html>

Assignment #9 due on Friday, November 6th.

WEEK ELEVEN: Job searches continued

(November 9 – 13)

- “Decreasing the Leak from the Sociology Pipeline” (Spalter-Roth, Van Vooren, and Senter, ONLINE)
- “How To Ace The 50 Most Common Interview Questions” (Smith, ONLINE)

Assignment #10 due on Friday, November 13th.

WEEK TWELVE: Graduate school

(November 16 – 20)

Assignment #8 (rough draft of research project) due on Friday, November 20th.

WEEK THIRTEEN: Workshops, prepare for presentations

(November 23, 25)

Assignment #11 due on Wednesday, November 25th.

No class – Friday, November 27th.

WEEK FOURTEEN: Project presentations

(November 30 – December 4)

Assignment #12 due on Friday, December 4th.

WEEK FIFTEEN: Project presentations, continued

(December 7 – 11)

Final paper due Wednesday, December 16th at 2 pm in the Sociology Department office.

Assignments

Scaffolding assignments:

Assignment #1 – Set a timer for fifteen minutes, sit down, and **write out questions** about the social world for that length of time. These questions are the kinds of things that worry and provoke you; what you would like to know about that you don't already know; and what you find interesting enough to spend the next several days, weeks, and months of your time investigating. Don't edit or censor. Just get them down on paper and see what you come up with. And be as specific as possible – do not write “What causes inequality?” but instead “Why do African Americans still, on average, have less wealth than whites?” (Adapted from Luker, pp. 20-21 and p. 39.)

Due **Friday, September 4th**.

Assignment #2 – **Choose four questions** from your list of question from Assignment #1. Think out full-scale, imaginary research projects for each one. This includes **answering the following** for each question:

- Specify, clarify, and focus it by writing it down in a form that shows a relationship between two things (in other words, a hypothesis). For example, “How does 1) gender influence 2) high school graduation rates in Utah?” “How do 1) gun laws affect 2) the amount of gun violence in inner city schools?” or “Why do 1) people want to cross the street at an electronic crosswalk but 2) many do not hit the button that changes the signal and just stand there like dopes?”
- List three ways that you could collect or find data that answers it.
- How would answering this question be helpful, interesting, or in other ways good to know?

Due **Friday, September 11th**.

Assignment #3 – Time to commit to a question and look at the current academic conversation about it. Pick one research question out of your four choices in Assignment #2, and find four academic articles that address that question as closely as possible. They should be recent, and at the very least, peer-reviewed, and ideally from prestigious journals. *NOTE: This will not be easy. By definition, the more original and innovative your question, the harder it is to fit with existing ideas.* (As Luker suggests, now is the time to make friends with a reference librarian. I hear they like cupcakes.) **Fully cite each article** in “Chicago” format (the “cite” button in Google Scholar makes this easy), **and answer the following** about each one:

- What is the main research question (hypothesis) that each article is trying to answer?
- How does this study answer that research question? What is the method (or methods) that it uses to answer it?
- What is the “frame” or “hook” (in Luker's words, see pp. 63-75) of the article? In other words, what is the study adding to the current conversation that researchers are having about your question?

Then answer the following: How do these conversations about your question change it? Rewrite your question given what you have found.

Due **Friday, September 18th**.

Assignment #4 – Further explore and expand the academic conversation(s) that you discovered in Assignment #3. **Find eight additional academic articles** that address your research question. These should be from peer-reviewed journals, as prestigious as possible, and they should each be empirical, using data to back up their claims. To do this, you can do a straight search of *Google Scholar*, *Sociological Abstracts*, *JSTOR*, or other databases. Or you also can look back in time (in the bibliography of the articles you already have) or forward (*Google Scholar's* “Cited by . . .” button). Cite these in “Chicago” format, and for each of the eight articles, list 1) the main research

question (hypothesis), 2) the methods they use to answer this question, 3) the answers that they found to the question, 4) two ways that this article is similar to one or more of the other articles (in important ways like the research question, frame, or methods that it uses), and 5) two ways that this article is different than one or more of the other articles (in important ways).

Due **Friday, September 25th**.

Assignment #5 – Write up what you have so far. This includes:

- a) Your research question in a sentence.
- b) An explanation of why this research question is important to study.
- c) A paragraph or two summarizing what other researchers have found when trying to answer your question.
- d) List three different research methods used to collect data about your question (citing these sources, of course).
- e) List three ideas of what method or methods you can use to answer your research question.
- f) Explain how it may add to the academic conversation (in other words, what “contribution” it could make to the “research literature”).
- g) Then, summarize this information into a paragraph-long “abstract.”

Due **Friday, October 2nd**.

Assignment #6 – Time to decide on the method (or methods) you will be using for your project. Pick a way (or ways) that you will be answering your question, and focus and develop it. Remember, keep it modest and doable!

Answer the following, as they fit or do not fit your method(s):

- a) What is the setting of your study?
- b) What is the population of your study? If not people, what are you studying?
- c) What is the sample of your study? How will you determine your sample size?
- d) How will your concepts be operationalized?
- e) What is your instrumentation – survey, experimental model, interview questions, historical data, magazine content?
- f) Are you using an existing instrument or creating your own? If applicable, attach a draft of your instrument.
- g) How will you collect your data?
- h) How will you analyze the data that you collect?
- i) Are there any problems that you anticipate, ethical or otherwise? What can you do to avoid them?

Due **Friday, October 9th**.

Assignment #7 – Complete the CITI training (found [here](#)), print out, and turn in your certification to me. Instructions are [here](#). You should complete the “Social and Behavioral Research – Basic/Refresher” modules and quizzes.

Note: If you are collecting data using human subjects (in other words, collecting new data using surveys, interviews, observation, experiments, etc. on people), you **must** also complete and turn in to me a draft of the IRB application form, found on Canvas or [here](#). To help you along, I’ve also included several examples on Canvas. **You cannot collect any data involving human subjects until you have IRB approval!**

Due **Wednesday, October 14th**.

Assignment #8 – Turn in a rough draft of your project, making it as complete as you can. Follow the outline found on **page 9**.

Due **Friday, November 20th**.

Additional assignments:

Assignment #9 – Create or revise your resume, making it clear and professional. Bring copies to class with you so that everyone has their own copy. There we will discuss all of the resumes, and you will receive feedback about yours.

Due **Friday, November 6th**.

Assignment #10 – Find a real world job listing in which you are interested, and write a cover letter for it. Then tailor your resume to fit it. Bring copies to class with you so that everyone has their own copy.

Due **Friday, November 13th**.

Assignment #11 – Complete a draft submission to a research conference. This involves writing up a three page synopsis of your study for an oral, roundtable, or poster presentation.

Due on **Wednesday, November 25th**.

Assignment #12 – Complete a draft application for funding through the WSU Office of Undergraduate Research. This can be for funds to carry out your research, and/or to travel to a conference to present your work. Details at <http://weber.edu/OUR>.

Due on **Friday, December 4th**.

What? You've loaded the gun, flipped the safety off, cocked it, aimed, and now you're NOT GOING TO PULL THE FRIGGIN' TRIGGER? That's just silly. Present your work to the world, and apply for some money so that you can fly across the country and stay at a nice hotel – on the school's dime! Be sure to carefully read the directions before submitting and don't be late!

Funding opportunities through the Office of Undergraduate Research:

Mandatory workshops in Stewart Library, room 59 (pick one):

- September 8 at 2:00 pm
- September 16 at 2:00 pm
- October 21 at 2:00 pm
- October 29 at 2:00 pm

A few regional and not-so-regional conferences:

PSA (Pacific Sociological Association) – held in Oakland, CA on March 30 – April 2, 2016. Submit a three page abstract to give a roundtable or poster presentation. Details at <http://www.pacificsoc.org/2016-oakland>. **Deadline around October - check the website for updates.**

UCUR (Utah Conference on Undergraduate Research) – held in Salt Lake City on February 19th, 2016. Submit an abstract to give an oral or poster presentation. Details at <http://www.ucur.org>. **Deadline around November – check the website for updates.**

NCUR (National Conference on Undergraduate Research) – held in Asheville, NC on April 7-9, 2016. Submit an abstract to give an oral or poster presentation. Details at http://www.cur.org/ncur_2016/. **Submission deadline December 2nd. Funding deadline for OUR on November 3rd.**

WSU Day at the Capitol – show your research to state legislators through a poster session. Details at <http://www.weber.edu/OUR/dayatthecapitol.html>. **Deadline around December – check the website for updates.**

Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters – held around March. Details at <http://www.utahacademy.org>. **Deadline around February – check the website for updates.**

Final paper outline

The final write-up of your research project should follow this outline, with **separate sections for an abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, findings, discussion, and bibliography**, each divided by a title. Feel free to rename these sections, and your own research may not fit parts of it (although it probably will). Your write up should be clear, painstakingly edited and proofread, and followed by a complete and painstakingly edited bibliography.

Abstract

- The “abstract” is a condensed version of your paper – presenting the main elements in a relatively short space (it should be under 150 words). The goal of the abstract is that, if someone reads it alone, they will know a) your research question, b) what you are researching, c) how you are researching it, d) what you found, and e) how what you found was important. Yep, all in a few sentences.

NOTE: An abstract is actually a very useful tool to focus and clarify your paper *while you write it!* Writing one *before* you assemble the write up, it can function as a kind of roadmap for the project, shaping how you organize and write it. You should also review and revise it *after* you have a complete draft, to cut parts of the paper that aren’t necessary or rewrite unclear sections.

Introduction

- A brief statement of the research question, how this question is important, and what your study contributes to the research literature.
- A brief summary of the methods you are using to answer this question, and what you found with your research.

Literature review

- Using at least 15 academic sources (academic journal articles or books), review the various ways that other researchers have tried to answer this question. (*Note:* This should NOT be a simple summary of this research. Instead, you should be strategically picking out the relevant information that informs your own study – whether it is the research questions, concepts and theory, operationalization and methods, findings, or other things. You are building a case for how your study fits in this academic conversation, as well as what you are adding to it.)
- Finish your literature review with a paragraph that explains exactly what you are adding to this academic conversation. In other words, restate in more detail your contribution to the research literature, as you presented it in the introduction. *Are you researching different subjects than the other studies? Using a new methodology? Creating a new concept or theory? Are you expanding an existing concept or theory in some way? Did you find different things in your data than previous studies?*

Methods

- Explain how you are answering your question through data. This should include most or all of the following, depending on your project: a) the setting of your study, b) your population, c) your sample, d) how you operationalized the concepts, e) your instrumentation (survey, census records, observation, interviews, experiment, etc.), f) your data collection methods, and g) your data analysis methods. While doing this, be sure to explain *why* you made these choices in methodology (A popular justification of researchers is “because earlier research did it this way too”).
- Include any problems or difficulties you encountered, ethical or otherwise. Also, explain what your methods are NOT doing very well, or what they do downright badly (In academic language, researchers often call these screw-ups the “limitations of the study”). Do not try to hide this – no research is perfect. It’s good to show that you’ve thoughtfully considered these issues.

Findings

- Explain what you found through the analysis of your data. This should be a detailed, step-by-step explanation. You need to “show” what you discovered, instead of just “telling.”

Discussion

- This is the conclusion of your paper. First, it involves a brief summary of the project – your research question, why it is important, what previous research has found, what you found, and the methods that you used to find it.
- Then, you need to explain how your findings fit with the academic conversation addressed by your question, what they add to it, how they change it, strengthening or weakening it. What does your study mean for our current understandings? How might it shape future research?
- This is also a place to state any limitations of your findings. In your eagerness to explain what your study does, be sure to point out what your study does NOT do. No one study can definitely prove anything right or wrong! Remember, you are only considering a very small slice of space and time.

Bibliography

- Also known as the “References” section, here you cite every source that you referenced in the paper. Please use the “Chicago” style for your paper (again, Google Scholar is a great tool for helping you format your sources).
- You should be like Santa Claus here. No, I don’t mean that you should see me when I’m sleeping, but make this list and check it twice.