

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL RESEARCH I

SOCI 205: Fall 2015

Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 to 10:45 a.m.

Nebraska Hall W185

Instructor: Dr. Christina Falci

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Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30 to 1:30, Wednesday 1:30 to 2:30, and by appointment

Course Description: Sociology 205 is the first in a two-part research methods sequence within the sociology curriculum at UNL. This course addresses how to conduct and evaluate social science research. It provides a general overview of the ways sociologists collect data about the social world to answer research questions. Special emphasis is placed on the method of survey research, which is the dominant method of collecting data among sociologists. In Sociology 206, students will learn how to statistically analyze quantitative data collected from surveys.

Course Goals:

- ❖ learn to formulate sociological research questions and to develop theoretical hypotheses to provide tentative answers to a research question
- ❖ learn to find, read and synthesize peer-reviewed journal articles to assess the current state of social scientific knowledge on a particular research question
- ❖ learn the elements of research design: conceptualization, measurement, sampling, and causation
 - practice critical thinking skills via the evaluation of the quality of social scientific research based on research design elements
- ❖ learn the core components of a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods for collecting the data necessary to empirically test theoretical hypotheses
 - appreciate the strengths, limitations and ethical concerns of each method of data collection

Course Format: Weekly class meetings will consist of lectures, discussions and homework exercises. Lectures will review some of the key points from the assigned readings, in addition to incorporating material not included in the assigned readings. I welcome questions and comments at any point during class. Your questions give me the opportunity to clarify ambiguities and help everyone deepen their understanding of the course material. Frequently, I will ask questions to the class about the course material. These questions help me assess your level of understanding of the course material and encourage you to think further about the topic being covered. Most homework exercises will be started in-class within impromptu small groups. These exercises will provide students the opportunity to engage in active learning of the course material and provide students with necessary skills to complete key written assignments in this class.

Required Readings: The textbook can be purchased at the University Bookstore. The journal articles can be downloaded from Blackboard under course documents. Bring a printed or electronic (download to device prior to coming to class in case of internet access issues) copy of each article to class for the week the article is assigned. You will also find it helpful to bring the textbook to class every day.

Textbook

Neuman, Lawrence W. 2012. *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative Quantitative and Approaches*, 3rd Edition. Toronto, CA: Pearson.

Journal Articles

- Baker, Christina. 2005. "Content Analysis: Images of Women's Sexuality in Advertisements: A Content Analysis of Black- and White-Oriented Women's and Men's Magazines." *Sex Roles* 52:13-27. (exemplar: content analysis)
- Currin, Laura, Ulrike Schmidt and Glenn Waller. 2007. "Variables That Influence Diagnosis and Treatment of the Eating Disorders within Primary Care Settings: A Vignette Study." *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 40:257–262. (exemplar article experiments)
- Johnson, Monica Kirkpatrick and Stefanie Mollborn. 2009. "Growing up faster, Feeling Older: Hardship in Childhood and Adolescence." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 72:39-60. (exemplar: survey research)
- Smith, Allen C., III and Sherryl Kleinman. 1989. "Managing Emotions in Medical School: Students' Contacts with the Living and the Dead." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52(special issue):56-69. (exemplar: in-depth interviews & participant observation research)
- White, Lynn. 2005. "Writes of Passage: Writing an Empirical Journal Article." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67:791–798. (sections of empirical journal articles)

Course Requirements and Grade Structure: I expect students to keep up with assigned readings, to show up for class on time, attend class on a regular basis, participate in class discussions, take good notes and participate fully in group exercises.

- ❖ **Class Participation and Homework Exercises** 125 points
- ❖ **Research Proposal Project** – this is a progressive assignment, in each assignment you will write a new section of your research proposal and revise previously submitted sections.
 - *Topic Statement*..... 25 points
 - *Annotated Bibliography*..... 50 points
 - *Literature Review*..... 75 points
 - *Methods* 75 points
 - *Final Project*..... 100 points
- ❖ **Exams:** multiple choice, matching and true-false
 - *Exam One*..... 100 points
 - *Exam Two*... 100 points
 - *Final Exam (cumulative)*..... 150 points

Grade Basis: based on percentage of the # of earn points divided by the # of possible points.

A	93 - 100	B -	80 – 82.9	D +	65 – 69.9
A -	90 – 92.9	C +	77 – 79.9	D	60 – 64.9
B +	87 – 89.9	C	73 – 76.9	F	below 60
B	83 – 86.9	C -	70 – 72.9		

Absences, Make-Ups, Late Work, Pass/Fail, Honor System: If you have a conflict with taking any of the exams, you must inform the instructor at least two weeks ahead of time to see if other arrangements are possible. Missed exams may only be made-up with documented evidence of illness or emergency. Assignments turned in late will lose points (5 points per weekday) unless there is documentation of illness or emergency. Students may take this class pass/fail, but students must complete all course requirements in order to receive a passing grade. Furthermore, those taking the course Pass-No Pass will need a C or better to obtain a Pass (a C minus is a “No Pass”). Finally, I will take all necessary steps to enforce the Honor System for the sake of fairness to all students. I will report incidents of academic dishonesty in writing to UNL’s Judicial Affairs.

- Plagiarism is taking someone else’s ideas/work/words and using them as your own – a very serious offense within academia. To better understand how to plagiarism avoid please take advantage of this UNL resource: <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/plagiarism.shtml>.

Disabilities: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Dr. Falci for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Class Schedule: The course is broken into two parts. In the first half, students will learn how to formulate research questions, develop theoretical hypotheses and design a research study by understanding the basic elements of research design: conceptualization, operationalization, sampling and causation. In the second half of the semester, students will learn various research methods: survey, experiments, content analysis, participant observation, in-depth interview and focus groups. A research method lays out the procedures for collecting the data necessary for gathering empirical evidence to test theoretical hypotheses. For each method, students will read an exemplar journal article that will provide an illustrative example of the research method within the academic research literature. Students will also be encouraged to assess the quality of the research in the exemplar article by applying their knowledge of research design learned in the first half of the course.

Week: Dates	Topics, Exams & Assignment Due Dates	Readings
1: Aug. 25 & 27	Social Science Research Asking Research Questions <i>Exercise 1: Research Questions and Concepts</i>	Chapter 1
2: Sept. 1 & 3	Theory Construction <i>Exercise 2: Conceptual Models</i> <i>Handout: Conceptual Models</i>	Chapter 2
3: Sept. 8 & 10	Research Process and Journal Articles <i>Handout: Research Circle,</i> <i>Peer-reviewed journals & ASA Style Guide</i>	Chapters 4 & 12 White (2005)
4: Sept. 15 & 17	<i>Exercise 3: reading a journal article</i> Research Ethics DUE: Topic Statement (9/15)	Johnson (2009) Chapter 3

5: Sept. 22 & 24	EXAM ONE: 9/24 <i>Handout: Searching for Empirical Research</i>	
6: Sept. 29 & Oct 1	Concepts and Measures <i>Exercise 4:</i> operationalization	Chapter 5
7: Oct. 6 & 8	Measurement Validity and Reliability <i>Exercise 5:</i> measurement validity	TBA
8: Oct. 13 & 15	DUE: <i>Annotated Bibliography (10/13)</i> Sampling	Chapter 6
9: Oct. 22	<i>Exercise 6:</i> probability sampling	
10: Oct. 27 & 29	Causation <i>Exercise 7:</i> Johnson exemplar article	TBA & Johnson (2009)
11: Nov. 3 & 5	EXAM TWO: 11/3 Survey Research	Chapter 7
12: Nov. 10 & 12	DUE: <i>Literature Review (11/10)</i> <i>Exercise 8:</i> writing survey questions	TBA
13: Nov. 17 & 19	Content Analysis <i>Exercise 9:</i> Baker exemplar article	Chapter 9 & Baker (2005)
14: Nov. 24	In-depth Interviews	Chapter 11
15: Dec. 1 & 3	Participant Observation DUE: <i>Methods (12/1)</i> <i>Exercise 10:</i> Smith exemplar article	Smith (1989)
16: Dec. 8 & 10	Experiments <i>Exercise 11:</i> Currin exemplar article DUE: <i>Final Paper (12/10)</i>	Chapter 8 & Currin (2007)
Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 16 th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.		