Advanced Methods Social Research I
Sociology 863: Spring 2020
Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 to 4:45 pm

Professor: Dr. Christina Falci  Email: cfalci2@unl.edu
Office: 714 Oldfather Hall  Office Hours: Tues. 2-3pm and Thurs. 9:30-10:30am

Course Description: This course focuses on how to conduct social science research. It is a first year required graduate seminar for sociology Master and Ph.D. students. This course has three aims. First, the course will cover the strengths and weaknesses of several methods of data collection, but the greatest emphasis will be placed on survey research methods. We will cover the elements of research design common to all methods of collecting data: conceptualization, measurement, sampling, causation, and data analytic strategies. Knowledge of research design will allow you to critically evaluate the validity of the social science research. Second, students will learn how to ask sociological research questions that are theoretically driven and scientifically relevant as well as learn how to write a research proposal that displays coherence across all components of the paper from the research question to the proposed data analysis strategy. Finally, this course will cover the philosophy of science, ethical consideration of various research methods, and the IRB process for conducting research on human subjects.

Course Requirements: All students must attend every class and have all assigned readings completed prior to class.

Participation and Assignments (20%): Class meetings will primarily consist of class discussion and all students are expected to participate. At the end of each class, it should be apparent to the instructor that you have completed all of the required readings for the class and grappled with the key content of the readings. This does not mean you need to have complete mastery of the assigned readings during class discussion. Rather, you should be making comments during class to gage your mastery of the readings as well as asking questions to clear up any confusion or to deepen your understanding of the material. I strongly encourage students to think about how the readings would apply to your own research projects. To help students prepare for class discussions and the exam, I will provide a reading guide to focus student attention on particular aspects of the assigned readings. At three points in the semester you will earn a participation grade for your classroom discussion participation, which will be posted on Canvas. Participation points also come from small assignments over the course of the semesters such as drawing the conceptual model for exemplar articles and showing your Citi training certificate.

Data Exercises (25%): Students will complete a series of method exercises throughout the semester. These are active learning exercises that have students apply course material to relevant data analytic techniques. Students will have the option to complete these exercises in Stata or SAS. The first lab class will introduce these statistical software programs. Subsequent data exercises focus on index construction, missing data, complex samples, and theory driven modeling.

Exam (25%): There will be one take-home essay exam, which students will submit online via Canvas. This exam will be open book, open note and cover material from readings, class discussions and data exercises.

Research Proposal (30%): Students are required to write a 15-page research proposal. Throughout the semester you will work on a series of proposal assignments on a topic of your choice in consultation with the instructor. Students must use secondary survey data for this proposal, unless given permission by the instructor to write a proposal that involves primary data collection. Either way, I highly recommend you start writing your master’s thesis or dissertation proposal.
Course Policies

Attendance and Late Work: Your attendance is expected at every class by university policy and by me. If you are going to miss a class, then you need to inform the instructor ahead of time. Assignments or exams turned in late will lose points (half a letter grade for every weekday it is late) unless there is documentation of illness or emergency.

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. The University's Student Code of Conduct addresses academic dishonesty - https://studentconduct.unl.edu/academic-integrity. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision. I will take all necessary steps to enforce the Honor System for the sake of fairness to all students. Importantly, all paper assignments will be checked for plagiarism using the “Turnitin” feature in Canvas. Plagiarism is taking someone else’s ideas/work/words and using them as your own. To better understand how to avoid plagiarism by paraphrasing and using proper citation please take advantage of this UNL resource: https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/integrity#plagiarism.

Accommodation: The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 232 Canfield Admin. Bldg.; 402-472-3787.

Course Readings

Required Books - available at the bookstore


Selected Chapters from these Books - available on Canvas


Useful Statistical Software Manuals – available for purchase online
Class Schedule – all readings listed below will be available on Canvas (except required books)

1. January 14 & 16
   a. Tuesday: Introductions and Overview
      i. Schutt (chapter 1, “Science, Society and Social Research”)
   b. Thursday: Theory Construction
      i. Schutt (chapter 2 “The Process and Problems of Social Research”)
   c. Handout and Assignments
      i. Conceptual Models Handout
      ii. Background Information - due Friday, Jan. 17th by 5pm
      iii. draw conceptual model: Hardie & Lucas (2010) - due in class Tues., Jan. 21st

2. January 21 & 23
   a. Tuesday: Conceptualization and Operationalization
      i. Schutt (pages 102-131 in chapter 4 “Conceptualization and Measurement”)
      ii. pages 199-207 & 222-237 in Neuman chapter on “Measurement”
   b. Thursday: meet in lab
      i. Read: SAS and Stata Reference Guide
      ii. Review: Youth Development Study here: [https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/24881](https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/24881)
      iii. Data Exercise: Data Management – due Friday, January 31st 5pm
   c. Assignment
      i. Deductive Theory Construction Assignment - due Monday, Feb. 3rd by 8am

3. January 28 & 30
   a. Tuesday: Measurement Validity and Reliability
      i. DeVellis (chapters 3 & 4)
      ii. Schutt (pages 131-141 in chapter 4 “Conceptualization and Measurement”)
   b. Thursday: Index Construction
      i. DeVellis (chapters 5, 6 & 8)
   c. Assignment
4. **February 4 & 6**
   
a. **Tuesday:** meet in the lab
   
i. **Data Exercise:** Index Construction - due Friday Feb. 14th by 5 pm
   
b. **Thursday:** **Writing for Research**
   
i. Lovitts (chapter 3 & Appendix Table 13.A)
   
   
   
c. **Assignment and Handout**
   
i. Proposal Topic Statement & Introduction due Monday, March 2nd by 8am
   
   ii. ASA Style Guide

5. **February 11 & 13**
   
a. **Tuesday:** **Sampling Procedures**
   
i. Schutt (chapter 5, “Sampling and Generalizability”)
   
b. **Thursday:** **Statistical Power**
   
   
   

6. **February 18 & 20**
   
a. **Tuesday:** **Representation Error**
   
i. *(only pages 1-10)* Dillman, Smyth and Christian. “Sample Surveys in Our Electronic World”
   
   
   iii. Susanne Rässler et al. “Incomplete data: Diagnosis, imputation, and estimation” P.p. 370- 386 in Leeux, Hox and Dillman
   
b. **Thursday:** meet in the lab
   
i. Read: Aneshensel (chapter 6 “Regression with Survey Data from Complex Samples”
   
   ii. **Data Exercise:** Missing Data and Complex Design - due Friday Feb. 28th by 5 pm
   
c. **Assignment**
   
i. draw conceptual model: Louise & Wheaton (2019) - due in class Thurs., Feb. 27th
7. **February 25 & 27**
   
   **a. Tuesday: Causation**
   
   i. Schutt (chapter 6, “Research Design and Causation”)
   
   ii. Aneshensel (preface & chapter 4, “The Focal Association”)

   **b. Thursday: Mediation and Suppression**
   
   i. Aneshensel (chapter 9 “Elaborating the Focal Relationship”)
   
   

   **c. Assignment**
   

8. **March 3 & 5**

   **a. Tuesday: Moderation**
   
   i. Aneshensel (chapter 11 “Specifying Conditions of Influence: Moderating Variables”)
   

   **b. Thursday:** meet in lab
   
   i. Read: Testing Mediation with Regression Analysis
   
   ii. Data Exercise: Model Building - due Friday, March 13th at 5pm

   **c. Assignment**
   
   i. Citi On-line Training (due in class Tuesday, March 10th)

9. **March 10 & 12**

   **a. Tuesday: Research Ethics and IRB**
   
   i. Schutt (chapter 3, “Research Ethics and Research Proposals”)
   
   ii. UNL IRB SOPs
   
   iii. ASA code of Ethics

   **b. Thursday: Research Ethics**
   
   i. Hesse-Biber and Leavy. “The Ethics of Social Research” (chapter 4)
   

   **c. Assignments**
   
   i. Take-Home Exam - due Friday, March 20th by 5pm
10. March 17 & 19
   a. Tuesday: **Writing Survey Instruments**
      i. Schutt (pages 253-280 in chapter 8 “Survey Research”)
      iii. *Exemplar*: Survey for the Faculty Network and Workload Study (FNWS)
   b. Thursday: **Survey Design and Modes**
      i. Schutt (pages 281-304 in chapter 8 “Survey Research”)
      ii. (only pages 10-18) Dillman, Smyth and Christian. “Sample Surveys in Our Electronic World”
   c. **Assignments**
      i. Introduction and Literature Review - due Monday, April 6th by 8am
      ii. draw conceptual model: Gollust & Lantz (2009) - due in class Tues., March 31st

11. March 31 & April 2
   a. Tuesday: **Content Analysis**
      i. Schutt (pages 574-585 in chapter 15 “Historical Comparative Research and Content Analysis”)
   d. Thursday: NO CLASS – MSS Conference in Omaha

12. April 7 & 9
   b. Tuesday: **In-Depth Interviews**
      i. Hesse-Biber and Leavy. “In-Depth Interviews” (chapter 5)
   b. Thursday: **Ethnography**
      i. Hesse-Biber and Leavy. “Ethnography” (chapter 8)
   c. **Assignment**:
      i. Proposal Methods Section - due Monday, April 20th at 8am
      ii. draw conceptual model: Taylor (2016) - due in class Thurs., April 16th

March 18th thru 22nd  Spring Break
13. April 14 & 16

a. Tuesday: **Focus Groups**
   i. Hesse-Biber and Leavy. “Focus Group Interviews” (chapter 7)

b. Thursday: **The Classic Experiment**
   i. Schutt (pages 220-230 in chapter 7 “Experiments”)

c. **Assignment**
   i. draw conceptual model: Mize & Manago (2018) - due in class Tues., April 21st

14. April 21 & 23

a. Tuesday: **Quasi and Vignette Experiments**
   i. Schutt (pages 231-248 in chapter 7 “Experiments”)

b. Thursday: **Historical Comparative**
   i. Schutt (pages 551-573 in chapter 15 “Historical Comparative and Content Analysis”)

15. April 28 & 30

a. Tuesday: **Philosophy of Research and Science**
   i. Neuman, Laurence. 2014. “Meaning of Methodology” chapter 4 in *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*

b. Thursday: **Short Presentations from students on Research Proposals**

**Final Research Proposal Due:** Monday, May 4th by 8am