**Introduction to Social Research I**
Sociology 205: Fall 2018
Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:30 to 10:20
Oldfather 307

**Professor:** Dr. Christina Falci  
**Office:** 714 Oldfather Hall  
**Hours:** Mon & Tue. 12:30 to 1:30  
**Email:** cfalci2@unl.edu

**TA:** Grace Kelly  
**Office:** 734 Oldfather  
**Hours:** Wed. & Friday 10:30 to 11:30  
**Email:** grace.kelly@doane.edu

**Course Description:** Sociology 205 is the first in a two-part research methods sequence within the sociology curriculum at UNL. Sociology 205 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.

In Sociology 205, students will learn how to formulate research questions, develop theoretical hypotheses and design a research study. The first half of the semester focuses on the basic elements of research design that apply to all research methods including conceptualization, operationalization, sampling and causation. In the second half of the semester, students will apply research design to research methods utilized by sociologists including surveys, experiments, content analysis, participant observation and in-depth interview. For each research method, students will learn the best practices for collecting the type of data gathered by the method. Social scientists use these data as the empirical evidence for testing 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. This class will also address the ethical considerations of social science research in general and within each particular research method.

**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 and method 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 method 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 and the journal articles are available on Canvas.

*Textbook*

*Journal Articles*


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

1) **Methods Exercises (20%)** – over the course of the semester students will complete research methods exercises (each worth 10 points). While students are allowed to work in groups of 3 to 4 students when completing the exercise, each student is required to write-up and turn-in their own exercise.

2) **Literature Review Project (35%)** – this is a progressive 3-part assignment. Each assignment builds from the previous one. As such, students will be required to revise any imprecise or incorrect components of previous assignments based on instructor’s when turning in the subsequent assignment.

   - *Topic Statement* …………………………………………………………………………… 50 points
   - *Annotated Bibliography* …………………………………………………………………… 100 points
   - *Literature Review* …………………………………………………………………………… 125 points

3) **Exams(45%)** – all exams will consist of multiple choice, matching, and true/false questions. The exams will cover all aspects of the class, including readings, lectures, in-class discussions, and methods exercises. The final exam will be cumulative. Students will have 90 minutes to complete exams 1 & 2 and 120 minutes to complete the final exam. All exams will be taken in the Digital Learning Commons (DLC). The DLC is located in the Adele Coryell Hall Learning Commons. It is
your responsibility to schedule a time to take each exam by visiting: http://dlc-reserve.unl.edu. Early sign-up is recommended as time slots fill up quickly. For information about the Exam Commons operating hours and student guidelines please visit http://dlc.unl.edu. Be sure to bring your N-Card to the exam and DLC staff reserves the right to ask for a second ID for identity verification.

- **Exam One**………………………………………………………………………………… 100 points
- **Exam Two**………………………………………………………………………………… 100 points
- **Final Exam (cumulative)**……………………………………………………………………… 150 points

**Grade Basis:** based on your final grade percentage.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A +</td>
<td>97 -100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 96.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>A -</td>
<td>90 – 92.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B +</td>
<td>87 – 89.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B -</td>
<td>80 – 82.9</td>
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<td>C +</td>
<td>77 – 79.9</td>
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<td>70 – 72.9</td>
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<td>D</td>
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**Course Policies**

**Late Work and Make-Ups:** Assignments turned in late will lose points (half a letter grade for every weekday it is late) unless there is documentation of illness or emergency. 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.

**Taking the Class Pass/Fail:** 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”).

**Honor System:** Students are required to abide by UNL’s student code of conduct - see information here https://studentconduct.unl.edu/academic-integrity. I will take all necessary steps to enforce the Honor System for the sake of fairness to all students. I will report code violations to UNL’s Judicial Affairs. Moreover, 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.

**Disabilities:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me (the instructor) for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation as determined by Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide individualized accommodations 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, students must be registered with SSD, which is located in 232 Canfield Administration (472-3787).

**Classroom Visitors and Recordings:** According to the University’s Trespass Policy (Regents’ Policy 6.4.7) only the instructor and the students registered for the course are “authorized” to be in the classroom during the scheduled class period. Only the instructor has the discretion to allow visitors into the classroom. Moreover, as to create a classroom environment in which everyone may feel comfortable participating in discussions, it is expected that no audio or video recordings of class will be made without the prior knowledge and consent of the instructor. Students with disabilities for which reasonable accommodation would include making such recordings should work with the Services for Students with Disabilities office and the instructor to make arrangements.
Laptop, Tablets and Cellphones: Recent research indicates that laptop use for note-taking during class undermines several indicators of student learning including lecture attention, comprehension & retention of the course material, and lower exam grades & overall course performance (Aguilar-Roca, Williams, and O'Dowd 2012; Fried 2008; Gaudrea, Miranda, and Gareau 2014; Junco 2012; Risko et al. 2013; Wurst, Smarkola, and Gaffney 2008). Laptop use also facilitates student “multitasking” (e.g., Facebook, emailing) in the classroom that poses a serious distraction for both users and other students in the classroom (Fried 2008; Sana, Weston, and Cepeda 2013).


In light of this research, students wishing to take notes electronically on a laptop or tablet for any reason must get permission from the instructor and follow the following guidelines: 1) use the electronic device for note-taking only, 2) the electronic device may only have note taking software (e.g., Word, Notepad) open, 3) disable Wi-Fi access, and 4) to minimize non-laptop user distractions sit in the back 2 rows of the classroom and the mute speakers. The instructor reserves the right to monitoring student’s use of laptops and tablets for note taking during class. There is, however, a place for electronics in education. In this class, for example, students are allowed to use electronics devices during class time to access assigned readings, the syllabus or assignments. I highly recommend you download these documents prior to class in case Wi-Fi access to Canvas is slow or unavailable during class time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week: Dates</th>
<th>Class Schedule</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| **1:** Aug. 20, 22 & 24 | **Research Questions**  
  *Exercise 1:* Research Questions | Text Chapter 1                               |
| **2:** Aug. 27, 29, & 31 | **Theory Construction**  
  *Exercise 2:* Conceptual Models | Text Chapter 2                               |
| **3:** Sept. 5 & 7  
  (*Labor Day: Sept. 3rd*) | **Research Process**  
  *Exercise 3:* Reading a Journal Article – Part 1 | Text Appendix A & B White (2005)  
  Johnson (2009) |
| **4:** Sept. 10, 12 & 14 | **Reading Journal Articles**  
  *Exercise 4:* Reading a Journal Article – Part 2  
  **DUE:** Topic Statement (9/14) |                                               |
| **5:** Sept. 17 & 19  
  (*no class Sept. 21*) | **Research Ethics**  
  *EXAM 1:* open DLC between Sept. 20-23 | Text Chapter 3                               |
| **6:** Sept. 24, 26 & 28 | **Concepts and Measures**  
  *Exercise 5:* Operationalization | Text Chapter 4 (p.45-56)                     |
| **7:** Oct. 1, 3, & 5 | **Measurement Validity and Reliability**  
  *Exercise 6:* Measurement Validity | Text Chapter 4 (p.56-61)                     |
| **8:** Oct. 8, 10 & 12 | **Sampling**  
  *Exercise 7:* Probability Sampling | Text Chapter 5                               |
| **9:** Oct. 17 & 19  
  (*Fall Break: Oct 15th*) | **Causation**  
  **DUE:** Annotated Bibliography (10/19) | Text Chapter 2 (p. 23-25)  
  Text Chapter 6 (p. 80-85) |
| **10:** Oct. 22, 24 & 26 | *Exercise 8:* Causation in Johnson Article  
  Text Chapter 7 (p. 97-107) | Johnson (2009)                               |
| **11:** Oct. 31 & Nov. 2  
  (*no class October 29th*) | **EXAM 2:** open DLC between Oct. 27-30  
  **Survey Research** |                                               |
| **12:** Nov. 5, 7, & 9 | *Exercise 9:* Writing Survey Questions  
  Text Chapter 7 (p.107-118) |                                               |
| **13:** Nov. 12, 14 & 16 | **Content Analysis**  
  *Exercise 10:* Martin Exemplar Article | Text Chapter 9  
  Martin (2009) |
| **14:** Nov. 19  
  (*break: Nov. 21 & 23*) | **Participant Observation**  
  Text Chapter 8 (p.120-129) |                                               |
| **15:** Nov. 26, 28 & 30 | **In-depth Interviews**  
  *Exercise 11:* Smith exemplar article  
  **DUE:** Literature Review (11/26) | Text Chapter 8 (p.129-136)  
  Smith (1989) |
| **16:** Dec. 3, 5 & 7 | **Experiments**  
  *Exercise 12:* Currin exemplar article | Chapter 6  
  Currin (2007) |
| **Final Exam:** | *open DLC between Dec. 12-14* |                                               |