Advanced Methods Social Research I  
Sociology 463/863: Spring 2019  
Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 to 4:45 pm

Instructor: Dr. Christina Falci  
office hours: Tues. 2 to 3pm and Thurs. 1 to 2 pm

Teaching Assistant: Joe Jochman  
office hours: Wed. 1 to 2pm and Friday 2 to 3pm

Course Description: This course focuses on how to conduct social research in the study of social phenomena. 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 (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. At two points in the semester you will earn a participation grade for your classroom discussion participation (mid-term and at the end of the semester). These grades will be posted on Canvas.

Data Exercises (25%): To better learn the course material and how to conduct research there will be a series of methods exercises completed throughout the semester.

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 and lecture. Students will have a 5-day window for completing the exam.

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 undergraduate thesis, master’s thesis or dissertation proposal.

Course Policies

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 located in 232 Canfield Administration (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 8th and 10th
   a. Tuesday: Introductions and Overview Lecture
      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:** Conceptual Models

2. **January 15\(^{th}\) and 17\(^{th}\)**
   a. **Tuesday:** Conceptualization
      i. pages 198-207 in Neuman chapter on “Measurement”
      ii. Schutt (pages 102-115 in chapter 4 “Conceptualization and Measurement”)
   b. **Thursday:** meet in lab
      i. **Data Exercise:** Data Management – due Friday, January 25\(^{th}\) 5pm
   c. **Assignments**
      i. Deductive Theory Construction Assignment - due Monday, Jan. 28\(^{th}\) by 8am
      ii. draw conceptual model: Hardie & Lucas (2010) - due in class Tues., Jan 22\(^{nd}\)

3. **January 22\(^{nd}\) and 24\(^{th}\)**
   a. **Tuesday:** Operationalization
      i. DeVellis (chapters 1 & 2)
      ii. Schutt (pages 116-130 in chapter 4 “Conceptualization and Measurement”)
   b. **Thursday:** Measurement Validity and Reliability
      i. DeVellis (chapters 3 & 4)
      ii. Schutt (pages 131-141 in chapter 4 “Conceptualization and Measurement”)

4. **Jan. 29\(^{th}\) and 31\(^{st}\)**
   a. **Tuesday:** Index Construction
      i. DeVellis (chapters 5, 6 & 8)
   b. **Thursday:** meet in the lab
      i. **Data Exercise:** Index Construction - due Friday Feb. 8\(^{th}\) by 5 pm
   c. **Assignments**
      i. draw conceptual model: Johnson & Mollborn (2009) - due in class Tues., Feb. 5\(^{th}\)

5. **February 5\(^{th}\) and 7\(^{th}\)**
   a. **Tuesday:** Writing for Research
      i. Lovitts (chapter 3 & Appendix Table 13.A)
      iii. How to improve your writing - power point slides

b. **Thursday: Sampling Procedures**
i. Schutt (chapter 5, “Sampling and Generalizability”)
ii. Aneshensel (chapter 6 “Regression with Survey Data from Complex Samples”

c. **Assignment:** Proposal Topic Statement & Introduction (due Monday, Feb. 25th by 8am)
i. handout: ASA Style Guide

6. **February 12th and 14th**

a. **Tuesday:** meet in lab
   i. *Data Exercise:* Analysis of Complex Survey Data - due Friday, Feb. 22nd by 5pm

b. **Thursday: Statistical Power**

7. **February 19th and 21st**

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 in Leeux, Hox and Dillman

b. **Thursday:** meet in lab
   i. read: Data Management in SAS and Stata
   ii. *Data Exercise:* Missing Data and Attrition - due Friday, Friday, Feb. 29th at 5pm

8. **Feb. 26th and 28th**

a. **Tuesday: Causation**
i. Schutt (chapter 6, “Research Design and Causation”)
ii. Aneshensel (preface & chapter 4, “The Focal Association”)

b. **Thursday: Spuriousness, Redundancy and Selection**
i. Aneshensel (chapters 7 and 8)

c. **Assignments**
i. draw conceptual model: Harding (2003) - due in class Tues., March 5th
ii. draw conceptual model: Lui & Kaplan (2014) - due in class Thurs., Mar. 7th
9. March 5\textsuperscript{th} and 7\textsuperscript{th}

\textit{a. Tuesday: Mediation, Moderation, and Suppression}
\begin{itemize}
  \item i. Aneshensel (chapters 9 and 11)
\end{itemize}

\textit{a. Thursday:} meet in lab
\begin{itemize}
  \item i. \textit{Exercise:} Model Building - due Friday, March 15\textsuperscript{th} at 5pm
\end{itemize}

\textit{b. Assignments}
\begin{itemize}
  \item i. Citi On-line Training (due in class Tuesday, March 12\textsuperscript{th})
\end{itemize}

10. March 12\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th}

\textit{a. Tuesday: Research Ethics and IRB}
\begin{itemize}
  \item i. Schutt (chapter 3, “Research Ethics and Research Proposals”)
  \item ii. UNL IRB SOPs
  \item iii. ASA code of Ethics
\end{itemize}

\textit{b. Thursday: Research Ethics}
\begin{itemize}
  \item i. Hesse-Biber and Leavy. “The Ethics of Social Research” (chapter 4)
\end{itemize}

\textit{c. Assignments}
\begin{itemize}
  \item i. Take-Home Exam - due Monday, March 25\textsuperscript{th} at 5pm
  \item ii. Introduction and Literature Review - due Monday, April 1\textsuperscript{st} by 8am
\end{itemize}

\textit{March 18\textsuperscript{th} thru 22\textsuperscript{nd} Spring Break}

11. March 26\textsuperscript{th} and 28\textsuperscript{th}

\textit{a. Tuesday: Writing Survey Instruments}
\begin{itemize}
  \item i. Schutt (pages 253-280 in chapter 8 “Survey Research”)
  \item iii. Fowler and Cosenza. “Writing Effective Questions” P.p. 136-160 in Leeux, Hox & Dillman
  \item iv. \textit{Exemplar:} Survey for the Faculty Network and Workload Study (FNWS)
\end{itemize}

\textit{b. Thursday: Survey Design and Modes}
\begin{itemize}
  \item i. Schutt (pages 281-304 in chapter 8 “Survey Research”)
  \item ii. (only pages 10-18) Dillman, Smyth and Christian. “Sample Surveys in Our Electronic World”
\end{itemize}
c. Assignment
   i. draw conceptual model: Gollust & Lantz (2009) - due in class Tues., April 2\textsuperscript{nd}

12. April 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 4\textsuperscript{th}
   a. Tuesday: Content Analysis
      i. Schutt (pages 574-585 in chapter 15 “Historical Comparative Research and Content Analysis”)
   a. Thursday: In-Depth Interviews
      i. Hesse-Biber and Leavy. “In-Depth Interviews” (chapter 5)
   b. Assignment: Proposal Methods Section - due Monday, April 15\textsuperscript{th} at 8am

13. April 9\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th}
   a. Tuesday: Ethnography
      i. Hesse-Biber and Leavy. “Ethnography” (chapter 8)
   b. Thursday: Focus Groups
      i. Hesse-Biber and Leavy. “Focus Group Interviews” (chapter 7)

14. April 16\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th}
   a. Tuesday: The Classic Experiment
      i. Schutt (pages 220-230 in chapter 7 “Experiments”)
   b. Thursday: Quasi and Vignette Experiments
      i. Schutt (pages 231-248 in chapter 7 “Experiments”)
15. April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>

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

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

**Final Research Proposal Due: Wednesday, May 1st by 5pm**