Sociology 205: Introduction to Social Research I
Web Conferencing via Zoom
Tuesday and Thursday 11am to 12:15pm
Spring 2021

Professor: Dr. Christina Falci
Office: 714 Oldfather Hall
Student Hours: by Zoom appointment only
Email: cfalci2@unl.edu
Sociology Office Phone: (402) 472-3631

Teaching Assistant: Andrea Johnson
Office: 730 Oldfather Hall
Student Hours: by Zoom appointment only
Email: andrea.johnson@huskers.unl.edu

Prerequisites: sociology minor/major or sophomore/junior/senior standing

Course Description: The sociology major requires a series of research-oriented courses including SOCI 205 (research methods), SOCI 206 (social statistics), and SOCI 489 (senior capstone). In SOCI 205 students learn the social research process from formulating a research question and developing theoretical hypotheses to designing a research study to answer those question. 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 SOCI 206, students will learn how to statistically analyze quantitative data collected from surveys. In SOCI 489, students will apply their knowledge from both SOCI 205 and SOCI 206 to write a complete original research paper.

For now, in SOCI 205, the focus will be on developing research questions, reviewing the peer-reviewed research literature, and learning numerous data collection methods. The course is split into two main sections. The first section of the semester focuses on the basic elements of research design that apply to all methods of data collection including conceptualization, operationalization, sampling, and causation. In the second half of the semester, students will apply research design elements to research methods utilized by sociologists including surveys, experiments, in-depth interviews, and participant observations. For each research method, students will learn the best practices for collecting the type of data gathered by the method. Importantly, social scientists collect data to test existing or develop new theories. For each method of data collection, students will read an exemplar journal article that will provide an illustrative example of the method within the academic research literature. This class will also address the ethical considerations of social science research in general and within each data collection method. Throughout the entire course students will be working on a three-paper assignment literature review project. For this project, students will formulate a research question, develop hypotheses to answer the question, find the empirical peer-reviewed literature on the topic, and write an integrated review about the current social science understanding of their chosen topic.

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: This class will be delivered synchronously via web conferencing. In other words, all lectures and group exercise work will happen over Zoom during the scheduled class time.

• Lecture classes 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 students’ understanding and encourage students to think further about the topic being covered.

• On groupwork days students will work in impromptu groups of 4-5 students completing methods exercise. Student will be randomly placed in Zoom breakout rooms to work on the exercise. The instructor and TA will be available to answer any questions that arise as each group works through the exercise. Often groups will be able to complete the exercise in class, but if not, then students will need to finish what is left of the exercise outside of class.
  o If you miss class on groupwork methods exercise day, then the student must complete the exercise on their own. It will be important to have notes from the classes before the methods exercise, so students will have the knowledge needed to complete the exercise. If a student is having a hard time completing an exercise on their own, then it is the student’s responsibility to reach out to the instructor or TA for help.

Required Readings: The textbook can be purchased at the University Bookstore and the journal articles are available on Canvas.

Textbook

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles


Media Reading


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

1) Methods Exercises (25%) – over the course of the semester students will complete research methods exercises (each worth 10 points). While students are set up to work in groups of 4-5 students when completing the exercise, *each student is required to write-up and turn-in their own exercise*. The due dates for each exercise are posted on Canvas. I expect every student to participate in the groupwork and follow the groupwork guidelines set up for this activity – see groupwork guidelines below.

2) Literature Review Project (35%) – this is a progressive 3-paper assignment (i.e., each paper assignment builds from the previous one). As such, students are required to use feedback from previous paper assignments to revise the relevant parts of subsequent paper assignments. The due dates for each paper assignment and complete assignment details are posted on Canvas. The first Topic Statement paper provides an overview of the topic of your paper by identifying the research question, concepts and hypotheses. The second Annotated Bibliography paper redrafts the overview based on instructor feedback and contains summaries of each peer-reviewed article that answers your proposed research question. Students will get feedback on the quality and relevance of the peer-reviewed articles – noting which articles are not suitable to use in the final paper. The final Literature Review paper will include an introduction to the research question followed by an integrated literature review – integrating concept definitions and hypothesis statements with a narrative, which cites past research appropriately, about the current social science evidence pertaining to your overall research question and the specific hypotheses you propose.

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

3) Exams (40%) – 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 60 minutes to complete exams 1 & 2, and 90 minutes to complete the final exam. All exams will be taken online via Canvas. Study guides for the exam are posted on Canvas along with timeframes for when students may complete the exam.

- **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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Course Policies:

Attendance and Engagement: Your attendance is expected by university policy and by me. I take attendance at every class, but I do not give a grade for attendance. If students are going to miss more than a single class due to illness or emergency, then get in touch with the instructor as soon as possible. Engagement in class is the best way to get the information you need to perform well in the class. Each student is responsible for any material missed from an absence.

Tardiness: While I expect students to show up for class on time, in my view, it is better to show up to class late than not to come to class at all. If you show up late on the day we have already started a methods exercise, then you will likely need to complete that exercise on your own. If for any reason you anticipate being late on a regular basis to class, then you need to inform the instructor and explain this situation.

Participation: Participation during class discussions and exercises requires being prepared to contribute relevant ideas, reactions, or questions. Completing the methods exercises will sometimes require having read a specified assigned reading before coming to class.

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/emergency or other extenuating circumstances. 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”).

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.

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, each student contributes to an environment that shapes the learning process. Any work and/or communication that you are privy to as a member of this course should be treated as the intellectual property of the instructor and is not to be shared outside the context of this course. Students may not make or distribute screen captures, audio/video recordings of, or livestream, any class-related activity, including lectures and presentations, without express prior written consent from me or
an approved accommodation from Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability such that you need to record or tape class-related activities, you should contact Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Failure to follow this policy on recording or distributing class-related activities may subject you to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct.

**COVID and Zoom Policy:** The global pandemic has altered many aspects of our personal lives and education. We all know that situations can change rapidly and that we may find ourselves needing to adjust/adapt to those changes. Please feel free to reach out to the instructor at any time if you have concerns, questions, situations that are affecting your ability to engage in the class, or if you just want to check-in. In times like this, it becomes even more important for students to reach out to the instructor or TA when they need help with anything, especially extensions on deadlines. I believe it is important for me to be very flexible with students, and I hope students will be patient and flexible with the instructor as I adjust to teaching via web conferencing.

Here are some guidelines to help us be successful in the Zoom environment:

- **Please be on time to class** – a few minutes early, if possible, so I can easily take attendance. If you are late to class, then I will likely mark you as absent for the day.
- **In order to increase a sense of community in this class,** I require that all students keep their Zoom video on during class time. If you cannot leave it on for some reason, please private chat the instructor to let me know why.
  - Students are asked to be in a location/room without other people/activity to minimize distractions and background noise. If this is not possible in your living situation, let the instructor know. If you need to use a Zoom background for privacy, please keep it simple such as a nature scene or other simple visual. Graphics with words or images that may be distracting are discouraged and you may be asked to remove or change them.
  - Students should place their computers or devises on a solid/stable surface (table/desk, not your lap) and sit in an upright chair (avoid couch, recliner, bed, etc.). This not only helps you stay attentive but avoids distractions if your computer or device is jostled. Please align your display so that we can see your face during class times. Looking at the top of your head or the back wall of your room is not as personal as seeing your face.
- **Unless asking a question,** making a comment, responding to question, or participating in a Zoom breakout room for groupwork, please keep your Zoom microphone muted.
  - Unless otherwise stated by the instructor, students should participate during class verbally rather than writing something in the chat; because, it is very challenging for the instructor to monitor the PowerPoint slides, student faces, and the chat.
- **Because students are likely to miss class on occasion this semester,** I will be recording our Zoom sessions that are lecture days - there will not be recordings of groupwork days when working on method exercises. These recordings will be posted on Canvas.
  - Please do not use these recordings as an opportunity not to attend class. If you are able, then students are expected to show up to class during our regular scheduled class time. The learning environment will suffer immensely if students who are able to attend do not show up on a regular basis.
Group Work Guidelines

Basic Principles

A) Courtesy: engage in common courtesy.
   i. Listen. Even if you think what they’re saying is wrong or off topic. Cutting someone off is rude, and not worth whatever small time gain you might make. Don’t finish someone’s sentences for him or her; they can do it for themselves. And remember: talking louder or faster doesn’t make your idea any better.
   ii. Phrase alternative ideas as questions. If someone expresses what you feel is a "bad" opinion, try to criticize it constructively rather than putting down the person. Instead of "I think we should do A, not B," try "What if we did A, instead of B?" That allows people to offer comments, rather than defend one choice.
   iii. Praise each other. Find something nice to say, even if it’s a stretch. Even the worst of ideas has a silver lining inside it, if you just look hard enough. Focus on the good, praise it, and then raise any objections or concerns you have about the rest of it.
   iv. Help team members who are struggling - everyone needs to understand the problem

B) Cooperation: is also a key factor in teamwork
   i. There is no “I” in group work. Don't let one group member have too much responsibility. Conversely, do not let any group member get out of doing their fair share of the work. Each group member needs to take initiative to participate in and complete the task.
   ii. Inclusion. All members should have a chance to express themselves and to influence the group's decisions. Go around the group and hear everyone's ideas (before discussing them) or encourage divergent thinking by brainstorming. All contributions are listened to carefully, and strong points acknowledged. Be sure to include everyone when considering ideas about how to proceed as a group.
   iii. Conflict. If you notice a problem in your group, discuss it right away. Don't let the problem escalate. Apologize for upsetting your peers, even if you think someone else was primarily at fault; the goal is to work together, not start a legal battle over whose transgressions were worse.

Group Member Roles: Occupy each role at least one time during the semester. Before starting any group work, the group must decide who will be the moderator and who will be the presenter:
   o Moderator – this person is in charge of soliciting ideas from or ask questions of each member of the group on the particular task at hand
   o Presenter – this person will be in charge of summarizing the group’s thoughts about how to tackle a specific task to reach consensus before moving on to the next task
   o Participant: all group members are responsible for providing input into the task at hand whether or not they take on one of the above roles

CLASS SCHEDULE ON NEXT PAGE
<table>
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<th>Week: Dates</th>
<th>Class Schedule</th>
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| 1: Jan 26 & 28   | Scientific Literacy and Social Research  
*Introductions discussion post due 1/27  
Syllabus Quiz open on Canvas from 1/25 to 1/29* | media article                   |
| 2: Feb 2 & 4     | **Research Questions**  
*Exercise #1: Research Questions* | Text Chapter 1                  |
| 3: Feb 9 & 11    | **Theory Construction and Conceptual Models**  
*Handout: Conceptual Models  
Exercise #2: Conceptual Models* | Text Chapter 2                  |
|                  | *Topic Statement Paper Assignment due 2/22*                                  |                                 |
| 4: Feb 16 & 18   | **Research Process and Journal Articles**  
*Exercise #3: Reading Journal Articles Part I  
Handout: Reading the Results Section* | Text Appendix A & B Galvin (2015) |
| 5: Feb 23 & 25   | **Research Ethics**  
*Exam One open on Canvas from 2/26 to 3/1* | Text Chapter 3                  |
| 6: March 2 & 4   | **Concepts and Measures**  
*Exercise #5: Operationalization* | Text Chapter 4 (p.65-82)        |
| 7: March 9 & 11  | **Measurement Validity and Reliability**  
*Exercise #6: Measurement Validity and Reliability  
Handout: Searching the Research Literature  
Annotated Bibliography due 3/29* | Text Chapter 4 (p.82-88)        |
| 8: March 16 & 18 | **Sampling**  
*Exercise #7: Sampling* | Text Chapter 5  
*review Chapt. 2 (p. 34-38)* |
| 9: March 23 & 25 | **Causation in Surveys**  
*Exercise #8: Research Design Surveys* | Text Chapter 6 (p. 115-124)  
Doren 2019 |
| 10: March 30 & April 1 | **Causation in Experiments**  
*Exercise #9: Experiment Exemplar  
Exam Two open on Canvas 4/2 to 4/5* | Text Chapter 6 (p.124-139)  
Currin 2007 |
| 11: April 6 & 8  | **Survey Research**  
*Handout: Data Collection Worksheet  
Exercise #10: Writing Survey Questions* | Text Chapter 7 (p.143-151) |
| 12: April 13 & 15 | Survey Research (continued)  
*Literature Review due 4/30* | Text Chapter 7 (p.151-174) |
| 13: April 20 & 22 | **Participant Observation**  
*Exercise #11: Participant Observation Exemplar* | Text Chapter 8 (p.177-192)  
Herring (2019) |
| 14: April 27 & 29 | **In-depth Interviews**  
*Exercise #12: In-Depth Interviews Exemplar* | Text Chapter 8 (p.192-203)  
Johnson (2019) |

**Final Exam open on Canvas from May 5th to May 7th**