

SOCIOLOGY 357: METHODS OF SOCIAL INQUIRY

University of Wisconsin-Madison Fall 2014

Section 303-MW 12:05-12:55pm

Section 304-MW 1:20-2:10pm

2339 Sterling Hall

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Objective

The purpose of discussion section is to clarify understanding of the concepts covered in the lectures and readings and to critically apply these concepts to research projects. In order to achieve this, section will consist of a mix of small group work, large group discussions, and other active learning exercises. Students are expected to come to discussion sections having finished all reading assignments and attended all lectures. Students should come prepared with readings, questions, and notes.

Requirements & Grading

Section participation (25%)

1. Attendance & general participation in discussion (5%)
2. Memos & proposal in preparation for the three projects (i.e., research proposal, experiment, survey) (10%)
 - a. Each memo/homework/proposal submitted in preparation for section discussion will be evaluated with '+', '✓' and '-' system.
3. Presentation (10%)
 - a. Leading discussion on published research article
 - b. Project presentations
 - Each presentation will be evaluated with a '+', '✓' and '-' system

Reading responses (10%)

- For selected readings, you will write a short reading response. For each reading we will provide a set of questions you will address in your reading response.
- Reading responses will be counted, not graded. Poorly written responses, however, may not get counted.

Final products from three main projects (40%)

- You will do three research exercises throughout the semester: a research proposal and two data collection projects. You can do all three exercises about a same topic but not necessarily. We will provide more detailed instructions in class. You can do these exercises individually or as a group (no more than three students per group). You can also do only the data collection portion of the exercise as a group and write the paper individually. When you write the paper as a group, each member is responsible for the paper in its entirety, not just the portion she/he writes.
1. Research proposal exercise (10%)
 2. Randomized Field Experiment project paper (15%)
 3. Questionnaire Survey project paper (15%)
 - o The final products of the projects will be letter-graded.

* Submit all written assignments to Learn@UW. Note that Learn@UW does not accept late submissions. Papers must be turned in on time to receive full credit.

Classroom Policies

Attendance: You are required to attend all discussion sections and arrive on time. Your participation grade will come from punctuality, attendance, and the quality and consistency of your contributions to discussion. Notify me in writing by the second week of the term if you will miss section due to a religious holiday, a school-sponsored field trip, or an athletic event; we will make arrangements for you to turn in assignments. If you will miss section due to a serious illness or an emergency, please contact me ASAP—ideally 24 hours before section. Unexcused absences will result in a zero participation grade. It is your responsibility to receive missed notes from a classmate.

Etiquette: When class begins, please turn electronic devices off and put away other distractions. Electronics will only be allowed for accessibility issues. During discussion, respect classmates, the TA, and yourself. Avoid comments or language whose sole purpose is to provoke or disparage others. If you have contributed in discussion, allow others to speak before making another comment. Do not be afraid to voice your opinion just because it may be different. Please refrain packing up until class is over.

Accommodations: Notify me in writing before the end of the second week about any accommodations due to learning disabilities, religious practices, medical needs, physical needs etc.

Re-grade policy: If you are concerned about a grade, review the assignment and wait 24 hours before contacting me. Submit a written request and stated reason for the re-grade, and schedule a time to meet me in office hours. I will review the assignment with Professor Lim; be aware that assignments may receive lower grades upon review.

Office Hours: If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about course material or the section, please visit me during office hours. Alternatively, email me **with “Soc 357” in the subject line** about accommodations or absences, to schedule an appointment, or with questions to address in section. I will respond to emails within 48 hours during the workday (9AM-5PM). If you have a logistical question, please first consult the syllabus.

Academic integrity: The student is responsible for understanding the University’s policies and disciplinary sanctions concerning academic misconduct. Any instance of cheating, plagiarism, or other misconduct will be dealt with strictly according to university policy (<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#overview>).

Resources

The Writing Center: The Writing Center provides free services to all students including classes and one-on-one meetings to help develop strong writing practices. Staffed by doctoral teaching assistants, Writing Fellows, and highly trained, expert readers, they are qualified to offer help with writing in all disciplines and at all levels. For more information please call 263-1992, email writing@wisc.edu, stop at 6171 Helen C. White Hall, or visit <http://writing.wisc.edu/>

The McBurney Center: It is the intention of the University of Wisconsin and me to work toward full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to make facilities and instructional programs accessible to all people, and to provide reasonable accommodations according to the law. The McBurney Disability Resource Center provides services to students with disabilities to insure accessibility to university programs. McBurney offers accommodations counseling, evaluation referral, disability-related information, adaptive technology counseling and equipment, and interpreter services for academically related purposes. For more information please call 263-2741, email mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu, stop at 1305 Linden Drive, or visit www.mcburney.wisc.edu

* I retain the right to alter or add to this syllabus in minor ways as the evolution of the course may necessitate.

Section Schedule

(See the schedule in the course syllabus for readings and works to be done each week)

Week 1 Introduction

Mon: No meeting

Wed: Introduction and organization

Week 2 Ethical issues in sociological research

Mon: The Role of values in social science research

- Discussion of the Anderson article.

Wed: Ethical issues in studying human subjects

- Discussion of the Goffman reading.

Week 3 Review and practice basic concepts in sociological research

Mon: Analyzing a published article

- Read and discuss the Sampson article, focusing on the followings:
 - What is (are) the key research questions?
 - How do the authors claim the significance of the research?
 - What is the key unit of analysis of the study?
 - What are the core concepts of interests? How are they measured?
 - What are the key hypotheses?

Wed: Develop a research question

- Small group discussion of student's research memo

Week 4 Conceptualization & Operationalization: Discussion and Practice

Mon: *Developing a better measure of the quality of college/university*

- Discussion of the Gladwell and Carey readings
- Group exercise to develop an alternative measure of the quality of college/university

Wed:

- Small group discussion of their research memo, focusing on how they can operationalize their key concepts and how they can collect the data to measure them.
- Also discuss how they might be able to check the validity and reliability of their core measures.

Week 5 Research Proposal Workshop

Mon & Wed: Students present their research proposals and discuss them.

Week 6 Quantitative Data Analysis Practice

Mon: WINSTAT/STATA instruction (led by SSCC staff)

Wed: STATA Exercise using GSS data (led by TA)

Week 7 Reading and writing sociological research

Mon: Writing workshop

- Read samples of student papers. Discuss how to make them a better/stronger paper.

Wed: Abstract/Media-abstract writing exercise

- Read samples of abstracts/media abstracts of published articles. In small groups, write an abstract and a media abstract for a sample article.

Week 8 Discussion of research articles that use randomized field experiments

Mon & Wed: A pair or a small group of students will pretend to be the authors of a research article and make a brief presentation of the article. Other students will serve as discussants and offer their comments/criticisms, especially focusing on their methods. The 'authors' will try to defend the article.

Week 9 Randomized Field Experiment Exercise: Proposal Workshop

Mon & Wed: Each group will present the first draft of their research proposal for the randomized field experiment project. Other groups will offer their comments/suggestions to improve the proposal.

Week 10 Discussion of research articles that use questionnaire survey method

Mon & Wed: See Week 8.

Week 11 Student presentation: Findings from the randomized field experiment exercise.

Mon & Wed: Each group will present their preliminary findings from the experiment project. You do not need to have your paper ready at this point. But you do need to have your data analyzed and have at least some preliminary findings ready to share. Other groups as well as TA will provide feedback.

Week 12 Questionnaire Survey Research Exercise: Proposal Workshop

Mon & Wed: Each group will present the first draft of their research proposal for the questionnaire survey project. The proposal must include the first draft of the questions you would like to include in your questionnaire. Other groups will offer their comments/suggestions to improve the proposal.

Week 13 Polishing the survey questionnaire

Mon & Wed: We will discuss the revised draft of each team's questionnaire. We will also provide some instruction on Qualtrics.

Week 14 Survey data analysis workshop

Mon & Wed: We will provide some additional instructions/assistants to help your data analysis.

Week 15 Presentation of the survey research project & Celebration