

SOC 357/C&E SOC 357: Methods of Sociological Inquiry

Fall 2017

MW 11-11:50 a.m.

Dr. Monica Grant

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Office: 4440 Sewell

Office hours: T 2-3, R 11-12, and by appointment

Chris Holmes Sections 303 and 304 Office: 2454 Social Science Office hours: M 9:55-10:45, T 11:00-11:50	Taylor Laemmler Sections 305 and 306 Office: 2439 Social Science Office hours: T 1:00-3:00
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This is a basic course in how to do social science research and how to evaluate the research of others. It provides a general overview of the ways sociologists collect information about social phenomena with a special emphasis on what can be done to yield information that is trustworthy and useful for our theoretical understanding of social life. You will have the opportunity to practice a range of sociological methods, and will learn how to identify and evaluate how these methods are used in future sociological readings.

This course assumes no background in research methods or statistics. Over the course of the semester, you will be introduced to basic statistical concepts and the methods of statistical computing and will use these tools to analyze the data that you collect.

Department learning objectives. Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content I will cover in this course, I have designed this course to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of sociology:

- *Conduct Research and Analyze Data (quantitative or qualitative)* – you will have the opportunity to design your own research projects, collect your own data, and learn how to analyze and present your findings.
- *Critically Evaluate Published Research* – in discussion section, you will read journal articles that use the methods that we study in class. Together, we will think about why social scientists use different methods to answer different questions, and how different research projects are structured.
- *Communicate Skillfully* – you will gain a research vocabulary that will help you think, write, and speak more critically about social science research.
- *Work effectively in groups* – all assignments are designed to develop your group work skills.
- *Improve project management skills* - .

My goals in this course are: (1) to introduce you to the elements of research design so that you will have a good foundation for future learning, (2) to teach you how to read a research report or journal article with a critical eye, so that you can know how trustworthy its information is, (3) to expose you to a variety of research methods that you may encounter in the future, (4) to convince you that research is a relatively straightforward, systematic set of procedures by which you can get answers to questions you have, (5) to let you experience some of the limitations and problems of doing research into human behavior, and (6) to show you that doing research can be fun.

Required Readings

Dixon, Singleton, and Straits. *The Process of Social Research, 1st Ed.* Oxford University Press.

In addition to the textbook, there are additional assigned readings. Electronic copies of these articles will be posted on Canvas. Hard copies of the articles in the reader will be available on reserve in the Social Science Library on the 8th floor of the Social Science Building (use the elevator at the rear of the building). I expect you to bring the assigned readings with you to section in order to facilitate discussion.

Course Requirements:

Homework (15%)

- Two types of homework will be assigned in section: reading responses (5%) and assignments (10%).
- *Reading responses:* For selected readings, you will be asked to write a short reading response that addresses a specific set of questions. Reading responses will be submitted via Canvas and will be graded on a five-point scale.
- *Assignments:* There will also be three small assignments that will be distributed in section. Two of the three assignments will be begun in class and finished at home. These assignments include:
 - Homework #1: Ethics certification
 - Homework #2: Sampling exercise
 - Homework #3: Stata exercise

Group Projects (45%)

- The primary goal of this class is to introduce you to the methods of social research. You will have the opportunity to try a range of data collection methods. This will require you to spend time outside of class working in groups of 2-4 students to collect and analyze your data. You may write the reports summarizing these exercises either individually or as a group. 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.
- The three research projects are:
 - Project #1: Field Observation (15%)
 - Project #2: Randomization (15%)
 - Project #3: Survey (15%)

- In preparation for each project, your group will submit a memo or proposal that sketches your plan. This will be discussed in the section and your TA will provide feedback. You may be asked to revise and resubmit your proposals. These proposals will count toward your grade for the project.

Quizzes (20%)

- At the end of each week, students will complete a quiz based on assigned readings and lectures from the week before. Some quiz questions will cover material included in the readings but not in the lecture, while others can only be answered by attending and paying attention in lecture. The quiz will be administered through Canvas. The quizzes will consist of true/false questions. You will have two chances to take each quiz and only the higher score will be counted. At each attempt, the questions will be drawn randomly from the “question library” and you will not get the same set of questions in your two attempts.
- **It is your responsibility to complete the quiz during the open window.** You will be given 60 hours to complete the quiz (e.g. W 12 pm – F 9 pm), which is sufficient time for most students to find time in their schedule. If you forget to complete the quiz, it **will not be re-opened** for you after the quiz deadline. We can, however, negotiate the deadline for submitting your quiz **if you contact me before the quiz deadline.** Things happen; in the event that you have scheduled university-related travel, religious observations, severe illness, computer problems, or rescheduled work shifts, email me and I can extend your quiz submission deadline **if you contact me before the quiz deadline.**
- Your lowest quiz score will be dropped from the final quiz grade.

Participation (20%)

Readiness to learn means that you will come to class with questions and insights to offer others and prepared to discuss the relevance and application of the course materials.

Characteristics of Students Who Excel in This Course

- Come to class with reading assignments finished
- Bring thoughtful questions to section for discussion
- Take notes during class discussions and while completing reading assignments
- Lecture Participation (5%)
 - Lecture participation is formally structured through **Top Hat** and is designed to apply concepts and check your understanding of the material.
 - **Top Hat** is an app that can be accessed through your smartphone, tablet, or laptop computer. If you do not have access to any of these items, prefer not to bring them to class, forget to bring one, or have battery issues, write your responses on a sheet of paper and hand it in at the end of class.
 - A semester subscription to Top Hat is \$16. You can set up your Top Hat account at <https://kb.wisc.edu/luwmad.page.php?id=59937>.
 - Participation scores are calculated as the percent of questions answered during class (2-5 questions per class). Scores will be adjusted for **excused** absences. You must contact me **before** lecture in order for your participation to be adjusted.

- Section Participation (7.5%)
 - Section participation is designed to apply the concepts learned in lecture to real research projects, both those written about in journal articles by other social scientists and those designed and implemented by you and your classmates.
 - **You are expected to be prepared for section, including planned workshopping for the components of the group projects.** If you must miss a meeting of your discussion section, you must arrange it in advance with your TA in order to not affect your participation grade.
 - In order to receive full credit for section participation, you are expected to arrive on time and attend all sections, and to be engaged in classroom activities.
- Presentation (7.5%)
 - You will be expected to lead section discussion of at least one assigned article
 - Groups will present their results from Project #3 in the final meetings of section.
 - All presentations will be evaluated on a five-point scale.

Honors Credit:

If you are eligible to receive honors credit for SOC 357, it is your responsibility to make the appropriate course registration and to contact Professor Grant. In order to receive honors credit, you must write a brief research proposal, following the guidelines for the Hilldale Undergraduate Research Competition (<http://awards.advising.wisc.edu/hilldale-undergraduatefaculty-research-fellowship/>). For grading purposes, your grade on the proposal will be averaged with that of your group projects.

Submission of work:

- All assignments must be submitted via Canvas.
- All submissions to Canvas are time-stamped and must be submitted on time in order to receive the full credit. Points will be subtracted for each day late.
- Homework and group project reports must be submitted via Canvas. We recommend that you submit these assignments in Microsoft Word format, if possible.
- Your TA will provide more detailed instructions on how to submit your written work, such as project appendices.

All questions about assignments and grading should first be directed toward your TA.

Accommodations: Please send the instructor and your TA an email by the end of the second week of the course if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. This may be the case if English is your second language, you have a travel schedule from student athletics, or you experience a physical or psychological condition that makes it difficult for you to complete assignments without some modification of those tasks. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the [McBurney Center](#). Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify. Provide a copy of your accommodations request (VISA) to the instructor and your TA by the end of the second week of class.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university's [web page](#) for details: <https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698>

Academic Integrity: As with all courses at the University of Wisconsin, you are expected to follow the University's rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. The standards are outlined by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) at <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/> According to UWS 14, academic misconduct is defined as:

- seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance;
- assists other students in any of these acts.

For a complete description of behaviors that violate the University's standards as well the disciplinary penalties and procedures, please see the Dean of Students [website](#). If you have questions about the rules for any of the assignments or exams, please ask your instructor or one of the TAs.

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights. The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science (jraymo@ssc.wisc.edu).

Important Deadlines

Date	Quiz	Project	Homework
9/15 (F)	Quiz #1		
9/22 (F)	Quiz #2		
9/26 (T)			Homework #1
9/29 (F)	Quiz #3		
10/6 (F)	Quiz #4		
10/13 (F)	Quiz #5		
10/20 (F)	Quiz #6	Project #1	
10/24 (T)			Homework #2
10/27 (F)	Quiz #7		
11/3 (F)	Quiz #8		
11/7 (T)		Project #2	
11/10 (F)	Quiz #9		
11/16 (R)			Homework #3
11/17 (F)	Quiz #10		
12/1 (F)	Quiz #11		
12/8 (F)	Quiz #12		
12/15 (F)		Project #3	

Note: All assignments and quizzes due at **9 pm** on the designated date.

Schedule of Classes

- 9/6 **Introduction**
Reading: The syllabus
Section:
 9/6: No discussion sections
 9/7-9/11: Introductions
Assignments: None
- 9/11-9/13 **Sociology as Science**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 2
Reading for section: Article TBD by your TA (9/12-9/13)
 Desmond, "About This Project," *Evicted* (9/14-9/18)
Section:
 9/12-9/13: How to read a research article (discuss Article TBD)
 9/14-9/18: Objectivity and the role of values in social science research
 (discuss Desmond)
Assignments:
 Quiz #1 must be completed by **Friday, 9/15 at 9 p.m.**
 Note: Quiz #1 covers 9/11-9/13 and associated lecture readings
- 9/18-9/20 **Elements of Social Research**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 4
Reading for section:
 Sudhir Venkatesh, 2008, "The Hustler and the Hustled,"
 Gang Leader for a Day, pp. 185-218 (9/19-9/20)
Section:
 9/19-9/20: Ethical issues in studying human subjects (discuss Venkatesh)
 Homework #1 distributed
 9/21-9/25: In class exercise: hypotheses
Assignments:
 Quiz #2 must be completed by **Friday, 9/22 at 9:00 p.m.**
 Homework #1 must be submitted by **Tuesday, 9/26 at 9:00 p.m.**
- 9/25-9/27 **Measurement in Social Research**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 5
Reading for section: Li Zhou, 2015, "Obama's New College Scorecard Flips the
 Focus of Rankings," *The Atlantic* (9/28-10/2)
Section:
 9/26-9/27: In class exercise: measurement
 9/28-10/2: Discussion of Zhou; in class exercise
Assignments:
 Quiz #3 must be completed by **Friday, 9/29 at 9 p.m.**
- 10/2-10/4 **Qualitative Research**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 9

Reading for section: Ashley Mears. 2015. "Working for Free in the VIP: Relational Work and the Production of Consent." *American Sociological Review*. 80(6): 1099-1122. (10/3-10/4)

Lauren A. Rivera. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review*. 77(6): 999-1022. (10/3-10/4)

Section:

10/3-10/4: Discuss readings (Mears; Rivera)

10/5-10/9: Introduction Project #1

Assignments:

Quiz #4 must be completed by **Friday, 10/6 at 9:00 p.m.**

Project #1 due **Friday, 10/20 at 9:00 p.m.**

10/9-10/11

Sampling

Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 6

Reading for section: None

Section:

10/10-10/11: Work on Project #1 in Section

10/12-10/16: Homework #2 (Sampling exercise) distributed and begun in Class

Assignments:

Quiz #5 must be completed by **Friday, 10/13 at 9:00 p.m.**

Homework #2 must be submitted by **Tuesday, 10/24 at 9:00 p.m.**

10/16-10/18

Causality and Experiments

Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 7

Reading for section: Ernest-Jones et al. "Effects of eye images on everyday cooperative behavior: a field experiment" (10/17-10/18)

Levine et al. "Identity and emergency intervention: How social group membership and inclusiveness of group boundaries shape helping behavior" (10/17-10/18)

Section:

10/17-10/18: Discuss Ernest-Jones et al., Levine et al. articles

10/19-10/23: Discuss Project #2

Assignments:

Quiz #6 must be completed by **Friday, 10/20 at 9:00 p.m.**

10/23-10/25

Designing Field Experiments

Reading for lecture: No assigned reading

Reading for section: None

Section:

10/24-10/25: Plan randomization project

10/26-10/30: Plan randomization project

Assignments:

Quiz #7 must be completed by **Friday, 10/27 at 9:00 p.m.**

Project #2 due **Tuesday 11/7, 9:00 p.m.**

- 10/30-11/1 **Survey Methods**
11/1: Guest speaker from SSCC about Winstat
Reading: Dixon Ch. 8
Reading for section: Rubin, “Measurement of Romantic Love” (10/31-11/1)
 Peterson et al., “Orientations to Happiness and Life Satisfaction: the Full Life versus the Empty Life” (10/31-11/1)
 Desmond and Shollenberger. “Forced Displacement from Rental Housing: Prevalence and Neighborhood Consequences” (11/2-11/3)
Section:
 10/31-11/1: Discuss articles (Rubin, Peterson et al., Desmond and Shollenberger)
 11/2-11/6: Winstat/Stata training in computer lab
Assignments:
 Quiz #8 must be completed by **Friday, 11/3 at 9:00 p.m.**
- 11/6-11/8 **Analyzing Quantitative Data/Social Science Computing Introduction**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 12
Reading for section: None
Section:
 11/7-11/8: Stata exercise (Homework #3)
 11/9-11/13: Distribute Project #3
Assignments:
 Quiz #9 must be completed by **Friday 11/10 at 9:00 p.m.**
 Homework #3 due **Thursday, 11/16 at 9:00 p.m.**
- 11/13-11/15 **Multiple Methods**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 11
Section:
 11/14-11/15: Plan Survey Project (critique questionnaires in class)
 11/16-11/20: Qualtrics training
Assignments:
 Quiz #10 must be completed by **Friday, 11/17 at 9:00 p.m.**
 Project #3 due **Friday, December 15 at 9:00 p.m.**
- 11/20-11/22 **Qualitative Data Analysis**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 13
Reading for section: Desmond, “Disposable Ties,” *Evicted* (11/28-11/29)
Section:
 11/21-11/22: In class coding exercise
 11/23: NO SECTION – HAPPY THANKSGIVING
Assignments:
 Quiz #11 must be completed by **Friday, 12/1 at 9:00 p.m.**
 Note: Quiz #11 covers material from 11/17 and 11/22

11/27

Careers in Sociology

Guest Speaker: Joel Clark, Sociology Career Counsellor

Section:

11/27-11/28: Download Project #3 data from Qualtrics

11/29-11/30: Survey data analysis

Assignments:

Quiz #11 must be completed by **FRIDAY, 12/1 at 9:00 p.m.**

Note: Quiz #11 covers material from 11/20-11/27

Continue work on Project #3

11/29-12/6

Unobtrusive Research (and Big Data)

Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 10

Cukier and Mayer-Schoenberger, "The Rise of Big Data: How It's Changing the Way We Think About the World" (12/8)

danah boyd and Kate Crawford, "Critical Questions for Big Data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon" (12/8)

Section:

12/4-12/5: Survey data analysis

12/6-12/7: Project #3 presentations

Assignments:

Quiz #12 must be completed by **FRIDAY, 12/8 at 9:00 p.m.**

Note: Quiz #12 covers material from 11/29-12/6

Continue work on Project #3

12/11-12/13

No lecture

Reading: No reading

Section:

12/11-12/12: Project #3 presentations

12/13: No discussion section

Assignments:

Project #3 due **Friday 12/15, 9:00 p.m.**

No quiz this week