

SYLLABUS
SOCL 3813-201
Spring 2026
T/TH 9:30am-10:50am
Prothro-Yeager Hall PY 100

Professor: Amy Clark, PhD

OFFICE: O'Donohoe 131

Mon. 9:55am-10:55am; 12:25pm-2:25pm

Tues. 10:55 am-11:55 am

Wed. 9:55am-10:55am

The best way to meet with me is on campus during my office hours, which are listed above. You can email me to set up an appointment or drop by to see me. Otherwise, I can meet with you during my office hours electronically via Zoom. If you need to schedule a Zoom appointment, then please give me *as much advanced notice as possible*, and we can set up a time. You can also reach me via email or by the D2L message inbox. I answer emails **Monday through Friday within 48 hours**; this excludes weekends. So, *I don't answer emails or D2L inbox messages over the weekend*. However, electronic communication is time stamped, and I will honor the date and time that you contact me.

EMAIL: amy.clark@msutexas.edu

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Required Textbooks:

Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat. Herzog. (2010). 2nd Edition. ISBN: 9780063119284.

Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers

Animals & Society - an Introduction to Human-Animal Studies. Demello (2021).

2nd Edition. ISBN: 9780231194853. Publisher: Columbia University Press (Now Perseus)

Additional readings/videos are provided/presented in class.

Required materials

- Scantrons (Form 882-E)
- No. 2 Pencil
- Composition notebook for optional extra credit
- Students are required to submit written work in a .docx or PDF format; students have access to Microsoft Office 365 through their MSU credentials

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore the integral role that non-human animals play in our society, and investigate the human-animal relationships that exist for our physical, emotional, and mental health, entertainment, survival, and social awareness. The main objective of this course is to establish a sociological perspective that enables an examination of human-animal relationships in a broader, sociological context.

Research skills students gain from this course

In accordance with the mission of MSU Texas, this class focuses on active and high impact learning. Students gain and then actively practice research skills related to relevant course topic of their choice, which will be highly beneficial to their professional career.

By the end of this course, students will be able to put the following **research skills** on their professional resume/curriculum vitae:

- (1) Conducted a qualitative content analysis in order to answer a research question
- (2) Analyzed qualitative data; created a codebook and coded data for emergent themes
- (3) Presented research findings in an academic setting
- (4) Based on findings, provided suggestions for future sociological research

ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING:

EXAMS: Worth 150 points each; 600 total

Exams will be administered in class. They are not open notes or open book. Students are required to bring their own scantron and number two pencils. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple choice/true false questions (worth 2 points each) and 5 short answer prompts (worth 10 points each). Students will be provided the prompts in advance, but they are not allowed to use notes on the day of the exam. Students must answer each short answer prompt with at least 5 complete sentences for each response. Incomplete or incorrect responses will result in a reduction in their grade on the short-answer portion of the test.

Exams cover required readings, required videos, class discussions, lectures, any class activities, any PPT presentations done by other students, and any notes, emails, or materials posted in D2L. Students will have **the entire class period** to complete the multiple choice/true false and short answer questions. Students who arrive to class late on test day **must finish the exam by the time they are taken up by the instructor** and will not be provided extra time to finish the exam. Students who miss an exam for an unexcused reason will **receive a zero**; there are no makeup exams allowed for unexcused absences. Students with excused absences will be required to make up the exam on a date designated by the instructor at the end of the semester.

There is no final exam in the course, and none of the exams are cumulative.

Special Notes on Accommodations for Tests:

- Students should notify me as soon as possible if they have accommodations for exams through DSS, and I must receive the DSS notification letter **before** the accommodation will be provided.
- Based on approved accommodations and testing needs, students can arrange to take a test on campus with an approved proctor in an alternate setting. The exam must be taken the same day as it is administered in class.

Policy on Missed Exams

- Students can only make up an exam with verifiable documentation an excused absence. Unexcused absences on test day will result in a zero on the exam. No exceptions.

Test grades will not be curved or dropped

Test grades will not be curved, and no test grades will be dropped. However, students are encouraged to complete the extra credit opportunity in the event that one of their test grades was much lower than they expected.

CONTENT ANALYSIS: Worth 200 points.

Content Analysis Assignment

Dr. Clark will spend time teaching students how to do each portion of the content analysis, and they don't need any previous experience doing research in order to complete this project. She will also provide them with several resources about conducting content analysis, which they can cite in their methods section. This project is designed to be highly relevant to what the student wants to research, and they can choose any topic that is of interest to them as long as it is relevant to the course. This topic should also be something that is relevant to the students future employment, academic, or research goals, respectively. After completing this project, students are capable of presenting it at an on-campus research or creative endeavor symposium and/or continuing it with a future publication goal in mind. Students can also highlight the research skills they gained from doing this analysis on their resume and/or curriculum vitae.

For this project, students should develop a research question which they can answer through a content analysis. The content they analyze can be from one of the following sources: social media post/reels/videos; episodes from a series (streaming or television); YouTube videos; films/movies/videos; artwork/photos displayed digitally, in a gallery, or in a museum. Students will analyze themes presented in the content that they analyze in order to answer their larger research question. Students should also support their findings with a clear connection to relevant sociological literature. Students are required to support their findings with at least 10 scholarly sources as well as relate their findings to relevant information that they learned so far in the course. (Students are provided with *some sources to support their methods* section by their instructor, and *several of those sources should be cited in their paper. These sources can count toward the overall 10.*) Overall, students should discuss how their theory, framework, or model further explains the themes that emerge in the content they reviewed. The evidence that they use to support their findings comes from the notes they took in their codebook, which is attached as an appendix to their paper. Similarly, students should describe the contributions of their study and suggest ideas for future sociological research.

Their content analysis should be 15-17 double-spaced pages (total), and all of the following are *included* in the required page length: (1) an introduction; (2) a problem statement; (3) a rationale; (4) a research question; (5) a sociological theory/framework/or model; (6) methods/ data collection; (7) data analysis; (8) findings, limitations, and conclusions; (9) suggestions for future research; (10) references formatted in APA 7th edition; and (11) an appendix containing their **codebook**. In-text and references citations should be formatted in APA 7th edition. Students will lose points for not correctly citing both in-text and reference citations in APA 7th edition.

Amount of Content Students Are Required to Analyze

In order to answer their research question, students may *choose one type of content to review* from groups 1, 2, 3, 4, *or* 5 below.

- (1) 20 to 30 short social media reels or posts/pictures/photos/graphics
- (2) 10 moderate length social media videos (any more than 60 seconds)
- (3) 3 episodes of a series on a streaming platform (less than 60 minutes each) or on television; these must be preapproved by instructor
- (4) 2 films/movies/videos (easily accessible to the student) less than 2 hours in length; these must be preapproved by the instructor
- (5) 10 pieces of artwork/photos (digitally; in a public gallery; in a museum; in books or eBooks)

Description of Codebook (Appendix)

In the process of their analysis, students should develop a **codebook**, which will be an **appendix** for their content analysis project. *The codebook counts toward the overall page length of their analysis projects. Projects without a codebook will not be graded.* The codebook should be created in Excel or Word and contain at least seven columns. **Column 1** should provide the source of the data (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, a film, an

article, a blog, a piece of art, etc.). **Column 2** should provide a link to the source (the specific post, the specific article, the specific blog post) or the title of the work. **Column 3** should provide a time stamp for the specific part of the content you are referring to and/or a page number/paragraph number for an image in an article/blog. Otherwise, describe the location of where the book, eBook, piece of art was accessible to you (i.e. MSU Library or an exhibit running for a certain length of time). If you are reviewing an episode of a series, provide the name of the episode, the series, name, the date of the episode, and what streaming/cable network you used. If you are reviewing images on a website, then you can number the images in chronological order. If you are reviewing images only, which don't have timestamps, then provide the date stamp. If you are reviewing a movie, film, etc., then provide as much information about the film/movie as possible so that others would know how to access it in the future. **Column 4** should describe the larger concept present in the content that is related to your research question. (*An example of a concept would be an animal that provides emotional support*). **Column 5** should give a specific breakdown of the larger concept (a theme) present in the media reviewed. I suggest identifying one or two concepts. Students should aim to have two to three themes per concept. (*An example of a theme would be the presence of a support animal.*) **Column 6** should give the specific example/specific evidence present/portrayed in the content that was reviewed. In this column, you want to answer the questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how much? You can also look at WHY the content was portrayed in this manner, and what message is being conveyed by what is added or excluded? How does this evidence help to answer your research question? (*Examples would be a person who is holding an animal; an animal is on the lap of a human; animals are on laps, in arms, or beside feet of humans; human are visibly anxious before holding the animals and are calmer after the animal is present.*) **Column 7** should address the impact of the media. (i.e. likes, follows, comments, number of people who watched the film, reviews of the movie, success/reviews of the art exhibit, etc.). This column will help you when you choose the most outstanding or most influential pieces of media to share with the class in your PPT presentation. (*Think about which pieces of media evoked the most emotion, provoked the biggest reactions, or had the most profound impacts. The overall impact of the pieces of media also helps you to answer your research question.*)

*All content analysis projects **require a codebook** and **will NOT be graded** without it attached as an appendix or uploaded as a separate document called "Appendix." As stated previously, the codebook counts toward the required page length of 15-to-17-pages.

** Any projects submitted without references will **NOT be graded** and will receive a zero. When sources are used to write any paper, you must provide properly formatted references or it is considered plagiarism.

***Any use of unauthorized AI on this project will result in the grade of a zero. (See AI use policy.)

POWER POINT PRESENTATION: Worth 100 points

Students should organize a PowerPoint presentation as a *summary of the content they have analyzed*, which they will present to the entire class. The presentation should be a minimum of 10 slides and a maximum of 12. The presentation should take between 15 to 20 minutes. A detailed description and rubric for the presentation will be provided in D2L.

The Power Point Presentations should include the following: (1) A title slide; (2) an introduction slide (includes major points from literature reviewed); (3) problem statement slide; (4) rationale slide; (5) a research question slide; (6) a theoretical framework slide; (7) a methods slide; (8) a data collection slide; (9) a data analysis slide; (10) a findings and conclusions slide; (11) a suggestions for future research slide; and (12) a references slide. The references should be formatted in APA 7th edition. *Detailed instructions about what each slide should contain will be posted in D2L.* Students should *provide screenshots of the most impactful content they reviewed and should include these images in the data analysis slide.*

Students can lose up to 30 points on their PPT presentation grade for any of the following reasons: using their phones or laptops during another student's presentation, talking during another student's presentation,

listening to headphones during another student's presentation, entering or leaving the room while another student is presenting, and/or not presenting their own PPT at their assigned time on the assigned date. Students are able to sign up for specific time slots to present in class.

QUIZZES: Worth 100 points

There are 4 quizzes, which are to be completed in class. Each quiz is worth 25 points. They are not open book or open notes, and they are to be completed via scantron. Each quiz may have multiple choice, true false, fill in the blank, or short answer questions. Students are given 25 minutes to complete the quiz. Quizzes are administered at the beginning of class. Students who come to class late will not be given extra time.

Graded Assessments	POINTS	Weighted Percentage of Final Grade by Category
Exams 1-4 (150 points each)	600	60%
Content Analysis (200 points)	200	20%
Power Point Presentation (100 points)	100	10%
Quizzes (4 @ 25 points each)	100	10%
Total Number of Points Available in the Course	1000	100%

Extra Credit

- There is one extra credit discussion board worth 30 points. It is due by the date and type listed in the Syllabus. Extra credit should be submitted in D2L by the date and time listed in the syllabus.

Late work:

- Content Analyses projects and PowerPoints will be accepted late for a penalty. **No late quizzes or tests will be excepted for unexcused absences.** Content Analyses and PowerPoints may be accepted **UP TO 48 HOURS LATE in D2L** with an unexcused absence according to the policy listed below. Therefore, students **MUST PAY ATTENTION** to the difference between **the due date and the last date that an assessment is available**. If students have any questions about this, then please ask me as soon as possible. *Submitting an assignment minutes late in D2L IS LATE AND WILL BE PENALIZED at the rates listed below without an approved excuse.*
 - Unexcused Content Analysis or PowerPoints may be submitted in D2L up to 48 hours late, but they will be penalized at the following rates:**
 - < or equal to 24 hours late, 50% reduction in the total point value of the assignment.** The deduction will be manually calculated by the instructor and applied in D2L once the assignment has been graded. The number of points deducted will depend on the point value of the assignment.
 - > 24 hours late but < or equal to 48 hours late, will receive a 75% reduction in the total point value of the assignment.**
 - >48 hours late WILL NOT be accepted and will be marked as a ZERO in D2L.**

COURSE POINT TOTALS AND CORRESPONDING GRADING SCALE

Grades will be determined by the following scale:

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	900 or higher
B	800 to 899
C	700 to 799
D	600 to 699
F	Less than 600

Posting of Grades

Grades are **posted two weeks** from the **due date** of an assignment. The instructor reserves the right to move a due date, and grades will thus be posted from the *updated* due date of the assignment.

Course Policies

Policy on Academic Dishonesty and AI Use

- Students are NOT allowed to use ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or any other unauthorized AI in this class. Similarly, students are NOT allowed to use any AI functions in Microsoft Word or Grammarly or any AI tools in any other form of word processing software. Thus, students are advised to use basic spelling and grammar check in Microsoft Word.
- Turnitin **will be utilized** to check for possible plagiarism on written assignments.
- Students suspected of cheating on exams, quizzes, or written assignments will be given a zero on the assessment and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.
- Students should never submit another person's work; this is cheating and will result in a zero and referral to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.
- Any unauthorized use of AI in the course, such as **Chat GPT, Claude, or Gemini** will result in a zero on any written assignments. All written assignments submitted in D2L are checked for plagiarism and use of AI via Turnitin. Students should not use ANY AI features in **Microsoft Office (CoPilot) or Grammarly** to submit their written assignments. Students are advised to use *basic* features of Microsoft Word and Grammarly only. These basic features should not have *any components of AI*; students should *not use any tools that word spin AI generated content in any capacity*. **If students are unsure about whether or not their word processing software is using AI or will flag Turnitin for the use of AI, then they can contact D2LHelp to double check.**

Attendance policy

Attendance is reported to the Registrar. Unexcused absences will adversely impact students' ability to do well in the course, and attendance is required. Students will not be dropped for attendance, but if students do not attend regularly, then they will not do well on quizzes and tests. This will adversely impact their overall grade in the course.

The Americans With Disabilities Act

- The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all

students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Office of Disability Accommodation. The telephone number is 397-4618.

Expectations about classroom etiquette and netiquette

- Coming to class is an essential part of a student's learning experience in this course. Students are expected to promptly attend class and actively participate. Students should engage in civil dialogue with others and keep a positive attitude and a growth mindset. Students should be willing to listen to others and *not engage in any form of hostile communication or excessively disruptive behavior*.
- Respect, empathy, kindness, and compassion for others will be a cornerstone in this course. Sociologists discuss things that are inherently controversial. Some of our class discussions may be energized at times, and it may become apparent that not everyone agrees. Regardless, we are all part of a larger community at MSU Texas, and I expect that each of you will do your very best to respect one another. We are all here to learn and listen and grow. *Please know that if you feel triggered, there are campus support services available.*
- When interacting with me and each other, please keep MSU Texas' core value of respect in mind at all times. Rude, abusive behavior will not be tolerated either in person or online. Disruptive behavior will be referred to Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Online communications including emails should display principles of netiquette and be civil in tone.

Disruptions of the classroom environment

- Students *should not use their phone or talk to other classmates* during class. This is excessively disruptive.
- Please refrain from using your phone or laptops during class, and keep them put away during lecture. In the event that you are experiencing a family or personal crisis, then please sit close to the door; you may go into the hall and check your messages or make a phone call if it is **absolutely an emergency**. Otherwise, please be mindful that unauthorized use of technology is considered excessively distracting.
- Students **should not** be playing games, texting, using social media, or listening to lectures for other classes while attending my class. Students engaging in this behavior will be *provided one verbal and one written warning before they are asked to leave class early*.
- Students talking during class will be provided *one verbal and one written warning about their disruptive behavior*. If they disrupt class a third time, then they will be asked *to leave class early*.

Use of cell phones and laptops in class

There may be times where brining your phones and laptops are appropriate based on instructor direction. Class lectures **cannot be recorded** unless you have an accommodation from disability services. *I must have the appropriate documentation from the DSS office as soon as possible.*

Excessive absences

- I will not drop you for absences. However, **your letter grade is very likely to drop** if you do not regularly attend class. **Attendance is recorded and reported to the Registrar**. You are required to attend this class.
- Missing class for unexcused reasons **will adversely impact your ability to do well on your tests and quizzes**. You will also miss critical instructions for your assignments, which will impact your ability to correctly complete them. So, missing several classes will negatively impact your overall grade in the class-especially if they are unexcused.
- If something serious has happened, which prevents you from coming to class, then please *reach out to me as soon as is reasonably possible*.

Extenuating Circumstances, Emergencies, Illness, and Academic Activities:

Emergencies and other extenuating circumstances happen. The following count as emergencies and/or extenuating circumstances and should be evidenced by appropriate documentation:

- Written evidence of attending a mandatory university-sponsored activity (band, athletics, etc.)-documentation must come from college dean, Athletic Director, and/or Provost
- Official documentation of mandatory military service (i.e., deployment, etc.)
- Religious observance or Holy Day(s)
- Medical appointments related to pregnancy, pregnancy related complications, delivering early, or being restricted from activity for a certain amount of time due to pregnancy
- An acute or chronic illness, which prevents you from coming to campus or coming to class on time
- A written note from a medical clinic
- A written note from the MSU Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities
- A written note from a physician for a family member/loved one's illness
- You experience issues related to Title IX including but not limited to assault, stalking, or domestic violence
- Official documentation of required jury or court appearance
- Death of a family member/loved one/close relative
- Documentation of a motor vehicle accident, domestic disturbance, theft of your property, etc., which prevented you from coming to class
- Unexpected homelessness, food insecurity, job displacement, or a loss of otherwise reliable transportation-*please let me know about this as soon as possible*
- If you suddenly became an unexpected caregiver of someone critically ill
- If you are a law enforcement, corrections officer, or first responder and are faced with a verifiable/documented work emergency, which prevented you from coming to class (i.e. a transport, accident, fire, or major trauma etc.)

Though the aforementioned list is thorough, if you have absences related to other extreme/extenuating circumstances beyond your control that are not listed above, then please let me know as soon as possible. I want you to be successful in this class, and I will make EVERY EFFORT to help you do so. **Please communicate with me as soon as something has gone wrong and before you begin missing several classes.** MSU Texas has a team of dedicated people ready to help you stay in school, and my desire is to support your continued education. The MSU Texas Student Handbook has additional information on certain types of absences and what you should do next.

COURSE CALENDAR AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND REQUIRED ACTIVITIES

Submission of assignments: Exams and quizzes are submitted **IN CLASS**. PPTs are presented **in class** at an **assigned time** but **submitted** in D2L by the due date at 11:59pm CST. The Content Analysis and the extra credit are submitted in D2L on the due date **by 11:59pm CST**. There is **NO** final exam in this class.

MODULE	ITEMS TO READ/VIEW/DISCUSS	ITEMS DUE/ SUBMISSION FORMAT
Module 1: Weeks 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • DeMello (Chapter 1) • Herzog (Introduction) 	Quiz #1: All material & lectures from module 1 due Thursday February 5th
Module 2: Weeks 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DeMello (Chapters 2-3) • Herzog (Chapter 3) • Video: <i>Cujo</i> (Stephen King/Movie Clips) 	Exam #1: All material & lectures from Modules 1 & 2 due Thursday, February 26

Module 3: Content Analysis Methodology Weeks 7-10 <i>Spring Break is March 9-15</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to conduct content analysis: a comprehensive guide unlock hidden meanings! Learn how to conduct content analysis, determining the presence of words, themes, or concepts in your data. (Abbadia 2024; 5pp) Comments Analysis on Social Media: A Review. (Alfawan, Siallagan, & Putro, 2023; 8pp) Applebaum, J. W., Tomlinson, C. A., Matijczak, A., McDonald, S. E., & Zsembik, B. A. (2020). The Concerns, Difficulties, and Stressors of Caring for Pets during COVID-19: Results from a Large Survey of U.S. Pet Owners. <i>Animals</i>, 10(10), 1882. (Approx. 14 pp) Delve, Ho, L., & Limpaecher, A. (2024). Codebooks in Qualitative Content Analysis.(13pp) Lai, L. & To, W. (2015). Content analysis of social media: A grounded theory approach. <i>Journal of Electronic Commerce Research</i> 16(2):138-152. Luo, A. (2022). Content Analysis: A Step-by-Step Guide with Examples. Scribbr. (8 pp) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz #2 (all lectures & material module 3) due Thursday March 19 Exam #2 (all lectures & material module 3) due Thursday March 26
Module 4: Weeks 11-13 <i>Holiday Break is April 2-4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DeMello (Chapters 4-6) Videos: <i>Remembering the 1944 Circus Fire</i> (NBC); <i>Tiger King Explained in 7 Minutes</i> (Cagan); <i>Jabari the Gorilla violent attack</i> (WFAA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz#3 (All lectures, material from Module 4) due Thursday, April 9 Exam #3 (All lectures, material from Module 4) due Thursday, April 16
Module 5: Weeks 14-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DeMello (Chapters 7-9;11-12) Herzog Ch. 7-8 Videos: <i>Behind the Scenes at a Slaughterhouse; Whitefeather Meats</i> (Bearded Butcher); <i>An inside look at factory farms</i> (McArthur); <i>2014 Lone Star Land Steward: Hillingdon Ranch</i> (Texas Parks and Wildlife) Photos and blog: <i>Hillingdon Ranch Book-Blog</i> (Langford & Clark 2014-2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT Presentations begin (due in class) on Tuesday, April 21 and Thursday, April 23 PPT Submissions (due in D2L) by 11:59pm CST on Thursday April 23 Quiz #4 (all lectures & material module 5; & all PPT presentations) due in class on Thursday, April 30
Module 6: Final Wrap Up Weeks 16-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make up day is Tuesday, May 5th 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content Analysis & Codebook (due in D2L) by Thursday May 7 at 11:59pm CST Optional Extra Credit (due in D2L) by Thursday, May 7 at 11:59pm CST Exam #4 (all lectures, material module 5 & all PPT presentations) due in class Thursday May 7

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT COURSE CALENDAR ABOVE

*A paper copy of all required readings (other than the textbook) will be provided for students in-class.