



## **Syllabus: Research Methods**

**Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences**

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**SOCL 3633 Section 201**

**Spring Semester 2022 CRN = 20042**

**Days M, and W; Time: 2:00pm to 3:20pm**

**Building and room: PY 100**

### **Contact Information**

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Instructor: Isaac Christiansen, PhD. Assistant Professor of Sociology

Office: Prothro-Yeager Hall, Room O-134

Office hours: MW 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. T 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Office phone: (940) 397.4179

E-mail: [isaac.christiansen@mwsu.edu](mailto:isaac.christiansen@mwsu.edu)

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### **Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to methods and techniques of sociological research. Here we examine the use and application of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analytical techniques.

### **Course Overview and Objectives**

Research methods provide the fundamental basis for our knowledge as social scientists. We use the scientific method to observe, learn and make inferences on various levels of analysis. Regardless of the particular area of sociology that most interests you, this course is designed to introduce you to the tools that social scientists use to conduct research. Learning how to match the different methods to different questions, and how to conduct a research project is a critical skill. This course will help you familiarize yourself with basic of sociological research methods. Specifically, you will be able to:

- Identify the principles of the scientific method and how they provide an epistemological foundation to our understanding of the social world. Thus, early on in the course, you should be able to identify why sociological perspectives informed by research are qualitatively distinct and superior to views that are based on ‘common sense’, the media and personal experience.
- Construct worthwhile research questions.
- Understand the various steps in the research process.
- Be able to identify the differences between quantitative and qualitative research, and when they are appropriate.
- Understand how sociological concepts are ‘operationalized’ to be measured.
- Understand the importance of maintaining a strong link between theory and research.

- Understand the critical role ethics play in research.
- Identify different types of quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis methods, and begin to understand which types of methods may answer which types of questions.
- Identify different sampling strategies, and the strengths and weaknesses of each.
- Understand how the research question(s) determine the method(s) to follow.
- Begin to form an idea of the types of analyses to which you can subject various types of data, and what kind of knowledge each type of test will render.
- Develop an actable research proposal OR complete Comparative Method Paper assignment.

### **Textbook & Instructional Materials**

Carr, Deborah, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, and Mary C. Waters. 2018. *The Art and Science of Social Research*. Norton. New York and London

### **Required Articles and Class Readings**

- Barata, Rita B., Manoel C. Sampaio de Almeida Ribeiro, Zilda Pereira da Silva, and José L. Ferreira Antunes. 2013. "Social Class: Concepts and Operationalization Models in Health Research." *Rev Saúde Pública* 47(4):1-9.
- Esterberg, Kristen G. 2002. "Strategies for Beginning Research" Pp.25-41 in *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Companies. Inc.
- Hlavka, Heather R., Darreen Wheelock and Jennifer E. Cossyleon. 2015. "Narratives of Commitment: Looking for Work with a Criminal Record." *The Sociological Quarterly*. 56:214-236
- National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. "The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research." Department of Health, Education and Welfare.
- Navarro, Vicente. 1993. "Has Socialism Failed? An Analysis of Health Indicators Under Capitalism and Socialism" *Science and Society*. 57(1) 6-30.
- Neuman, M. Lawrence 2006. "Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs." Pp. 149-178 in *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Sixth ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Pager Devah and Lincoln Quillian. 2005 "Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus What They Do" *American Sociological Review*. 70 (3) 355-380.
- Schutt, Russell K. 2004. "Chapter 11: Historical and Comparative Research." Pp. 337-366 in *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. Fourth ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Sugie, Naomi and Kristen Turney. 2017. "Beyond Incarceration: Criminal Justice Contact and Mental Health." *American Sociological Review*. 82(4) 719-743.

### **Non-assigned examples of types of research**

### **Experiments:**

Abascal, Maria. 2015. "Us and Them: Black-White Relations in the Wake of Hispanic Population Growth" *American Sociological Review*. 80(4) 789-813.

Hahl Oliver, Minjae Kim and Extra W. Zuckerman Sivan. 2018. "The Authentic Appeal of the Lying Demagogue: Proclaiming the Deeper Truth about Political Illegitimacy" *American Sociological Review*. 83(1) 1-33.

### **Surveys:**

Stikes, L. Beverly, Newman Chun Wai Wong & Emily LaBeff. 2017. "College Cheating Thirty Years Later: The Role of Academic Entitlement" *Deviant Behavior*. 1-12.

Christiansen I., Suheyl Gurbuz and Beverly Stiles. 2020. Awareness of U.S. Empire and Militarist Ideology: A Survey of College Students from a Southwestern University in the United States. *International Critical Thought*. 10(1) 1-18.

### **Historical Comparative:**

Willson, Andrea E. 2009. 'Fundamental Causes' of Health Disparities: A Comparative Analysis of Canada and the United States. *International Sociology* 24(1) 93-113

## **Student Handbook**

Refer to: [Student Handbook 2017-18](#)

### **Basic skills necessary for the assimilation of sociological knowledge and success in this course:**

**1. Self-discipline:** You will need to be sufficiently dedicated and take the time necessary to not only read through all of the assigned material, but to truly learn and absorb it. You will need to ask yourself questions as you read to ensure that you can identify and recall the main points. After reading you should be able to answer questions related to the material and see its personal and/or social/economic/political implications.

**You are responsible for knowing the material in the text and other readings according to the syllabus schedule as well as the material covered in class lecture.**

Chapters should be read by the time the material is covered in class. In this way you will gain more from the lecture, be prepared for quizzes, and reduce the need to cram for exams. To test your own knowledge, you should be able to answer the questions at the end of each chapter correctly.

**2. Attend every class. Come prepared and pay attention in class, take appropriate notes according to your best learning style and method.**

**3. A willingness to challenge dominant beliefs and perceptions.** The sociologist must not fear information, data, and iconoclastic perspectives, which may clash with their

preconceptions. The sociologist must not shy away from information, data or truths that may be distasteful to powers that be- or to their own preconceptions.

### Course Schedule

Week	Topics	Readings	Due Dates
Week 1 1/10 to 1/12	Overview of course and scientific method	Carr 1; Esterberg	
Week 2 1/17	Research process		
1/19	Theory's role in research	Carr 2	
Week 3 1/24	Theory		
Week 3 1/26	Research Ethics	Carr 3 ASA Code of Ethics	Research question brainstorm due 1/26
Week 4 1/31	Research Ethics		Ethics Certification due 2/1
2/2	<b>Exam 1</b>		
Week 5 2/7- 2/9	Hypotheses and Operationalization	Carr 4; Barata 2013	
Week 6 2/14- 2/16	Reliability and Validity	Carr 5	
Week 7 2/21-2/23	Sampling Strategies	Carr 6	
Week 8 2/28-3/2	Survey Research	Carr 7	
Week 9 3/7	Survey Research	Quillian and Pager 2001	
3/9	<b>Exam II</b>		
3/13 – 3/17	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>		
Week 10 3/21	Session to review progress	Carr 8;	
3/23	Experimental Research	Catch up on reading	Survey Due 3/23
Week 11 3/28-3/30	Experimental Research	Pager and Quillian. 2015	

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>
Week 12 4/4-4/6	Qualitative Analysis	Carr 11, Hlavka et al.	
Week 13 4/11	Secondary data- historical and comparative research	Schutt 11; Navarro	Research Article Review Due 4/11
4/13	<b>HOLIDAY BREAK</b>		
Week 14 4/18-4/20	Materials and Methods	Carr 12;	<b>Research Proposal or Comparative Methods Paper Due 4/20</b>
Week 15 4/25-4/27	Quantitative Analysis	Carr 14; Sugie and Turney	
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>Exam 3 (not comprehensive) Wednesday May 4, 5:45-7:45</b>		

### **Grading points and weights**

Assignments	Points
Research Question Brainstorm	10
Ethics Assignment Certification	10
Survey Instrument	25
Research article review	25
Attendance	30
Research Proposal or Comparative Methods paper	50
Exam 1	50
Exam 2	50
Exam 3	50
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>300</b>

### **Grading Scale**

90% to 100% A  
80% to 89% B  
70%-79% C  
60%-69% D

### **Note on Research Methods**

I will be available throughout the semester during office hours and/or by appointment to sit down with you and help you to work through your ideas on these projects, or to help clarify confusions that may arise when dealing with research methods. Research methods may appear overwhelming at first, but you just need to take it one step at a time.

## **Research Question Assignment**

Brainstorm on topics of interest. Choose a topic that you would be interested in designing a research proposal with the goal in mind of eventually turning it into a research project. What is it about this topic that you want to know? Then, brainstorm three or four specific research questions that are related to your topic, such as: What are some of the primary causes of homelessness in Wichita Falls? What barriers do homeless people face when seeking employment, and what strategies do they employ to address those challenges? What is the relationship between unemployment and inequality? Does a recent alcohol abuse rehabilitation program significantly reduce excessive drinking? While these are just ideas, it is important for you to brainstorm questions of interest to you. Then, after brainstorming three to four questions (and writing them down on the top of your assignment, select one and answer the following questions. What would you need to do to obtain the data to answer this question? Does your research question lead you down a quantitative or qualitative path? Why? What are some steps that would conceivably have to take to have a reasonable trustworthy answer to your research question? Finally, identify three scholarly sources that you could later read (and build upon) for a literature review. While you may change your research question as the semester moves on, you may also use it to build up to your research proposal.

The question ideally should be either theoretically important (i.e., conducting the research will improve our understanding of an important social phenomenon or practically informative in terms of informing social, economic or political policy. This question could take the form of what explains a particular phenomenon and may take lead to formal hypotheses to address the question (more quantitative). Or, the question may be more exploratory and looking for meaning to a particular phenomenon (grounded theory) or a comparison of case studies (leading to qualitative research). The research could also be evaluative- did a particular program have the expected impact? Generally, it is important to have research questions that address associations and or causal relationships. *Thus, you want to avoid developing questions that would be purely descriptive.*

When choosing a research question consider:

1. Sociological importance of topic/ question
2. Personal Interest
3. Feasibility (if you do not plan on developing a research proposal or carry out the research proposal you do not have to weigh this heavily).

Your answers to these questions should be typed and submitted via D2L. I expect between one to two pages Times New Roman 12-point font double spaced for this assignment.

## **Ethics Assignment**

Complete the CITI Ethics Training <https://about.citiprogram.org/course/responsible-conduct-of-research-basic/?h=Responsible%20Conduct%20of%20Research> . You will

have to complete a registration form and go through each of the course modules. While it takes time, Institutional Review Boards often require this if you are going to do any research involving human subjects. Please upload a copy of your certificate and save a copy in your files for your records. Completion and timely submission of the certificate results in 20/20 to help your grade!

### Survey Assignment

Design a survey of between twenty and twenty-five questions. You may choose the target population of your choice and the survey may or may not be connected to your larger research proposal for the end of the semester. Make sure to include demographic questions such as age, sex, household income, and racial and ethnic category. Your survey should include questions that would capture some potential interesting outcome variable or variables of interest as well as some hypothesized predictor variables. (Thus, you will have to put some thought into what you are going to ask in addition to how you are going to ask it). You may want to ask various questions that capture different aspects of the same measure that could then be averaged as a scaled measure of the responses. You will need to consider where in the survey you will place specific questions and to avoid the collection of pitfalls that many surveys may fall into.

Be aware of what type of data will be produced by what type of question. Your questions should be varied in the types of data that they will produce. The questions should yield the following types of data: categorical data, binomial data, interval or ratio data, ordinal data, and open-ended (qualitative) data. Be sure to make sure that your questions are specific (not double-barreled), that the possibilities provided are generally exhaustive and avoid leading the respondent and ordered effects since they could introduce a bias into your survey. See pages 214-221 and pages 224-226 of Carr et al. (2018) to serve as a guide for what to avoid. **The topic of the survey should have some sociological import. Customer satisfaction and surveys that do not investigate sociological questions and/or surveys downloaded from the internet are strictly not allowed and will be given a 0.**

### Research Article Review

Select a sociological research article to review from the required readings. Each article review should be two to three pages in length (double spaced). Please use 12 pt. Times New Roman, Arial or Verdana font. Article reviews must include the full bibliographic reference of the article, the major research question that the article was asking and the major arguments of the article. The *best* reviews will reflect that you engaged with the article, and will include significant discussion of the methods used to research the question.

Answer the following:

- What is the central research question guiding the research?
- What methods are used to investigate this question
- - How were the data obtained?
  - Was the study cross sectional or longitudinal?
  - Was the research qualitative or quantitative?

- How were the data analyzed?
- Did you see, or did the authors acknowledge, any threats to external or internal validity?
- What were the results of the study?
- Why are these results important?

### **Research Proposal Option**

For the research proposal you will need to have all of the basic elements of a research proposal. These include:

- An introduction that orients the reader to your intent, your research question and why it is important. The question ideally should be either theoretically important (i.e., conducting the research will improve our understanding of an important social phenomenon or practically informative in terms of informing social, economic or political policy. This question could take the form of what explains a particular phenomenon. This question then may take a look at formal hypotheses to address the question (More quantitative). Or, the question may be more exploratory and looking for meaning to a particular phenomenon (grounded theory) or a comparison of case studies (leading to qualitative research). The research could also be evaluative- did a particular program have the expected impact? Generally, it is important to have research questions that address associations and or causal relationships. *Thus, you want to avoid developing questions that would be purely descriptive.* Although the question itself is not weighted heavily, a good question will lead to a stronger proposal overall than a poorly thought out one.
- A brief review of the literature of your topic of interest that reflects why this research question is important and how your question fits into the broader literature. Has an answer to this question been found? If so, what is new or innovative about your research? What will your research add to the literature? (12.5 points)
- Discussion of relevant or potential ethical concerns and how you plan to address those concerns (for example, informed consent forms if applicable, steps to protect confidentiality etc.) (7.5 points)
- Inclusion of [IRB form](#) (5 points) –Available here
- Detailed Methods section (25 Points). Identification of your research question and key hypotheses (if quantitative). You will operationalize your concepts (you will need to say what measures you will use and how these measures capture the concepts that you are trying to measure), explain and justify how you plan to gather your data, (this includes sampling strategies- if the data is not secondary data) and what sort of analysis you plan to use once you have gathered your data. The methods of analysis will vary considerably depending on the type of research being conducted. If your research proposal focuses on secondary data (and thus there is less weight on sampling and ethics) more detail should be provided in terms of analytical techniques and hypothesis testing (if quantitative). In the end, the proposed method should provide a clear path to answering the research question proposed in the beginning of your proposal.



### **Comparative Methods Paper Option**

For this option you will write a paper comparing two different research methods.

- The paper should be 6 to 8 pages in length, excluding the title page (if any) and the bibliography.
- The paper will select two methods (such as historical/comparative and survey methods) and compare and contrast them, paying special emphasis to the types of questions that these methods are suited to investigating, the appropriate methods of data collection and procedures for analysis.
- Further, the paper will compare the strengths and weaknesses of reliability and different forms of validity of these methods.
- The paper will obviously draw much of its supporting information from the text book, however, in addition you should select at least two examples of research to discuss that exemplifies each method. In other words, if you select experimental research and survey research, you would select two examples of sociological survey research and two examples of sociological experimental research. These pieces of research should be summarized in the paper with emphasis on how the methods were employed.
- A concluding paragraph should be included summarizing your discussion on the two forms of research.
- A bibliography of all sources cited in the text must be provided. Remember all sources cited in the text must be in the bibliography and all sources in the bibliography must be cited in the text.

### **Exams**

Exams may include multiple choice, essay and/or fill in the blank questions.

#### **Missed exam policy:**

No missed exams may be retaken without instructor approval based on *evidence* (doctor's note, university letter) that indicates the person missed the test due to a legitimate emergency, illness and/or school function. **Without this evidence ten points will be deducted from the exam. All missed exams must be made up within one week.** The exam may also be different than the exam given to the rest of the class, and no bonus question will appear on the make-up exam.

#### **Final Exam**

Final exam details should be provided. Include point values or percentage of the overall grade, method of assessment, whether or not it will be timed, and date for final. This will appear on the Course Schedule in more detail.

#### **Extra Credit**

A student may gain extra credit by conducting an additional article review. The amount awarded depends on the quality as assessed by the stipulations under 'Article Reviews'. Extra credit is available only to students who have turned in all of their assignments. The extra credit Article Review is worth up to 15 points.

### **Late Work**

**Late assignments will have up to 5 points deducted per day late.** After a week has gone by, grading begins at half credit.

### **Make Up Work/Tests**

State whether or not you will allow students to make up missed assignments and tests, and any conditions you stipulate.

### **Important Dates**

**Change of schedule and late registration:** January 16-18, 2017.

**Deadline to file for graduation:**

**Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:"** March 26, 2017.

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

### **Desire-to-Learn (D2L)**

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

### **Attendance**

The attendance and participation of students is vital for a positive and rewarding learning experience for everyone. Your presence is expected and students will be evaluated on their sharing of thoughts and class contribution. You will miss vital information if you are not present and alert in class. In the end it is your grade and your responsibility to know the information in the exams and to incorporate the information from class in your assignments. **You are allowed up to three absences after which your grade will suffer up to a 20-point deduction for each day absent. Only under extreme circumstances or university activities that conflict with class will this penalty be waved.**

### **Online Computer Requirements**

*Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.* Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. **Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!**

### **Instructor Class Policies**

**Learning Environment** Please keep in mind that everyone has a different learning style and we need to collectively keep distractions to a minimum. I will respect you and I also expect you do give your fellow classmates and me that same respect. If you are disruptive in class you will first be given a warning, the second time it occurs, you will be asked to leave. **Please stay off your cell phones and other electronic devices during**

**class.** Not permitted during class time. Turn off or silence your cellular telephones before coming to class. Sending text messages is distracting and is strictly prohibited. Laptop use is generally prohibited during class time. No use of iPhones or other electronic devices will be tolerated. Please focus on the task at hand

### **Change of Schedule**

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the *Schedule of Classes* each semester.

### **Refund and Repayment Policy**

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

### **Disability Support Services**

Midwestern State University is committed to providing equal access for qualified students with disabilities to all university courses and programs, and by law all students with disabilities are guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disability. This guarantee is provided through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA reads: "No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subject to discrimination by any such entity." The Director of Disability Support Services serves as the ADA Coordinator and may be contacted at (940) 397.4140, TDD (940) 397.4515, or 3410 Taft Blvd., Clark Student Center 168.

### **College Policies**

#### **Campus Carry Rules/Policies**

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

#### **Smoking/Tobacco Policy**

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

#### **Alcohol and Drug Policy**

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-

sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

### **Grade Appeal Process**

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#)

### *Notice*

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

### **Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures**

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). At no time will any form of cheating or plagiarism of any kind be allowed. Students are attending the university to learn and cannot do so if they do not complete their own work. Academic dishonesty is a serious ethical violation and will not be tolerated. I expect that these standards will be met, and I will hold students to them.

Plagiarism is according to the New Oxford Dictionary is "the practice of taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own". This means in academic practice copying someone else's work and ideas, without quoting and citing as appropriate.

**Consequences of plagiarism or academic dishonesty include failing the article review, assignment, exam and/or quiz at a minimum. Other consequences include failing the entire course and the filing of the Academic Misconduct Form that will remain on your college records.**

Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.