

Western Michigan University
SOC 2820: Methods of Data Collection
Fall 2015

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Office: Sangren Hall 3234
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00 – 2:00 PM (or by appointment)
Class Meetings: MWF 11:00 – 11:50AM in Sangren Hall 1730

Required Textbook:

Babbie, E. (2013). *The Basics of Social Research* (6th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
ISBN: 978-1133594147

**Consult the course schedule for assigned readings. Additional readings and materials may be posted that are not found on the course schedule below; these materials will be announced in class and will be found on the ELearning website.

Course Description:

“Method’ has to do, first of all, with how to ask and answer questions with some assurance that the answers are more or less durable”
-C. Wright Mills (1959)

This course is intended to serve as an introduction to conducting research in the social sciences, from gaining an understanding of why we do research to acquiring the skills necessary to conduct this type of research on your own and analyzing the results. Over the semester, we will explore a multitude of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, such as surveys, experimentation, content analysis, ethnographic observations and more. Not only will we learn all of the technical details necessary for carrying out these methods, but we will also engage these methods first hand, with activities and examples that involve actually doing research (in and out of the classroom). The course will culminate with a final project in which you construct and carry out a research project of your own.

Course Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of the major methods of social research, both quantitative and qualitative.
- Gain an understanding of the interrelationship between sociological theory and research methods.
- Develop the skills necessary to carry out meaningful and ethical social research on your own.
- Develop a view of social research which sees the pursuit as something which is interesting and even exciting, as opposed to dull and tedious.

Class Structure:

The majority of information in this class will be presented in lecture form during our regular class meetings. We will also utilize a variety of media to supplement the lectures, including video and audio presentations. A major portion of the class will require your participation, as every topic we cover will be discussed as a group in order to gain the widest variety of views and therefore the best possible understanding. The class will flow from one issue to the next throughout the semester, with more or less time being allotted to any given issue depending on the interest it generates. As such, the schedule presented in this syllabus is tentative and may not perfectly match the course progression.

Term Paper:

This course will culminate in a research project and final paper (due on the day of the final exam). We will be working on this project systematically throughout the semester, forming groups, asking research questions, developing hypotheses, selecting research methods, collecting and analyzing data and writing up the final report. The research project will be designed and carried out in small groups (to be decided by you in class), and projects throughout the semester will be turned in by the group; however, the final research paper will be turned in and graded individually. In other words, while the project takes place in a group, you are responsible for your own work therein.

Course Grade and Grading Scale:

Your grade for this course will consist of points earned from 4 examinations (3 chapter exams and the final exam), as well as a final term paper/project, and in-class/take-home activities. The examinations will account for 50% of your grade. The term paper will be worth 20% of your grade, and the remaining 30% will consist of various in-class and take-home activities.

Grading Scale

Percentage	Grade
93 - 100	A
88 - 92	BA
83 - 87	B
78 - 82	CB
73 - 77	C
68 - 72	DC
63 - 67	D
0 - 62	E

Extra Credit:

The best way to learn about social research methods is to take part in them first-hand, both as a researcher and a research participant. As such, a major part of this course is getting involved with research. Over the semester, you will have the opportunity to earn extra credit by taking part in research projects on and off the campus of WMU. Be on the lookout for recruitment fliers and email announcements for experiments, surveys, etc. which are being carried out by students, professors, businesses, research groups, etc. ("surveys" posted on social networking sites don't count). Once you have completed the research process, you will need to fill out the

post-research worksheet (found on the ELearning website) and submit it to the professor for extra credit consideration. More information will be given throughout the semester on research opportunities. Each instance of participation will be worth 2% (added to the top of your grade), up to a maximum of 10% extra credit.

Ground Rules:

- 1) All assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments **will not** be accepted for any reason unless an arrangement has been made with the instructor to account for legitimate reasons (i.e. severe illness, death in the family, etc.).
- 2) If you miss an exam, you will have a chance to make it up during the university assigned retake period (Friday of exam week), if you get approval from the instructor for a legitimate reason as listed above.
- 3) All assignments and examinations must be completed by you alone (unless otherwise noted for group work). Any form of cheating or plagiarism will be handled in accordance to university policies.
- 4) Sources used in any writing assignment must be cited in APA format.
- 5) Cell phones must be turned off during all class sessions. If your cell phone becomes an annoyance to the class you will be asked to leave and it will count as an absence from the class. Cell phones, as well as headphones and any other electronic devices are prohibited during examinations.
- 6) While computers are a wonderful advancement in the history of human technology, they often prove to be a multi-tasking distraction from the academic experience. Therefore, if you must use your computer to take notes in class, be sure to use it for this purpose only (it really is quite obvious to the professor and other students when you check Facebook, send emails, or watch videos).

University Policies and Statements:

Accommodation for Disabilities

Students with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who need to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact Disability Services for Students located at Woodlawn Place at the beginning of the semester. A disability determination must be made by this office before any accommodations are provided by the instructor. For more information, contact DSS (269) 387-2116.

Student Academic Conduct

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the academic policies and procedures in the Undergraduate or Graduate Catalogs (found online, <http://catalog.wmich.edu>) that pertain to student rights and responsibilities. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity, and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Tentative Course Schedule:

Date	Material Covered	Readings
9/9	Course Introduction	
9/11	Human Inquiry and the basis of Science	Chap 1
9/14	Human Inquiry and the basis of Science	Chap 1
9/16	Theory and Research	Chap 2
9/18	Theory and Research	Chap 2
9/21	Ethics and Politics in Research, Exam 1 Review	Chap 3
9/23	Activity Day (Start thinking about research topic)	Chap 3
Exam 1, 9/25		
9/28	Research Design	Chap 4
9/30	Research Design	Chap 4
10/2	Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement	Chap 5
10/5	Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement	Chap 5
10/7	Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement	Chap 5
10/9	Activity Day (Form Groups and Select Topics)	
10/12	Indexes, Scales and Typologies	Chap 6
10/14	Sampling	Chap 7
10/16	Sampling, Exam 2 Review	Chap 7
10/19	Activity Day	
Exam 2, 10/21		
10/23	Experiments	Chap 8
10/26	Experiments	Chap 8
10/28	Surveys	Chap 9
10/30	Surveys	Chap 9
11/2	Field Research	Chap 10
11/4	Field Research	Chap 10
11/6	Unobtrusive Research	Chap 11
11/9	Unobtrusive Research	Chap 11
11/11	Activity Day (Research Design Finalized)	
11/13	Evaluation Research	Chap 12
11/16	Activity Day, (Prep for Data Collection), Exam 3 Review	

11/18	Activity Day (Data Collection)	
Exam 3, 11/20		
11/23	Qualitative Data Analysis	Chap 13
Thanksgiving Break, No Class 11/25 and 11/27		
11/30	Qualitative Data Analysis	Chap 13
12/2	Quantitative Data Analysis	Chap 14
12/4	Quantitative Data Analysis	Chap 14
12/7	Writing up Social Research	Chap 15
12/9	Writing up Social Research, Final Exam Review	Chap 15
12/11	Activity Day	
FINAL EXAM, 12/16/2015, 8:00AM. FINAL PAPERS DUE		
Makeup Exams, 12/18, 10:15AM-12:15PM (Arrangements must be made with professor prior to making up an exam)		