Course Description

This course introduces students to the analytical logic and skills required for research in sociology. Major emphasis is placed on teaching the research process, including library research, survey research, and statistical analysis. Information literacy goals are addressed, such as evaluating the appropriateness, reliability and accuracy of different types of information; developing familiarity with sources of available data; generating new data; and interpreting empirical information within a theoretical framework. As groups, students work on research projects throughout the semester.

Required Texts


Required Assignments

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistics Exercises</td>
<td>(15% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idiographic Interview Transcript and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
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<td>Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quantitative Hypothesis Testing</td>
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Total: 100%
Instructor policies

• Your consistent, on-time attendance and participation are required. Please do not attend to other activities during class (cellphones, knitting, etc.). After two absences, additional absences will generally lower your final grade in the course (1/3 of a grade per two additional absences). In case of illness or personal emergency, your absence will be excused. This policy is governed by the honor code; to report an excused absence, please contact me.

• Assignments are due IN CLASS the day they are due. An extension will be automatically applied to all assignments until 4:00 the day they are due. After this grace period, 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. an A would be reduced to an A-) will be deducted for each day of lateness, unless you have previously made arrangements with the instructor because of illness or emergency. **NO credit will be given for assignments more than 1 week late.**

• Assignments are to be handed in on paper (double sided is fine)- **please retain a copy of this work for yourself.** Please use a 12pt font, double spaced (unless specifically instructed to use another format) and NUMBERED pages. **Staple your papers before turning them in** (points may be deducted for failure to comply with these standards).

• You may discuss assignments with fellow students but the work handed in must be uniquely yours. Students may NOT hand in identical assignments. Doing so is potentially a violation of the honor code.

• Office Hours are listed at the top of this syllabus. Upon special request, I will meet with students at times outside of my office hours. Please see me IN PERSON to set up such an appointment.

• I receive up to 30 or more e-mails per day. Please do not expect me to reply immediately to an e-mail question or request. If something is urgent, please CALL ME in my office or signify in the e-mail header that it is urgent.

• P/NP: If you are taking this course P/NP, you must fulfill all course obligations and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course.

• Honor Code: This course will follow the policies described in the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System. Please include the statement “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment” in all written work. Please contact me if you have any questions about citation/referencing, or the relationship of the Honor Code to your work in this course. For more information on the Honor Code, see [http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html).

• Students with Disabilities: If you need disability-related accommodations for your work in this course, please let me know. Support is available through Student Academic Services—please contact Jane Boomer, Coordinator Office of Disability Services, (Room G27/28 Peters Hall, ext. 55588, [http://www.oberlin.edu/disability](http://www.oberlin.edu/disability)) for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs.

• The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus during the semester, if needed.
Course Goals

Defining and narrowing a research topic
Student is able to select a viable research topic that is defined and described in detail as well as specific and appropriate scope for assignment.

Use of databases to locate scholarly sources
Student demonstrates proficient ability to identify and use academic and public databases to locate appropriate, and relevant, up-to-date topical sources; uses multiple databases and identifies different types of sources (e.g. scholarly articles, books, journalistic sources, etc.).

Constructing annotated bibliography of sources
Student demonstrates proficient ability to organize resources and distill relevant information from sources into a detailed annotation that is well beyond an abstract or short summary, is alphabetized, and uses appropriate citation style [APA] including page numbers for location of significant information.

Operationalizing Concepts
Student demonstrates proficient ability to translate abstract ideas with bases in theoretical frameworks into precise empirically observable measures.

Combining information synthetically and conceptually into a literature review
Student is able to arrange material from sources based on concepts; is able to synthesize information from distinct sources into concise statements rather than a series of summaries; writing is logical and clear, uses appropriate citation [APA], provide an alphabetized, complete bibliography.

Testable Hypothesis Construction
Student is able to define a tentative relationship among well operationalized concepts using conditional, mathematical, continuous or difference statements and the statements are precise and clear.

Obtaining idiographic data via interviews
Student demonstrates understanding of subject consent procedure; prepares detailed interview/schedule/structure; uses appropriate interviewing techniques including probes; transcribes interview content in full detail; and takes accurate and detailed field notes including observational notation, theoretical notation, methodological notation and personal notation.
Accessing and processing nomothetic survey data (secondary sources)
Student is able to access and use survey data archives; select appropriate data source from archives for topic; demonstrates proficient ability using data codebooks; selects appropriate variables to represent operationalized concepts; and is competent using software to process data.

Coding and analyzing idiographic interview data
Student demonstrates a proficient understanding of grounded theory; uses open coding scheme effectively to develop a coding frame; uses open coding to accurately identify concepts in the data; uses a clear and consistent notation schema in analysis of transcription; uses a significant amount of data from interviews in analysis as empirical examples of concepts and theory; and is able to assess data in the form of idiographic hypotheses, draws appropriate level of conclusion from data.

Calculating and analyzing univariate and bivariate statistics
Student demonstrates proficient understanding regarding levels of variable measurement; can produce and interpret a frequency distribution (in tabular and graphic form) including normality and skewness; can calculate appropriate measures of central tendency for variables and interpret; can obtain appropriate measures of dispersion for variables and interpret; shows proficient ability to select and execute appropriate bivariate analytical techniques for variables, interprets and is able to discuss bivariate empirical results in extreme detail; shows proficient ability to form and test null and alternative hypotheses; draws appropriate level of conclusion from data.

Organizing research findings into a coherent oral and visual presentation
Student develops a well organized and informational visual presentation of research findings, including references to important literature; selections from interview data integrated and discusses these well, includes tabular and/or graphic illustration of statistical analyses present and discusses well; presents a clear and concise discussion of research findings that relate to the literature. Overall, the presentation is of appropriate time length; voice volume and speed appropriate and includes insightful conclusive statements regarding future research direction.

Structure of the Class-The Semester Long Research Project

1) At the beginning of the semester, students will form research groups of no more than 4 persons. As a group, a research topic will be selected based on survey data available from ICPSR (see below). The research group, in consultation with the instructor, will narrow the topic and begin library research on the topic and subtopics. As individuals, students will write an
annotated bibliography and partial literature review of the sources reviewed in their annotated bibliographies and from group members’ sources.

2) The second stage of the research project will deal with idiographic data. Students will interview Oberlin College students based on questions and topics constructed by the research group. Each student will transcribe the collected data, code the data and provide a written analysis of the results.

3) The third stage of the research project will focus on hypothesis construction and nomothetic data analysis. Students will learn to generate statistical analyses and interpret results. Using survey data from the ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research) data archive website, students will operationalize hypotheses and use statistical analyses to test the hypotheses. A written analysis of the hypotheses will be completed by each student.

4) The fourth stage of the research project will be a collaborative group presentation to the rest of the class and any invitees. All students are required to attend the presentations of other groups. The presentations will be based in MS PowerPoint or equivalent.

Description of Assignments

Attendance and Participation: It is your commitment to this class and your classmates that you will be present and ready to begin work at the start of class. Participation includes in-class group work, engagement in response to instructor queries, active listening and two scheduled office hour meetings (once alone and once with your group). Repeated lateness may result in significant deductions to your final grade in this course. After two absences, additional absences will generally lower your final grade in the course (1/3 of a grade per two additional absences). In case of illness or personal emergency, absences may be excused through a doctor or dean’s note.

Quizzes: Five (5) short quizzes based on course readings will be administered throughout the semester. The lowest grade for the five will be dropped. Generally, quizzes may not be made up due to absence. Please see me if you are unable to take a scheduled quiz.

Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review: The Group should divide the research topic into conceptual parts and each student should select one conceptual area to investigate. Each student in a group must find 7-10 sources for the review and construct detailed annotations for each to serve as an annotated bibliography. Students are required to share their annotated bibliographies with group members and at least 2 sources from other members’ annotation should be included in each student's conceptual
literature review. This literature review should contain a) an introduction b) discussion/synthesis of literature; c) bibliography. The paper, in total, should be approximately 5-7 double-spaced pages in length. The literature review should provide a coherent review of the literature on a research topic. A variety of scholarly sources should be utilized (monographs, edited texts, journal articles and government documents). Citation of information must be in the form of parenthetical citation and follow the American Psychology Association (APA) guidelines. Each group member will write a literature review on one area of the group’s research topic. The literature review should not summarize information, but synthesize the information into a paper that presents the reader with a cogent, conceptually organized discussion of the literature. Students are encouraged to refer to the literature review sections of articles in sociology journals for examples of how to organize a literature review.

Statistics Exercises: We will use SPSS software (available on the computers in King 137) to perform statistical analyses of survey data from the General Social Survey and other data available at the ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research) website. Students will be assessed through an assignment on descriptive statistics (e.g. measures of central tendency and variability) and inferential statistics (e.g. tests of significance). NOTE: Help is available for quantitative work at the Quantitative Skills Center, Science Center, A263.

Idiographic Interviews and Analysis: As groups, students will select individual Oberlin College students (18 years of age or over) to interview (on issues related to the group research topic) and define their interview process. Individually, students will interview, observe and take detailed notes and transcribe each interview to be coded and used as a basis for a write up of results. Coded interviews will be shared with group members and be used in each write up. Each student will write a paper that discuss the idiographic data, the interview methods used and provide detailed description and interpretation of the ethnographic data. The paper should be between 5-7 pages in length.

Quantitative Hypothesis Testing: As a research group, students will develop a number of testable nomothetic hypotheses based on the group’s research topic and literature reviews. Each student will test several hypotheses and provide a write up of the results as well as appropriate tables and graphs.

Group Presentation: Each research group will develop a 20 minute visual (e.g. MS PowerPoint) and oral presentation based on cumulative findings from their research during the semester. Each group member is required to discuss some component of the project in the oral presentation to be held during the last week of classes.
Due Dates
Due Dates
Annotated Bibliography 9.26
Literature Review 10.13
Statistics Exercise 1 10.31
Statistics Exercise 2 11.17
Idiographic Transcript 12.1
Quantitative Hypothesis Testing 12.5
Idiographic Analysis no later than 12.19
Group Presentations 12.8-12.12
Quizzes: 9.15, 9.29, 10.8, 11.5, 11.28

Course Outline (NOTE: Readings Apply to SOCI 301 and SOCI 302)

I. Introduction to Social Research: Theory and Method

9.3 Introduction

9.5-9.8

In Babbie:
Chapter 1- Human Inquiry and Science
Chapter 2: Paradigms, Theory and Social Research
Chapter 15: Reading and Writing Social Research

In Rubin and Rubin:
Chapter 1: Listening, Hearing and Sharing Social Experiences

9.10-12

In Rubin and Rubin:
Chapter 2: Philosophy of Qualitative Interviewing

On Blackboard:
In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Approaches to Qualitative Research: Rank-
The Blending of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in
Understanding Childbearing among Welfare Recipients

In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Approaches to Qualitative Research: Tolman
and Szalacha- Dimensions of Desire: Qualitative and Quantitative
Methods in a Study of Female Adolescent Sexuality
On Blackboard:


Pan: *Preparing Literature Reviews*
   Ch. 5: Taking Notes and Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism
   Ch. 6: Guidelines for Evaluating Sources of Literature
   Ch. 7: Evaluating and Interpreting Research Literature

II. Research Ethics

9.17-9.19

In Babbie:
   Chapter 3: The Ethics and Politics of Social Research

In Rubin and Rubin:
   Pages 85-93

On Blackboard

From Wysocki:
   Chapter 3: Ethics
   Milgram: Problems of Ethics in Research.
   Hamilton: The Ethics of Conducting Social Science Research on the Internet.


III. Structuring Research Design

9.22 In Babbie:
Chapter 4: Research Design

In Rubin and Rubin:
Chapter 4: Designing Research for the Responsive Interviewing Model

*On Blackboard*

Pan: *Preparing Literature Reviews*
Ch. 8: Planning and Writing the First Draft
Ch. 9. Revising and Refining the First Draft
Ch. 10: Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

9.24-9.26

In Babbie:
Chapter 5: Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement
Chapter 6: Indexes, Scales and Typologies

In Nardi: Introduction


(READ pp. 205-206).


(READ pp. 280-282)
9.29-10.3

In Babbie:
Chapter 7: The Logic of Sampling

In Rubin and Rubin:
Chapter 5: Designing for Quality

On Blackboard

Babbie, Halley, Wagner and Zaino
Chapter 3: Description of Data Sets: the General Social Survey (GSS)

Nardi
Chapter 5: Sampling

IV. Observation/Collecting Data/Analyzing Data

NOTE: Wagner, *Using IBM SPSS Statistics for Statistics and Social Research Methods*, is a guide to using the software (SPSS) used for quantitative analysis and may be useful at this point. Copies are on reserve in the library.

10.6-10.8

In Babbie:
Chapter 9: Survey Research

On Blackboard

Nardi
Chapter 4- Developing a Questionnaire

10.10-10.13

NOTE: Between 10.12 and 11.9 we will be referring to the following articles-please bring them to class!


community in the undergraduate transfer student experience”.  

In Babbie:  
Chapter 14: Quantitative Data Analysis

In Nardi:  
Chapter 1: Describing Data

On Blackboard:  
Babbie, Halley, Wagner and Zaino  
Chapter 4: Using SPSS Some Basics  
Chapter 5: Describing Your Data

10.15-10.17 In Nardi:  
Chapter 2: Understanding Tables

On Blackboard:  
Babbie, Halley, Wagner and Zaino  
Chapter 6: Presenting Your Data in Graphic Form

10.27 In Nardi:  
Chapter 3: Interpreting Relationships

10.29-11.3 In Nardi:  
Chapter 4: Explaining Mean Differences

*On Blackboard*

In Babbie, Halley, Wagner and Zaino  
Chapter 14: Tests of Significance

11.5-11.10  
*On Blackboard*

In Babbie, Halley, Wagner and Zaino  
Chapter 15: Suggestions for Further Bivariate Analysis  
Chapter 16: Multiple Causation

11.12-11.17  
In Babbie:  
Chapter 10: Qualitative Field Research

In Rubin and Rubin:
Chapter 3: Qualitative Data-Gathering Methods and Style
Chapter 6: Conversational Partnerships

On Blackboard:
Berg- A Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing
Goffman- On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto
Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie and Huntley- I'm Not Thinking of it as Sexual Harassment
Ibarra- Buscando La Vida: Mexican American Women’s Memories of Home, Yearning, and Border Crossings

11.19-11.26
In Rubin and Rubin:
Chapter 7: The Responsive Interview as an Extended Conversation
Chapter 8: Structure of the Response Interview
Chapter 9: Designing Main Questions and Probes
Chapter 10: Preparing Follow-up Questions
Chapter 11: Variants of the Response Interviewing Model

On Blackboard:
Herzog- On Home Turf: Interview Location and Its Social Meaning
In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Approaches to Qualitative Research: Denzin- The Art and Politics of Interpretation
In Hesse-Biber and Leavy, Approaches to Qualitative Research: Richardson- Writing: A Method of Inquiry

11.28 Data Analysis Workshop in Class

12.1-12.5 In Babbie:
Chapter 13: Qualitative Data Analysis

In Rubin and Rubin:
Chapter 12: Data Analysis in the Responsive Interviewing Model
Chapter 13: Sharing the Results
Chapter 14: Personal Reflections on Response Interviewing

On Blackboard:
Weston, Gandell, Beauchamp, McAlpine, Wiseman and Beauchamp- Analyzing Interview Data: The Development and Evolution of a Coding System
Conrad- It’s Boring: Notes on the Meanings of Boredom in Everyday Life

12.8-12.12 PRESENTATIONS IN CLASS AND IN LAB