Sociology 301
Social Research Methods
Fall 2015
MWF 9:00 – 9:50
King 323

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Office: King 305A
Office Hours: Wednesdays
12:00 – 3:00, or by appointment

**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**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (5 x 2% each)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9/14, 9/28, 10/7, 11/4, 11/23</td>
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<td>Individual Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10/12</td>
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<td>Statistics Exercise 1</td>
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<td>Statistics Exercise 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative Interview Transcript and Coding</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11/30 (Transcript), by 12/16 (Coding)</td>
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<td>Quantitative Hypothesis Testing</td>
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<td>Group Presentation</td>
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<td>12/7 – 12/11</td>
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INSTRUCTOR POLICIES

Attendance: Your consistent, on-time attendance and participation are required. You have two “free” absences this semester. Additional absences will result in a lower final grade. It is not possible to pass this class with several absences. Latecomers disrupt the class. Be on time. 3 late arrivals = 1 absence. Please talk to me beforehand if you anticipate missing a class. It is your responsibility to obtain notes from your classmates if you miss a class.

Classroom Behavior: It is disruptive and unprofessional for a cell phone/pager to go off in class. Turn them off (not on vibrate) before class starts. If your cell phone goes off in class, I reserve the right to lower your grade. Please do not engage in outside activities during class (e.g., cellphones, knitting).

Use of a Laptop: Please ask permission if you prefer to take notes on your laptop. If I notice you navigating away from course material, I will ask that you put it away. I will also request that you send your notes to me via email so that I can verify that you are staying on task.

Participation: I expect frequent, active participation from students. We will have class discussions about the readings every week, and therefore I expect you to have completed the readings before we meet each class period. Regular attendance and mindful participation will work to your advantage and will be taken into account when determining final grades.

Assignments: Assignments are due at the beginning of class the day they are due. After this, 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. an A would be reduced to an A-) will be deducted for each day of lateness. 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. Use 12pt Times New Roman font, double spaced (unless specifically instructed to use another format) and NUMBERED pages. Staple multiple pages before turning them in. Points will 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.

Pass/No Pass: 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.

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

Email Policy: Email is the best way to reach me, although please allow 24 hours for responses. 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, signify in the e-mail header that it is urgent. For substantial discussions, please see me during office hours.
**Oberlin 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” and your signature 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).

**Accommodating Disabilities:** If you have or acquire any sort of condition that may require special accommodation(s), please inform me AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (i.e., not the day an assignment is due) so that we may make the appropriate arrangements. 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.

**Other Issues:** If you are encountering difficulties, academic or otherwise, that are negatively impacting your performance in this class, please speak with me as soon as possible. I can only help you if I know there is a problem, and the earlier I know this, the better.

**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 (ASA) 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 (ASA), 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 guide; uses appropriate interviewing techniques including probes and follow-up questions; transcribes interview content verbatim; 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

At the beginning of the semester, students will form research groups of no more than 4 members. 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 professor, 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.

The second stage of the research project will deal with qualitative 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.

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. Each student will complete a written analysis of the hypotheses.

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 will 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: You will take five short quizzes based on course readings 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: Each 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 and
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 (journal articles, edited texts, and government documents). Citation of information must be in the form of parenthetical citation and follow the American Sociological Association (ASA) 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. I strongly encourage you 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, located in the Science Library, room N176.

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 qualitative 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.
I reserve the right to modify the syllabus as needed. I will announce any changes in class, but if you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out about any changes and to be prepared accordingly.

CLASS SCHEDULE
This class is scheduled so that we will discuss the readings on the day they are listed. Therefore, you need to complete the readings for each day by class time. Readings Apply to SOCI 301 and SOCI 302. In addition to the required texts, you will be reading numerous articles and individual book chapters. These articles are available through the class’s Blackboard site under the Readings tab. These readings are denoted by an asterisk (*) below.

### SECTION I. Introduction to Social Research: Theory and Method

#### WEEK 1

8/31: Introductions

9/2 - 9/4: Babbie Ch 1 *Human Inquiry and Science*

Babbie Ch 2 *Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research*

Babbie Ch 15 *Reading and Writing Social Research*

Rubin and Rubin Ch 1 *Listening, Hearing, and Sharing Social Experiences*

#### WEEK 2

9/7: NO CLASSES – LABOR DAY

9/9 - 9/11: Rubin and Rubin Ch 2 *Philosophy of Qualitative Interviewing*

*Rank. *The Blending of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Understanding Childbearing among Welfare Recipients.*

*Tolman and Szalacha. *Dimensions of Desire: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in a Study of Female Adolescent Sexuality.*

**Note:** *Add/Drop Deadline is Thursday, September 10*
WEEK 3

9/14: Quiz 1 (9/14)

* Shelton and John. *The Division of Household Labor.*


* Pons et al. *Is There an Association between the Quality of Hospitals’ Research and their Quality of Care?* (READ pp. 204-205). PLEASE PRINT AND BRING TO CLASS

* Townley et al. *Exploring the Role of Sense of Community in the Undergraduate Transfer Student Experience.* (READ pp. 277-280) PLEASE PRINT AND BRING TO CLASS

* Pan Ch 5 *Taking Notes and Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism*

* Pan Ch 6 *Guidelines for Evaluating Sources of Literature*

* Pan Ch 7 *Evaluating and Interpreting Research Literature*

SECTION II. Research Ethics

9/16 - 9/18: Babbie Ch 3 *The Ethics and Politics of Social Research*

Rubin and Rubin Pages 85-93

* Wysocki. Ch 3 *Ethics*


* Milgram: Problems of Ethics in Research.

* Hamilton. *The Ethics of Conducting Social Science Research on the Internet.*


* Halse and Honey. Unraveling Ethics: Illuminating the Moral Dilemmas of Research Ethics.

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SECTION III. Structuring Research Design

WEEK 4

9/21: Babbie Ch 4 Research Design

Rubin and Rubin Ch 4 Designing Research for the Responsive Interviewing Model

*Pan Ch 8 Planning and Writing the First Draft

*Pan Ch 9 Revising and Refining the First Draft

*Pan Ch 10 Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

9/23: NO CLASS – YOM KIPPUR

9/25: Individual Annotated Bibliography Due (9/25)

Babbie Ch 5 Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement

Babbie Ch 6 Indexes, Scales and Typologies

Nardi Introduction

*van der Sar et al. The Opinion on Dutch Cannabis Policy Measures: A Cross-Sectional Survey. (READ pp. 163-164)

*Pons et al. Is There an Association between the Quality of Hospitals’ Research and their Quality of Care? (READ pp. 205-206).

*Townley et al. Exploring the Role of Sense of Community in the Undergraduate Transfer Student Experience. (READ pp. 280-282)

WEEK 5

9/28 - 10/2: Quiz 2 (9/28)

Babbie Ch 7 The Logic of Sampling

Rubin and Rubin Ch 5 Designing for Quality

*Babbie et al. Ch 3 Description of Data Sets: the General Social Survey (GSS)

Nardi Ch 5 Sampling
SECTION IV. Observation/Collecting Data/Analyzing Data

WEEK 6

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.

10/5 - 10/7: Quiz 3 (10/7)

Babbie Ch 9 Survey Research

*Nardi Ch 4 Developing a Questionnaire

10/9 - 10/12: Literature Review Due (10/12)

NOTE: Between 10/12 and 11/9 we will be referring to the following articles-please bring them to class!


*Pons et al. Is There an Association between the Quality of Hospitals’ Research and their Quality of Care?

*Townley et al. Exploring the Role of Sense of Community in the Undergraduate Transfer Student Experience.

Babbie Ch 14 Quantitative Data Analysis

Nardi Ch 1 Describing Data

*Babbie et al. Ch 4 Using SPSS Some Basics

*Babbie et al. Ch 5 Describing Your Data

WEEK 7

10/12 - 10/14: Nardi Ch 2 Understanding Tables

*Babbie et al. Ch 6 Presenting Your Data in Graphic Form

10/16: NO CLASS! HAPPY FALL BREAK
WEEK 8  OCTOBER 19—23  NO CLASSES—FALL BREAK!!!

WEEK 9

10/26:  Nardi Ch 3 Interpreting Relationships

10/28 - 11/2:  Statistics Exercise 1 Due (10/30)

   Nardi Ch 4 Explaining Mean Differences
   *Babbie et al. Ch 14 Tests of Significance

WEEK 10


   *Babbie et al. Ch 15 Suggestions for Further Bivariate Analysis
   *Babbie et al. Ch 16 Multiple Causation

WEEK 11

11/11 - 11/16:  Statistics Exercise 2 Due (11/16)

   Babbie Ch 10 Qualitative Field Research
   Rubin and Rubin Ch 3 Qualitative Data-Gathering Methods and Style
   Rubin and Rubin Ch 6 Conversational Partnerships
   *Berg A Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing
   *Goffman On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto
   *Welsh et al. I’m Not Thinking of it as Sexual Harassment
   *Ibarra. Buscando La Vida: Mexican American Women’s Memories of Home, Yearning, and Border Crossings
WEEK 12 and 13


- Rubin and Rubin Ch 7 *The Responsive Interview as an Extended Conversation*
- Rubin and Rubin Ch 8 *Structure of the Response Interview*
- Rubin and Rubin Ch 9 *Designing Main Questions and Probes*
- Rubin and Rubin Ch 10 *Preparing Follow-up Questions*
- Rubin and Rubin Ch 11 *Variants of the Response Interviewing Model*
  
  *Herzog. *On Home Turf: Interview Location and Its Social Meaning*
  
  *Denzin. *The Art and Politics of Interpretation*
  
  *Richardson. *Writing: A Method of Inquiry*

11/27: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

WEEK 14

11/30 - 12/4: **Qualitative Interview Transcript Due (11/30)**

**Quantitative Hypothesis Testing Due (12/4)**

- Babbie Ch 13 *Qualitative Data Analysis*
- Rubin and Rubin Ch 12 *Data Analysis in the Responsive Interviewing Model*
- Rubin and Rubin Ch 13 *Sharing the Results*
- Rubin and Rubin Ch 14 *Personal Reflections on Response Interviewing*
  
  *Weston et al. *Analyzing Interview Data: The Development and Evolution of a Coding System*
  
  *Conrad. It’s Boring: Notes on the Meanings of Boredom in Everyday Life*

WEEK 15

12/7-12/11: PRESENTATIONS IN CLASS AND IN LAB
12/16: SUBMIT CODED QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW BY 4:00 PM