

Sociology 311: Introduction to Social Research  
Summer 2017 (Session 2)  
CRN 42125  
Monday- Thursday, 12pm-1:50pm  
Room: 106 Deady Hall

**Instructor:**

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 3pm-4pm

**Course Description & Objectives:**

In Sociology 311 students will be introduced to a variety of research methods that are used in the social sciences to understand social problems and the social world. During the course, students will become familiar with the basics of a variety of social research methods. Sociologists are considered methodological generalists, who are concerned with ensuring that the appropriate research method is used to answer the question at hand. To that end, students will explore both qualitative and quantitative approaches. However, as there is not enough time to learn quantitative methods sufficiently in this course, the focus will be on understanding what types of questions researchers answer using this, and other, approaches and identifying common errors that might bias the results of such studies. Students will also become familiar with the intricacies of research ethics, and learn how to navigate the research process in an ethical manner.

By the end of the course students should be proficient in:

1. Describing how the scientific method is employed in social science research.
2. Identifying the various types of scientific reasoning, and the requirements of establishing causality.
3. Understanding, broadly speaking, the implications of research reported in popular news sources, as well as how to critique such research.
4. Recognizing a variety of study designs and identifying the pros and cons of each.
5. Designing ethical research studies that can address questions about the social world using the basics of field methods– such as participant observation, and interviews– unobtrusive research, and surveys.

**Course Structure and Classroom Etiquette:**

Classes will consist of lecture, group work and discussion, organized research ‘field trips’, and full class discussion. It is important for students to note that, though the primary focus of this class is research methods, the topics of research are social and might make some students uncomfortable. Considering this, I encourage students to participate in classroom conversations in a constructive and respectful way. Further, as the leader of the course discussions I am committed to ensuring that all students feel comfortable being in the classroom and sharing their thoughts. I encourage you to bring instances that make you uncomfortable to my attention.

## Required Texts

*Approaches to Social Research, 5th Edition* by Royce A. Singleton, Jr. and Bruce C. Straits.

There will also be required readings posted on canvas. *Students are expected to read all listed course readings.* Please refer to the weekly schedule in order to find a comprehensive list of required readings.

## Grading Criteria

There are four graded components of the course: 1) Participation– while attendance is not mandatory per se, classes will often have a group assignment component that will count towards your participation grade. 2) Bi-Weekly Quizzes– You must complete the readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. Your quiz grade depends on you having read. Out of six quizzes, the lowest grade will be dropped. 3) Research essay assignment– You will be expected to write an 4-5 page original research essay using one of the methods covered in class. 4) Peer Review Process– In addition to receiving a grade for your final essay, you will be graded on participating in a peer review process on two occasions. In both instances, you will be expected to provide something to critique (i.e. a draft of your paper) to your assigned partner, and to provide written feedback on how your partner might improve their own work.

Quizzes (5 @ 5%): 25%

Participation (in class assignments and activities): 30%

Essay assignment and peer reviews: 45%

Total: 100%

Except for truly exceptional cases, incompletes or deferred grades will not be given. At my discretion I may give extra credit for exceptional class participation or take into account improvement over the term.

Letter grades:

A+ 98-100%	B+ 88-89%	C+ 78-79%	D+ 68-69%
A 93-97%	B 83-87%	C 73-77%	D 63-67%
A- 90-92%	B- 80-82%	C- 70-72%	D- 60-62%
			F <60%

## In Class Participation

Though attendance will not be formally taken in class, lecture will typically be followed by a graded individual or group exercise. Grades for these exercises will be based entirely upon participation. **There will be no opportunity to “make-up” in class exercises, but the three lowest in-class exercise scores will be dropped.**

In addition to regular in class exercises, students will be required to turn in a daily comment card (3x5 index card) demonstrating that they have attempted to grapple with the topics, discussions, and activities of the day. **There will be no opportunity to make up a missed comment card, though students can miss three with no consequence.** I reserve the

right to grant extra credit for exceptionally well thought out comment cards and class participation. Similarly, I reserve the right to revoke credit for a comment that has clearly not been sufficiently thought through.

### **Reading Quizzes**

Reading quizzes will be held in class twice a week for the first three weeks of the course. Each quiz will cover the material that students are expected to have read prior to that day's lecture. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. Students may turn in handwritten quizzes, or they may take the reading quizzes on canvas. **The lowest quiz score will be dropped. No make-up quizzes will be given.**

### **Research Report Assignment & Peer Review Process**

Research report- You will be required to write one 2,000 to 2,500 word report that details the result of original research you perform to answer a research question of sociological interest. Questions can be novel, or can resemble something to the effect of: "How does variation in personal background affect college preparation?"; "How does one's gender identity affect career trajectory?"; "How are black families represented in popular media?"; "How does being an immigrant change one's experience of Eugene?". Regardless of the research question chosen, students must attempt to formulate an "answer" to the research question using the research methods that are covered in class. The reports should consist of a short introduction detailing what the research question is, and why it is interesting/important; a methods section that explains the method you chose to perform your research, why the method is appropriate for this question, and how you employed it to collect and interpret data; and your report should include an analysis that explains your results and includes a brief conclusion.

Peer Review Process- As you write your essay, you will be required to participate in a peer review process with a designated classmate. This process will consist of turning in an outline for your partner to evaluate, as well as evaluating the outline your partner provides you with. The initial outline should include a research question, a chosen method, and a loosely outlined research plan (e.g. how will you collect and analyze your data). Additionally, one week prior to the final class, you will be required to exchange a first draft of your report with your peer-review partner. The peer review process accounts for 44% of the final research report grade. As a result, it will be very difficult to receive a passing grade on this assignment if you do not participate.

### **Late Policy**

Assignments turned in after they are due will have 20% subtracted from their normally assigned score for each day they are late. **After three days, assignments will no longer be accepted.** If you have an unplanned absence due to an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible to notify me and arrange an alternative due date. Special accommodations may be granted with respect to due dates in the case of emergencies or other circumstances that I deem relevant, but you must notify me of any relevant issues as soon as possible, preferably BEFORE the due date.

### **Academic Honesty**

Students are encouraged to work with classmates on assignments to enhance the mutual learning experience. However, students must submit their own original work for evaluation. No

copying will be accepted. Students determined to have violated the University of Oregon's Student Conduct Code in this course through cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of misconduct may receive a grade penalty as deemed appropriate by the professor and/or other forms of sanctions and scrutiny deemed appropriate by the university (see <https://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code>). It is strongly suggested that students read and understand the University of Oregon's Student Conduct Code.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

As a university employee, I am a mandatory reporter of child abuse, sexual assault, and discrimination when I learn about it. More information about this can be found here: <http://around.uoregon.edu/mandatoryreporting>.

### **Accommodations**

Appropriate accommodations will be made for alter-abled students and students who require additional support to enjoy full and equal access and inclusion in this course. Please inform me that you will be requesting accommodations during the first week of class and make arrangements with the UO Accessible Education Center (<http://aec.uoregon.edu>). AEC will then provide me with a formal letter documenting your required accommodations.

### **Technology in the Classroom**

Generally speaking technology is welcome in the classroom, so long as it does not become a distraction to others. Considering this, cell-phones must be silenced before class begins. Further cell phones should not be used except for in the case of emergencies or for reference in group activities. If you cannot refrain from using a cell phone, please sit in the back row of the classroom or leave the class. Laptops may be used for educational purposes pertinent to the course. This means that students should not be browsing the internet or working on materials for other courses during class. If you think that your screen might be a distraction to others, you should sit in the back row of the classroom or leave until you are able to concentrate on the course. **If I am put in a position where I need to address your use of technology, you will receive a zero on that day's in-class participation score.**

## Tentative Course Schedule

### Week 1: Introduction to Research in The Social Sciences

#### **Monday, 7/24: Course Introduction**

##### *Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 1 (Introduction);
- Syllabus

##### *Assignments:*

- Assignment of peer review partners

#### **Tuesday, 7/25: Interrogating the Social Scientifically**

##### *Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 2 (The Nature of Science)
- Jeff Rouner, “No, It’s Not Your Opinion. You’re Just Wrong”  
<http://www.houstonpress.com/arts/no-it-s-not-your-opinion-you-re-just-wrong-updated-7611752>
- Bergstrom & West, “How do you know a paper is legit”,  
[http://callingbullshit.org/tools/tools\\_legit.html](http://callingbullshit.org/tools/tools_legit.html)

##### *Assignments:*

- First Reading Quiz

#### **Wednesday, 7/26: Research Ethics, Responsibilities, and the IRB**

##### *Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 3 (Research Ethics)
- Jennifer Ruark, “Anatomy of a Hoax: How a physicist hoodwinked a group of humanists, and why it still matters 20 years later.”
- Paul Campos, “The Implausible Ethnography of Alice Goffman”
- Recommended: Gideon Lewis-Kraus, “The Trials of Alice Goffman”

##### *Assignments:*

- Bulls\*\*t Inventory (If time permits)
- IRB visit

#### **Thursday, 7/27: Basics of Research Design- Finding a research question**

##### *Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 4 (Elements of Research Design) pp 79-91 & 96-111
- Booth, Colomb & Williams, Chapters 3 & 4

##### *Assignments:*

- Honing in on your research question
- Second Reading Quiz

Week 2: Research Design and Qualitative Methods (First Peer Review Exercise due)

**Monday, 7/31: The Intricacies of Measurement and Sampling**

*Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 5 (Measurement)
- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 6 (Sampling)

*Assignments:*

- What are you measuring, who is your population, how will you sample?

**Tuesday, 8/1: Experiments**

*Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 7 (Experimentation)
- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 8 (Experimental Design) pp. 230-242 & 250-258

*Assignments:*

- Experimental Design in Sociology
- Third Reading Quiz

**Wednesday, 8/2: Surveys and Survey Instruments**

*Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 9 (Survey Research) pp. 263-292
- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 10 (Survey Instrumentation) pp. 309-337
- Fisher, Stanley, Burman & Neff, "How Do Organizations Matter: Mobilization and Support for participants at 5 Globalization Protests" pp. 106-111 (Data & methods section)

*Assignments:*

- Designing a Survey or Interview Protocol to Answer Your Question

**Thursday, 8/3: Field Research Methods**

*Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 11 (Field Research)
- Pilgeram, "Ass-Kicking Women: Doing and Undoing Gender in a U.S. Livestock Auction", pp. 577-581 (Methodology & Analysis)
- Mitch Dunier, "How Not to Lie With Ethnography"

*Assignments:*

- Class Time to Work on Research Outlines and Peer Reviews
- Fourth Reading Quiz

***DUE DATE!***- Turn in research outlines to partners for first peer review

Week 3: Methods in The Social Sciences, Continued (Second Peer Review Exercise Due)

**Monday, 8/7: Unobtrusive Research and the Use of Available data**

*Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 12 (Research Using Available Data)
- Clark & Foster, “Ecological Imperialism and The Global Metabolic Rift: Unequal Exchange and The Guano/Nitrates Trade”

*Assignments:*

- Content Analysis at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum: “Graphic Ideology: Cultural Revolution Propaganda From China”.

***DUE DATE!***- Turn in first peer review to partner

**Tuesday, 8/8: Analyzing Your Data**

*Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 15

*Assignments:*

- What is your data? How are you getting it?
- Fifth Reading Quiz

**Wednesday, 8/9: Writing Your Report**

*Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 17 (Writing Research Reports)

*Assignments:*

- How to use the library.
- Reviewing the requirements of your report

**Thursday, 8/10: Quantitative Analysis- How it’s used and what to watch for**

*Readings:*

- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 4 (Elements of Research Design), pp. 91-96
- Singleton & Straits, Chapter 16 ( Multivariate Analysis)
- King and Powell, “How Not to Lie Using Statistics”

*Assignments:*

- Research Project Workshop
- Sixth Reading Quiz

***DUE DATE!***- Turn in first draft of research report to peer review partner

Week 4: Quantitative Methods and Expert Guest Speakers (Final Projects Due)

**Monday, 8/14: Guest Lecturer- Daniel Shtob, “Interviewing in the real world”**

*Readings:*

- No Readings- Use the time to work on your research report

*Assignments:*

- Bring in three questions to ask Professor Shtob

***DUE DATE!***- Turn in second peer review to partner

**Tuesday, 8/15: Guest Lecturer- Evan Shenkin, “Issues and opportunities in unobtrusive research”**

*Readings:*

- No Readings- Use the time to work on your research report

*Assignments:*

- Bring in three questions to ask Professor Shenkin

**Wednesday, 8/16: No Class- Free day to finish research reports**

**Thursday, 8/17: Pulling it all Together- Social Science Research for Enlightenment and for Reform**

*Readings:*

- David Pellow, “Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies”
- Recommended: Ava DuVernay’s “13<sup>th</sup>” (Available on Netflix)

*Assignments:*

- How can you use research methods moving forward, even if you are not involved in ‘research’?
- “13<sup>th</sup>: A Conversation with Oprah Winfrey and Ava DuVernay” viewing and discussion.

***DUE DATE!***- Final draft of research report due on canvas by 5pm