

RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY (SOCI 4340)
FALL 2017
3 Credit Hours

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Communication Policy:

As this course is taught strictly online, I do not keep traditional office hours. However, I do want to be available to students as needed. My general policy is to respond within 24 hours to emails that I receive by 12:00 (noon) Monday-Friday. If extenuating circumstances prevent this, I will make every effort to notify the class through Blackboard and/or email. Emails received after noon on Fridays will be answered by noon on the following Monday. Please be sure to read the **entire** syllabus at the beginning of the semester and refer to it frequently, so that if questions arise, you can get them answered in a timely fashion. Also, please include SOCI 4340 in the subject line of all e-mails, so that I can keep them organized.

You are also responsible for reading and understanding all of my communication with you. I will correspond in the following ways:

- Course announcements (automatically sent to your university e-mail address)
- Direct e-mail messages
- Comments and tracked changes within submitted documents
- Replies and comments in discussion board threads and blog forums
- Feedback in “My Grades” related to specific assignment submissions
- Posts and comments on the course Facebook page

Please let me know if you have trouble finding any of these.

Course Computer and Internet Requirements:

The online nature of this course requires that you be able to regularly gain access to the World Wide Web. You will be completing the class in a fully online format through the class’s Blackboard portal. Some users may need to download special “plug-ins” to be able to use the discussion board and all students will be required to download and view Microsoft Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, and/or PowerPoint presentations. Please be sure to contact the Delta helpdesk if you have any problems connecting or access materials or tools in this course (via e-mail: helpdesk@shsuonline.net or via telephone: 936-294-2780 or 1-877-870-9214).

We will also be using Facebook for several of the course assignments. If you are new to Facebook, you may sign up for an account at www.facebook.com. Step-by-step instructions can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/help/188157731232424>. (You may use an alias if you’d like, but please let me know what you choose so that I can properly assign you credit for participation.) Once you have an account, you can search for the course group, called SOCI 4340-Fall 2017. Once all students have joined, I will change the group’s status from “Public” to “Closed.” This will keep others from seeing your course-related posts. If you have concerns about this process, please don’t hesitate to discuss them with me.

Required Textbook:

Dixon, J. C., Singleton, R. A. (Jr.), & Straits, B. C. (2016). *The Process of Social Research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Course Description:

This research methods class is designed to provide students with an introduction to social science research. Students will be exposed to the logic and process of scientific social inquiry, including: the basic components of social research and theory testing, the structuring of social inquiry, various research designs, data collection methods, and data analysis. Students will exercise what they learn through various class activities and the completion of a series of assignments. The main goal of this class is to develop students' insights and abilities to critically read and analyze both qualitative and quantitative social research (from scholarly and popular sources).

Prerequisite: SOCI 1301 or instructor permission. 3 credits.

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate factual knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles and techniques of social research.
2. Distinguish between popular and scholarly (academic, peer-reviewed) research.
3. Effectively search for, locate, and critically analyze research from both popular and academic sources
4. Identify strengths and weaknesses of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods social research.
5. Formulate original research questions and effectively locate and review relevant literature.

My goal is to assist the learning process in our online classroom environment by:

- Making you feel welcome and invited in the “classroom”
- Using positive coaching and constructive feedback to promote success in the course
- Getting to know you and being empathetic to your needs
- Using a sense of humor in the “classroom”
- Providing real-world examples of the material covered

Grading (out of 1,000 points)

A: 900-1,000 points

B: 800-899 points

C: 700-799 points

D: 600-699 points

F: 599 or fewer points

Evaluation:

Course evaluation will include:

Assignments	Points
Syllabus Quiz	50
Research Opt-in/Opt-out Survey	10
Blog Forums	
• Introductions and Expectations	60
• Research in the Media (X2 @ 60 points each)	120
• Research Questions	60
• Bibliography	60
Reading Quizzes	
• Quiz #1	50
• Quiz #2	50
• Quiz #3	50
• Quiz #4	50
• Quiz #5	50
• Quiz #6	50
Facebook Participation	
• Join Facebook by deadline	20
• Initial Posts (X2 @ 15 points each)	30
• Follow-up Comments (X2 @ 15 points each)	30
Article Analyses	
• Quantitative	50
• Qualitative	50
Course Reactions and Impressions	60
Final Exam	100
Total	1000

The **syllabus quiz** (worth **50** points) is designed to ensure that you have read and fully understood the syllabus. You may take it as many times as you wish, prior to the due date, to improve your score.

Research opt-in/opt-out assignment (worth **10** points): Because I want to conduct ongoing research on the effectiveness of this course and my teaching methods (in order to facilitate improvement from one semester to the next), I've obtained IRB approval to conduct research among the students in my courses. Participation in this research is completely *voluntary*, as described in the consent form that you will find in the Week 4 folder for this course. You will indicate your decision about whether or not to participate through this one-question (yes/no) assignment. Answering the question (regardless of the answer you choose) is worth 10 points.

Blog assignments (worth **60** points each) will give students the opportunity to share what they are learning and participate in discussions with one another. Blog assignments include: Introductions and Expectations; Research in the Media (X2); Research Questions; and Bibliography. Those assignments are detailed further in the Blackboard folders for the weeks in which they are assigned. Additionally, please note that, for the Introductions and Expectations and Research in the Media entries, **you may choose to submit either a traditional blog entry or a video blog entry**. This option is offered to accommodate any of you who may be more comfortable in front of a camera than behind a keyboard. Research questions and the bibliography must be submitted in *written* form.

Reading quizzes (worth **50** points each*) will contain 25 questions each and will be administered through Blackboard. The quiz due dates are announced in the course calendar. Quizzes must be **completed** by **11:59 pm** Central Time on the due date. Quizzes will be open for four days **PRIOR** to the due date (beginning at **12:00 a.m (midnight)** on the **Thursday** before). You may retake each quiz **TWICE** (for a total of **THREE** attempts) in order to improve your score. After each attempt, you will see which questions you answered correctly, but you will not see the correct answers for those you answered incorrectly. Because questions will be pulled from a question pool, your questions on your second and third attempts will not be exactly the same as those on your first attempt. However, your highest score will be recorded as your final grade, so it is to your advantage to make all three attempts. You **CANNOT** collaborate with other students on exams. You may, however, use any of the material provided in the course. *Quizzes are **required**.

Article Analyses (worth **100** points total): In order to help students become more informed and intelligent consumers of research, you will each be required to locate at least one quantitative article and one qualitative article. For each of those articles, you will need to provide a brief analysis. Details about required elements and format are included in the assignment instructions within the designated week's folder in Blackboard.

Course Facebook Group Participation (worth up to **80** points): My hope is that the Course Facebook Group will allow for valuable communication between and among students. You are expected to participate throughout the semester on an *ongoing* basis, with points assigned for two different periods (due dates are specified in the Course Calendar). During each period, you must share at least **1 initial post** and **1 follow-up comment**. You will earn up to 15 points for each comment (up to 30 points per period), as well as an additional 20 points for joining the course Facebook group by the deadline announced on the course calendar. Note that Facebook participation points are NOT subject to the late point deduction policy. You will need to submit your contributions prior to the stated deadlines in order to earn points. Late submissions will **NOT** be awarded credit.

There are a number of ways in which you could profitably use this group to better your own and others' understanding of and engagement with the course content.

For example, you may consider using Facebook posts to:

- Share “aha moments” that you have while reading the text, delving into external sources, or completing course assignments.
- Share meaningful quotes from the textbook, or relevant quotes from other sources.
- Share links to photos, videos, and examples reinforcing topics from the textbook.
- Share examples of research in the media, along with your cursory impressions of quality.
- Ask questions requesting clarification on sections of the text or a particular assignment that might be confusing (don’t just ask for a due date or some other information that is clearly available in the syllabus—that won’t count for credit).
- Express discouragement or frustration with a certain concept, idea, or assignment (yes, that is allowed—just be respectful and constructive with your comments and maintain a professional tone).
- Offer a *substantive* response to an idea presented by someone else (more than, “I agree!”)
- Create/use relevant hashtags to allow others in the course to search related posts.

NOTE: Always be sure to make a value-added contribution with your initial posts and follow-up comments. **DO NOT** simply share a link with the caption, “Thoughts?” Always share **YOUR** thoughts and responses before asking for those of others.

The **Course reactions and impressions** assignment (worth **60** points) will contain several open-ended questions that will allow me to improve the course for future semesters. This is **separate** from the official course evaluation administered by the university. While you are also **required** to fill out that **mandatory survey**, the course reactions and impressions assignment contains questions that are not included in the official evaluation but that are valuable for course improvement efforts. It will ask questions about what you liked best and least about the course, and what suggestions you would offer for improvement. There are **no right or wrong answers** (although courtesy and respect should still dominate; and comments should be constructive). Students completing the worksheet and providing *thorough* and *thoughtful* responses will receive full credit.

The **Final exam** (worth **100** points), which will be **cumulative** and will contain 50 questions (drawn from the same question pool as those used for reading quizzes), will be administered through Blackboard. The exam will be available throughout finals week, but you will have only **2 hours** to complete it once you open the test. You will have only **1** opportunity to complete this test. Remember: You CANNOT collaborate with other students on exams. You may, however, use any of the material provided in the course. But, given the time limit, it may be worthwhile to prepare notes ahead of time that you can reference during the test.

Extra Credit: Reading Quiz Review (worth up to **60** points): Students often ask for Power Points, outlines, and reviews to aid in preparing for quizzes and tests. My philosophy is that students learn better when they complete the preparation process themselves, rather than being told by an instructor “what’s important.” Thus, students’ studying process might incorporate any or all of the following suggestions (or others):

- Reading through an assigned chapter (in a quiet place, free from distractions like radio, TV, and friends—unless **YOUR** learning style requires more background noise) while highlighting the most important words and concepts

- Re-reading the highlighted portions while taking notes (perhaps in outline form)
- Using notes to construct a mock test including multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions (“What would YOU ask if you were the instructor?”)
- Attempting to take the mock test with, and then without, the help of notes

I believe that collaboration with fellow students can be a valuable tool in the test preparation effort. For this reason, I am providing an extra credit blog forum for each quiz designed to facilitate this collaboration. For each forum, please be sure to share your mock test questions, **along with the answers and the page number** where you found them, in an initial blog entry. You will receive **2 extra credit points** for each question and answer pair that you share—**up to 10 points** (5 question/answer pairs) **per quiz**. Your questions must be submitted by **Wednesday at 11:59 pm** on the day before each quiz opens to receive credit. Please honor this deadline, in order to prevent academic dishonesty.

Course Policies:

Late Submission:

Assignments will lose 10% of available points for each day that they are late. Quizzes and tests **MAY NOT** be taken outside of the window of time during which they are available on Blackboard (except as dictated by another university policy such as disability, religious, or emergency accommodation). Each quiz is available to students for four days, spanning both weekdays and weekend days, in order to accommodate a variety of work and travel schedules. Please plan in advance to complete the quizzes within the designated window of availability. The final exam will be available for four business days during Finals Week (see the course calendar below for details) and must also be completed within that window of availability.

Participation:

If an emergency arises during the course that prevents you from participating in the class activities and assignments in a timely fashion, please contact me immediately. Please see the website for the Dean of Students' Office to find out more about SHSU's official 'absence' policy (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/policies/>). For the university policy regarding observance of religious and holy days, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/0953c7d0-7c04-4b29-a3fc-3bf0738e87d8.pdf>

University Code of Conduct:

<https://netreg.shsu.edu/mirror/codeofconduct.html>

Academic Integrity:

Students found cheating in the course will receive an **automatic 0** for assignments in question. Repeat offenses will be subject to receipt of an **“F”** for the entire course. This policy includes all assignments, quizzes, and discussion posts. Cheating includes:

- Passing your work off as someone else's (taking a test or quiz for someone)
- Passing someone else's work off as your own (letting someone take a test or quiz for you)

- Copying answers from someone else's assignment, quiz, or blog post
- Letting someone copy your answers from an assignment, quiz, test, or blog post
- Turning in written work or ANY PART OF WRITTEN WORK that has been copied from another source
- Working with another student on a written paper and using his or her words or ideas in your assignments, quizzes, or blog posts without giving proper credit
- Turning in any writing that is not IN YOUR OWN WORDS and/or correctly cited

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the act of not properly crediting your sources of information. To maintain standards of proper citation, when you cite the course textbook or outside sources, include both in-text citations and a reference list. This requirement applies to any material that is not your own (from original research, or original ideas). In addition, **direct quotations must appear in quotation marks and be followed by the page number(s)** (or sections for online sources) in parentheses. The main purposes of citation are to give credit where credit is due, and to allow others to find and reference the source.

Please use APA (American Psychological Association) format for citations. You can find a great reference online for how to do that: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/06/>

If you need assistance ensuring compliance with standards of academic integrity, please visit the University Writing Center (Farrington 111):

<http://www.shsu.edu/centers/academic-success-center/writing/>.

For more information on the university's policy toward cheating, plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty, refer to this link:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/728eec25-f780-4dcf-932c-03d68cade002.pdf>

Disabled Student Policies and Service Information:

Students with a disability that affects their academic performance are expected to arrange for a conference with the instructor in order that appropriate strategies can be considered to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. Please contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities in the SHSU Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786) to request accommodations. For more information on university policies toward and services to disabled students, see the links below:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/9edd8433-cad5-40d1-b4bf-6a91b08f90e4.pdf>

Online Etiquette:

Out of respect for other students, please do not use the course e-mail or online environments for general (non-course-related) messages. Feel free to use email and Blackboard to ask or answer questions related to the course schedule and content. Remember that everyone in the class (and the instructor) will read your posts and messages. Please keep sensitive information private.

Course Calendar		
Week	Assignments	Due Dates
1	Download, read, save, and print the syllabus from Blackboard Read Chapter 1-2 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapters 1-2 Complete the Syllabus Quiz BLOG: Introductions and Expectations: INITIAL entry due Join the course Facebook Group (See syllabus for details)	Wednesday, August 30 Wednesday, August 30 Sunday, September 3 Sunday, September 3 Sunday, September 3
2	Read Chapter 3 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 3 Submit Extra Credit Review Questions by 11:59 pm Introductions and Expectations FOLLOW-UP comments due Reading Quiz #1 (Covers Chapters 1-3; Open Thursday)	Wednesday, September 6 Wednesday, September 6 Sunday, September 10 Sunday, September 10
3	Read Chapter 4 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 4 Facebook Participation #1 due: INITIAL & FOLLOW-UP	Wednesday, September 13 Sunday, September 17
4	Read Chapter 5 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 5 Submit Extra Credit Review Questions by 11:59 pm Research opt-in/opt-out assignment due Reading Quiz #2 (Covers Chapters 4 & 5; Open Thursday)	Wednesday, September 20 Wednesday, September 20 Sunday, September 24 Sunday, September 24
5	Read Chapter 6 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 6 BLOG: Research in the Media #1: INITIAL entry due	Wednesday, September 27 Sunday, October 1
6	Read Chapter 7 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 7 Submit Extra Credit Review Questions by 11:59 pm Research in the Media #1: FOLLOW-UP comments due Reading Quiz #3 (Covers Chapters 6 & 7; Open Thursday)	Wednesday, October 4 Wednesday, October 4 Sunday, October 8 Sunday, October 8
7	Read Chapter 8 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 8 BLOG: Research Questions: INITIAL entry due	Wednesday, October 11 Sunday, October 15
8	Read Chapter 9 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 9 Submit Extra Credit Review Questions by 11:59 pm Research Questions: FOLLOW-UP comments due Reading Quiz #4 (Covers Chapters 8 & 9; Open Thursday)	Wednesday, October 18 Wednesday, October 18 Sunday, October 22 Sunday, October 22
9	Read Chapter 10 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 10 BLOG: Bibliography: INITIAL entry due	Wednesday, October 25 Sunday, October 29
10	Read Chapter 11 Instructor's Notes and Textbook Chapter 11 Submit Extra Credit Review Questions by 11:59 pm Bibliography: FOLLOW-UP comments due Reading Quiz #5 (Covers Chapters 10 & 11; Open Thursday)	Wednesday, November 1 Wednesday, November 1 Sunday, November 5 Sunday, November 5
11	Read Chapter 12 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 12 Article Analysis: Quantitative Article Article Analysis: Qualitative Article	Wednesday, November 8 Sunday, November 12 Sunday, November 12
12	Read Chapter 13 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 13 Read Chapter 14 Instructor's Notes & Textbook Chapter 14 Submit Extra Credit Review Questions by 11:59 pm Reading Quiz #6 (Covers Chapters 12 -14; Open Thursday)	Wednesday, November 15 Wednesday, November 15 Wednesday, November 15 Sunday, November 19
13	BLOG: Research in the Media #2: INITIAL entry due Facebook Participation #2 due: INITIAL & FOLLOW-UP	Sunday, November 26 Sunday, November 26

14	Research in the Media #2: FOLLOW-UP comments due Course reactions and impressions assignment due	Wednesday, December 3 Wednesday, December 3
15	Final exam: (Cumulative; Open: Monday, 12/4 – Thursday, 12/7)	Thursday, December 7
<i>Note:</i> Assignments and due dates are color coded. Quiz and Test due dates are in bold.		