

## Applied Research Methods (SOC 5376)

3 Credit Hours

Spring 2018

### Basic Information

Instructor: J. Bart Stykes, Ph.D.

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Campus Phone: (936) 294-4122

**Required Readings:** Required readings will be posted to Blackboard. **However**, I strongly encourage you to have a methods text on hand to review for key concepts covered in Methods I (SOC 4340). Your previous method's book will suffice if you still have it. If you no longer have your copy of *The Process of Social Research*, I use Singleton and Straits (2010) *Approaches to Social Research*.

**Course Description:** This course is designed to extend your base of knowledge from *Graduate Research Methods I* (SOC 4340). Specifically, in this course you will be required to *more critically engage* with much of the content that was previously presented to you in a textbook format. Rather than focusing on definitions appearing in a textbook, you will be reading scholarly and technical writing. This class is structured to emphasize the *application* and *critique* of methodological practices in sociology.

**Course Goals:** Broadly speaking, I hope this course reinforces your knowledge of the role of research methods in Sociological Inquiry. More specifically, this course is intended to benefit each of you depending on your status as thesis or non-thesis track students by either reinforcing your understanding of research methods for the methods comprehensive exam or providing a framework to begin the early stages of developing a thesis proposal.

**Course Objectives:** Upon completion of this course students will:

1. Apply course content pertaining to methods to frame their own research questions,
2. Develop specific skills and competencies needed by professionals in the field, and
3. Learn the appropriate methods for collecting and analyzing data.

**Grading Criteria:** Performance in this class is evaluated on three distinct components: *class participation*, a *research proposal* and *assignments* which are directly tied to the course objectives. SOC 4340 was primarily concerned with gaining factual knowledge whereas this course focuses on the *application* of content, accordingly traditional exams will not be used to evaluate student performance in this course.

#### 1. Class participation comprising 10% of your grade.

- Ten weekly units will have a corresponding discussion board forum wherein students are expected to compose *quality* responses to my prompts based on that week's topic.
  - i. All students start with a score of 7 (denoting an average level of engagement). To improve this score students must *consistently* post strong responses that demonstrate critical thinking skills (above simple summation) **and respond** to their fellow classmates' posts. Inadequate responses will result in a deduction from the starting score of 7.

*I will reach out to individual students periodically to provide feedback on their participation in the discussion board forums. At this time, I will provide concrete feedback on how their score can be further improved.*
  - ii. Students who are absent from **any** discussion board forums **will receive a 0** for this component of the class. This is a graduate-level course and your active participation is expected.

2. Research Proposal comprising **50%** of your grade.

- The research proposal will be submitted in stages and students are expected to incorporate my detailed feedback from each stage in preparing their completed research proposal. Additional details regarding the Research Proposal are available on Blackboard.
  - i. Topic Statement (5% of final grade)
  - ii. Literature Review and Statement of Research Questions (10% of final grade)
  - iii. Method Section and Proposed Analyses (10% of final grade)
  - iv. Completed Research Proposal (25% of final grade)

3. Assignments comprising **40%** of your grade.

- 5 mandatory assignments (each constituting 8% of your final grade) are associated with selected *Troubleshooting* components of the course and are available on Blackboard.
  - i. These assignments are designed to test your practical understanding and application of noteworthy challenges sociologists frequently encounter in their own research endeavors.

The cutpoint for various letter grades in this course is as follows:

<b>A:</b>	90-100
<b>B:</b>	80-89
<b>C:</b>	70-79
<b>D:</b>	60-69
<b>F:</b>	59 or lower

*Late Posts and Submissions:* As this is a graduate-level class, late discussion board posts or submissions will not be graded. If, however, a student has circumstances that warrant an extension **and they reach out to the professor 24 hours prior to the deadline**, the professor reserves the right reconsider this policy on a case-by-case basis.

**Academic Dishonesty:** All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students caught cheating will receive an F for that assignment with more severe sanctions as appropriate.

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

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities must register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center and then arrange a conference with the instructor in order that accommodations can be made to assure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/9edd8433-cad5-40d1-b4bf-6a91b08f90e4.pdf>. SSD Office Location: Lee Drain Annex (next to the Farrington Building); Ph. 936-294-3512; TDD: 936-294-3786; E-mail: [disability@shsu.edu](mailto:disability@shsu.edu); Web Address: [www.shsu.edu/disability](http://www.shsu.edu/disability)

**Religious Holidays:** The Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a

religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. Religious Holy Day means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation. Students should contact the instructor as soon as possible regarding any missed classes or exams due to Religious Holy Days. <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/0953c7d0-7c04-4b29-a3fc-3bf0738e87d8.pdf>

**University Code of Conduct:** Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students shall arrive to class on time and be respectful to their other students. If a student needs to arrive to class late or leave class early the student will make the professor aware of these needs prior to class time. All cell phones and beepers must be turned off and stowed away while in the classroom. If a cell phone is out during an exam, the student will receive an F for that exam. Students who disrupt the class will be contacted by the professor to adjust their behaviors. In extreme cases students who cannot comply with these requirements can be removed and resigned from the class. <https://netreg.shsu.edu/mirror/codeofconduct.html>

**Evaluation:** Students will have the opportunity to evaluate the professor during the semester.

**Classroom Rules of Conduct:** Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students shall arrive to class on time and be respectful to their other students. If a student needs to arrive to class late or leave class early the student will make the professor aware of these needs prior to class time. All cell phones and beepers must be turned off and stowed away while in the classroom. If a cell phone is out during an exam, the student will receive an F for that exam. Students who disrupt the class will be contacted by the professor to adjust their behaviors. In extreme cases students who cannot comply with these requirements can be removed and resigned from the class.

**Visitors in the Classroom:** Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE, IMPORTANT TASKS AND DEADLINES

### Week and Topic

### Important Tasks

Week 1 (Jan. 17 - 19): Introductions <b>Readings:</b> Syllabus, Research Proposal Guidelines, and <b>White (2005)</b>	<a href="#">Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on Jan. 21</a>
Week 2 (Jan. 22 - 26): Sociological Inquiry and The Nature of Science <b>Readings:</b> <b>Bryman (1984); Collins (1989)</b>	<a href="#">Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on Jan. 28</a>
Week 3 (Jan. 29 – Feb. 2): Values and Objectivity in Research <b>Readings:</b> <b>Weber (1904); Haraway (1988)</b>	<a href="#">Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on Feb. 4</a>
Week 4 (Feb. 5 - 9): The Role of Theory in the Research Process <b>Readings:</b> <b>Lichterhan &amp; Reed (2015); Giordano et al. (2015)</b>	<a href="#">Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on Feb. 11</a> <a href="#">Topic Statement due by 11:59pm on Feb. 11</a>
Week 5 (Feb. 12 - 16): Practical Consideration of Measurement <b>Readings:</b> <b>Mohr (1998); Golafshani (2003)</b>	<a href="#">Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on Feb. 18</a>
Week 6 (Feb. 19 - 23): Practical Sampling Strategies <b>Readings:</b> <b>Reichman et al. (2001); Noy (2008)</b>	<a href="#">Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on Feb. 25</a> <a href="#">Lit. Review and Research 2s due by 11:59pm on Feb. 25</a>
Week 7 (Feb. 26 – Mar. 2): Practical Guide to Qualitative Analyses <b>Readings:</b> <b>Charmaz (2008); Charmaz (1990)</b>	<a href="#">Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on Mar. 4</a>

<b>Week and Topic</b>	<b>Important Tasks</b>
Week 8 (Mar. 5 - 9): Secondary Data Analyses <b>Readings: Hofferth (2005); Savage &amp; Burrows (2007)</b>	Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on Mar. 11 Proposed Data and Method due by 11:59pm on Mar. 11
Week 9 (Mar. 12 - 16): <b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
Week 10 (Mar. 19 - 23): Correlation $\neq$ Causation <b>Readings: Ruggles' exchange with Oppenheimer &amp; Preston (1997)</b>	Assignment 1 due by 11:59pm on Mar. 25
Week 11 (Mar. 26 - 29): Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research <b>Readings: Goffman (2009) and Humphreys (1970)</b>	Assignment 2 due by 11:59pm on Apr. 1
Week 12 (Apr. 2 - 6): Ethical Considerations in Quantitative Research <b>Readings: Regnerus (2012a; 2012b); Regnerus Affair timeline, with Maze</b>	Assignment 3 due by 11:59pm on Apr. 8
Week 13 (Apr. 9 - 13): Challenges in Conceptualization Measurement <b>Readings: Jerolmack &amp; Khan (2014) exchange with Cerulo and DiMaggio</b>	Post in DB forum by 11:59pm Apr. 15
Week 14 (Apr. 16 - 20): Challenging Target Populations: Fathers <b>Readings: Greene &amp; Biddlecom (2000); Joyner et al. (2012)</b>	Assignment 4 due by 11:59pm on Apr. 22
Week 15 (Apr. 23 - 27): Evaluation Research <b>Readings: Rossi &amp; Wright (1984); Wood et al. (2014)</b>	Completed Research Proposal due by 11:59pm on Apr. 29
Week 16 (Apr. 30 – May 4): Wrapping up The Course and Debriefing	Post in DB forum by 11:59pm on May 4 Assignment 5 due by 11:59pm on May 4

**Please note this schedule is tentative and subject to change.**