

Research Methods in Sociology (SOCI 3320 001)

Contact Information

Dr. Joseph M. Simpson, Associate Professor of Sociology

Email: jsimpson@tamusa.edu ← THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO CONTACT ME

Office: 347E CAB

Course information

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

Where: Senator Frank L. Madla 238

Course Description

The foundational concepts, assumptions, and approaches in qualitative and quantitative research; the scientific method; and research ethics. Students will apply knowledge gained in this class through application to a hands-on, semester-long research project.

Open Source Text

[The Craft of Sociological Research](#)

by Victor Tan Chen; Gabriela León-Pérez; Julie Honnold; and Volkan Aytar

Course Goals

- Craft a strong research question and hypothesis;
- Do research ethically;
- Identify, conceptualize, and operationalize variables in your model;
- Complete an observational study, code your field notes, and write an integrative memo;
- Schedule and conduct an in-depth interview and report your findings;
- Locate a secondary data set and identify specific variables;
- Compile valid survey questions into a quality survey; and
- Write the literature review and methods sections of a manuscript.

Community Agreement

In addition to what is described in this syllabus the class will develop a set of community agreements for how we want to do what we want to avoid and what we want to create in the classroom.

Academic Integrity

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic Dishonesty for which a student is subject to penalty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submission, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, violating known safety requirements and ethical misconduct. Engaging in one of these activities may result in a zero for the assignment or a grade of "F" for the course. All students are responsible for being familiar with the Academic Dishonesty Policy, which may be found in the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook

No Use of Generative AI Permitted

SOCI 3330 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the principle that supports a welcoming academic environment where open inquiry, critical analysis and intellectual growth are possible, and respectful debate is valued. By ensuring the right to express thoughts, challenge assumptions and pursue knowledge freely, academic freedom not only enriches individual growth but also upholds the integrity of higher education as a site of innovation and discovery. In this course, it is mutually agreed (by both instructor and student) that we support these principles of academic freedom.

Student Handbook 8.5.1 Academic Freedom

Students will be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views in any course of study and to withhold judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for

learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students have the right to be evaluated for their participation and work in the classroom in accordance with the parameters as indicated in the course syllabus.

Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disability. If you believe you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. DSS is located at the Main Campus on the 2nd floor of the Central Academic Building in suite 210. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dss@tamusa.edu.

Classroom Courtesy

Courtesy is expected, especially when we are dealing with sensitive topics. For that reason, the following rules will be enforced.

- If you have questions, ask them. But do so in a respectful manner.
- All comments made to classmates and/or the instructor must be respectful. This includes comments made through private channels such as email.
- If you are uncomfortable about a statement made by any other student, notify me as quickly as possible.
- Do not link to other online information or send links to other websites without consulting me first. There is a great deal of "information" on the Internet that is inappropriate and/or incorrect.

Any statement that is discriminatory or disrespectful toward any group of people or that creates a forum hostile to others will not be tolerated. It is possible that comments will not be intended as discriminatory or disrespectful but may be interpreted as such. In these cases, I will discuss why the statement is inappropriate the first time. Use of identified terms or phrases after that will be interpreted, as intentionally disrespectful and appropriate disciplinary actions will be taken.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class. You are expected to participate throughout the semester. Your grade is directly tied to your class attendance. If you want to get an

"A" you must attend 90% of class time. This allows you to miss 3 days and still receive an "A." Work turned in late will receive a 10% penalty unless it is for an excused reason including:

- Hospitalization of you, a spouse, or a child (with proof of hospitalization emailed to me within 24 hours)
- Death of an immediate family member (with proof emailed to me within 72 hours)
- Military assignment that will prevent regular participation (with proof emailed to me BEFORE participation is missed)

As adults, you are expected to handle your own time. A normal 3-hour university course should require 2-3 hours of work outside the classroom for every hour in the classroom. That means 9-12 hours per week of work for each class. I will not accept late work without penalty for any reason other than those listed above. Please do not email me with requests for deadline extensions or to tell me why work was not completed on time.

Grading

As indicated above and in the instructions for each assignment, some assignments will be graded (using a rubric) and other assignments will earn completion points. The idea behind completion points is that I want you to experience the method/process without having to worry about getting everything exactly right as you are learning. Mistakes are part of the learning process!

Completion Grades: Assignments with completion grades will receive full credit if the work is complete and submitted on time. I may provide feedback on your completion grade work, especially if you did an exceptionally good job or if feedback is necessary for the future development of your work, but in many cases, you will not receive individual feedback. Instead, we will discuss the process as a class, and I will note some mistakes that I saw frequently and discuss how those errors will affect the rest of the research project.

Graded Assignments: The instructions for graded assignments will include either a grading rubric or a list of grading criteria. If you see a grading rubric, then I am looking for very specific levels of performance on a list of criteria. In this case, it is your responsibility to look at the rubric and ensure that each of those criteria are met. In other cases, there are multiple, equally valid ways to approach an assignment or a severely limited list of criteria. In these cases, I will list the criteria that I will be checking for, but I will also award points for work that demonstrates mastery of class

content and skills but is not included in my list of criteria. This provides a more individualized grading scheme for assignments where that is more appropriate.

Graded Components

Components	Percent	Graded	Completion
Attendance	5		✓
In-Class Activities	10		✓
Possible Topics and Research Articles Assignment	5	✓	
Research Question and Hypothesis Assignment	5	✓	
Model and Variables Assignment	3		✓
First Set of Notes on Articles	5	✓	
CITI Training Module	3		✓
Survey Questions Assignment	5	✓	
Identifying Variables in a Secondary Data Set Assignment	5	✓	
Field Notes Assignment	3		✓
Integrative Memo Assignment	3	✓	
Interview Guide Assignment	5	✓	
Interview Transcript, Notes, and Reaction Assignment	5	✓	
Second Set of Notes on Articles	5	✓	
Detailed Outline of Research Proposal	10	✓	
One-on-One Meeting with Dr. Simpson	3		✓
Final Version of Research Proposal	20	✓	
Total	100		

Letter Grade Calculation*

A = 100 to 90

B = 89.9 to 80

C = 79.9 to 70

D = 69.9 to 60

F = Below 60

** I do not round up grades
or negotiate grades at the
end of the semester.*

I may offer extra credit opportunities.

Submission Policy

Submit all your work on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to ensure that your work is successfully submitted before the deadline. I value the skill of timely communication and prioritize flexibility in response to what life throws at us: therefore, please email me before the due date if you need an extension. I do not provide credit for late assignments unless you receive email permission from me before the due date or within 24 hours following it. If you receive written permission from me to submit late work, I may deduct 10% per day or mark your work as partial credit. If late work becomes a pattern, extensions will no longer be provided.

Course Schedule

Section 1: Getting Started

Week 1: What is Sociological Research? 8/24

Required Reading:

- Syllabus
- Course Matters and [1. Introduction](#) and [4. Research Questions](#)

Assignments:

- "Possible Topics and Research Articles" due August 30 by 11:59pm
- Fact vs. Opinion Exercise

Week 2: Choosing a Topic, Research Questions, and Hypotheses 8/31

Required Reading:

- [2. Using Sociology in Everyday Life](#) and [5. Research Design](#)
- Guidelines for Research Questions and Hypotheses
- Research Questions and Hypotheses Example

Assignments:

- "Research Questions and Hypotheses" due Sun 9/6 by 11:59pm
- Continue to gather sociological research articles and take notes on your topic

Week 3: The Role of Theory and Research Design 9/7

Required Reading:

- [3. The Role of Theory in Research](#)
- Guidelines for Using Theory

Assignments:

- Begin CITI Training Module
 - Continue to gather sociological research articles and take notes on your topic
- Readings

Week 4: Models and Variables: Conceptualization and Operationalization 9/14

Required Reading:

- [7. Measuring the Social World](#)
- Guidelines for Variables

Assignments:

- Work on CITI Training Module
- First Set of Notes on Articles due Sun 9/20 by 11:59pm

Week 5 Ethics 9/21

Required Reading:

- [8. Ethics](#)
- CITI Training Module
- Gerson & Damaske (2021) – Examples of Consent Forms

Recommended Resources:

- American Sociological Association – Ethics
- Texas A&M University-San Antonio IRB website

Assignments:

- Model and Variables due Sun 9/27 by 11:59pm
- CITI Training Module due Sun 9/27 by 11:59pm

Section 2: Quantitative Reasoning

Week 6: Introduction to Quantitative Research - Surveys and Variables 9/28

Required Materials:

- [13. Surveys](#)
- Handout from Pew Research Center
- Handout from Survey Monkey
- Methods 101: Survey Question Wording
<https://youtu.be/eFzGdQrr2K8?si=OqnGgPHZLiXIu8wj>

Assignments:

- Survey Questions Assignment due 10/4 by 11:59pm

Week 7: Sampling and Secondary Data Analysis 10/5

Required Materials:

- [6. Sampling](#)
- Methods 101: Random Sampling:
<https://youtu.be/sonXfzE1hvo?si=6qkljJESISFSzAIC>

Assignments:

- Identifying Variables in a Secondary Data Set due 10/11 by 11:59pm

Section 3: Qualitative Research

Week 8: Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods - Ethnography 10/12

Required Materials:

- [9. Ethnography](#)
- Lareau (2021) Chapter 7: Writing High-Quality Field Notes

Assignments:

- Conduct ethnographic observations
- Field Notes due Sun 10/18 by 11:59pm
- Integrative Memo due Tues 10/20 by 11:59pm

Week 9: In-Depth Interviews 10/19

Required Materials:

- [**10. In-Depth Interviews**](#)

Recommended Resources:

- Gerson and Damaske (2021) Examples of Interview Guides
- Lareau (2021) Chapter 5: Two Sample Interviews

Assignments:

- Interview Guide due Tues 10/27 by 11:59pm
- Continue to gather and take notes on research articles about your topic

Week 10: Analyzing Qualitative Data 10/26

Required Materials:

- Gerson and Damaske (2021) Chapter 6: Analyzing Interviews
- [**11. Qualitative Data Analysis**](#)

Assignments:

- Second Set of Notes on Articles due Sun 11/1 by 11:59pm
- Complete interview by Wed 11/4

Week 11: Analyzing Qualitative Data 11/2

Required Materials:

- Saldaña (2016) Chapter 1: An Introduction to Codes and Coding

Assignments:

- Interview Transcript, Notes, and Reaction due Tues 11/10 by 11:59pm

Section 4: Research Proposal

Week 12: Analyzing Qualitative Data 11/9

Required Materials:

- Saldaña (2016) Chapter 5: Second Cycle Coding Methods
- Review the Research Proposal template and rubric

Assignments:

- Work on Detailed Outline of Research Proposal

Week 13: 11/6

Assignments:

- Detailed Outline of Research Proposal due Mon 11/24 by 11:59pm

Week 14: Research Proposal 11/23

Detailed Outline of Research Proposal due

Thursday, November 26 Thanksgiving

Week 15: Research Proposal

Tuesday, December 1

1-on-1 Meetings

Thursday, December 3 Last Day of Class

Finals Week

Thursday December 10

2:00 – 3:30 PM

Final Version of Research Proposal Due