

Directed Research in Sociology (SOCI 4393)

Texas A&M San Antonio, Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Pollock
spollock@tamus.edu

Office Hours: email to schedule an appt
Tues 11:30-1:30pm (virtual or in person)
Wed 2:00-4:00pm (virtual)

Course Catalogue Description

This is an opportunity for outstanding sociology students who will be able to acquire hands-on research experience by conducting research under the guidance of a faculty member.

Prerequisite(s): SOCI 3320, SOCI 3330, cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, and with instructor approval.

TSI Restriction(s): Reading, Math, and Writing

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Find and synthesize literature related to a specific research topic of interest
- Develop a research project (e.g., timeline, research question, survey or interview guide, etc.)
- Collect data using at least one sociological method
- Analyze research findings
- Prepare research findings for presentation (e.g., research paper, poster, or other product)

Required Readings and Materials

You do not need to buy any books for this class. All readings and course materials will be available on Blackboard.

Graded Components

Each student will work with Dr. Pollock to create a list of objectives and deliverables as well as a timeline for the semester. The final grade will be based upon meeting the objectives and deadlines, as well as the quality of the deliverables accomplished.

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

Course Meetings and Time Commitment

We will schedule regular meetings throughout the semester to discuss the selected readings and assess the status of the research project. Each “hour” of course credit requires two hours outside of class. As such, we expect three hours per week of activity related to the course for each hour of credit. This includes time spent in scheduled research meetings, finding and reading articles, conducting research and analyzing findings, preparing deliverables, and so on.

Class Policies

Controversial Subject Matter

Student participation and class discussion are highly valued and encouraged. We will be exploring several potentially sensitive topics such as prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, violence, and so forth. Mutual respect is key in this class. **I will not tolerate disrespect** under any circumstance. I ask that everyone is respectful of other people's comments and questions even if you disagree. It is crucial for all of us to work together to create an environment in which we can discuss social issues in a non-judgmental way. If you find a comment that I or another student makes to be insensitive or disrespectful, please speak up and explain your thoughts or feelings in a civil manner or discuss the issue with me in private.

I expect everyone to come to class with an open mind. You are encouraged to raise alternative viewpoints. However, you will be asked to think critically about your (and your classmates') world view, beliefs, and biases in an academic manner. You will be evaluated on your ability to explain and analyze various perspectives regardless of whether or not you think they are accurate. Keep in mind that the goal of a college education is to learn about different perspectives, how to analyze them academically according to a particular discipline's approach, and how to make arguments supported by scholarly evidence. Rather than dictating what you should think, this course is aimed to enhance your ability to think critically.

Active engagement is highly encouraged and rewarded. I will exercise my responsibility to manage the discussions so that ideas and argument can proceed in an orderly fashion. If you are having difficulty with participating or feel intimidated in any way, please come and see me early in the semester and we can work together to find a solution.

Other Expectations

I expect you to regularly check both Blackboard and your TAMUSA email. This is how I will get in touch with you and it is the best way to get in touch with me.

I also expect that you will use Blackboard to access required readings, to submit your assignments, and to review feedback that I provide on your work. You are responsible for doing so and should contact me in a timely manner (and before assignments are due!) should you have any difficulty. Since this course focuses substantially on writing, failure to turn in writing assignments on time may result in failure of the course.

It is your responsibility to get in touch with me early in the semester if you are struggling in the course or have questions. I am more than happy to work with you, but I cannot do so unless you communicate with me. I expect students to take advantage of my office hours, especially if the material or assignments seem difficult or if you are facing barriers to your success.

The University policy on withdrawal allows students only a limited number of opportunities available to withdraw from courses. It is important for you to understand the financial and academic consequences that may result from course withdrawal.

Syllabus Adjustments

Any modifications to this syllabus will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard. Students are responsible for knowing all in-class announcements and Blackboard announcements/adjustments.

Religious Accommodation

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition.

Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

If you will be observing any religious holidays this semester which will prevent you from attending a regularly scheduled class or interfere with fulfilling any course requirement, please contact me to make appropriate arrangements within two weeks of the beginning of the semester (or three days before any holidays which fall within the first two weeks of class).

Grades

I maintain course grades on Blackboard and it is possible that I occasionally enter an incorrect grade (i.e., sometimes I make a mistake). Please check the feedback I provide on your assignments and your grades via Blackboard throughout the semester and address any concerns immediately: do not wait until the end of the semester.

University Policies & Resources

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University Policies & Resources

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us at the [website](#) or email us at dss@tamus.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodations with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio 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 submissions, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, violating known safety requirements and ethical misconduct. This includes holding other students to the same standards and reporting any incidents of alleged violation of the honesty policy to the instructor involved

or, if necessary, to the appropriate academic department head. 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.

University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, a grade of 'F' on the particular paper or assignment, a failing grade in the course, or possible expulsion from the University. Considering the potential consequences of academic misconduct, it is obviously in students' best interests to avoid even the appearance of such behavior. If you are ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact your instructor for an assessment of the situation.

All student written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

If you are unsure about what plagiarism is, please take the plagiarism course offered through the university library. Not understanding plagiarism rules will not be accepted as a justification for plagiarized work. Here are the basics:

- Any time you use ideas or information from any other source, you must add a complete citation (including situations in which you do not use the author's words);
- A citation is made up of two parts: the internal citation (also called an in-text citation) at the point in your paper where the idea or information was used and an end citation (also called external citation) in your works cited or references section at the end of your paper. Both must be present to be considered a citation;
- If you use another person's words, they must be cited, they must be in quotation marks, and the internal citation must include a page number if the source is a book or article; and
- A paper that is substantially composed of quotes does not qualify as independent student work and will be treated as plagiarism, even if properly cited.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

This is not a campus-wide policy and only applies to this course. This policy may change, with prior notice, to reflect developments in technology.

Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, may only be used in this course for preparatory activities such as brainstorming, editing text, outlining, etc. Students are responsible for providing proper attribution and full transparency about their use of AI, with the aim of becoming informed digital citizens.

Note that generative AI can produce questionable results, including misinformation, nonexistent references, and bias, and its responses are often bland. When using generative AI, students are responsible for revising its responses to meet the assignment prompts and to be accurate, authentic, and relevant to your unique perspectives and creative thoughts.

For each usage, documentation of the following process is required:

- Cite your prompts to any AI tool that informed your work.
- Cite the AI tool and provide its entire response in quotation marks.
- Edit the AI tool's response to include your own original thoughts and style of writing and to meet the assignment requirements. In other words, you may not submit assignments generated entirely by artificial intelligence.
- Use quotations in your work to any text generated by AI and cite the tool.
- Validate any AI-generated content with reliable references and cite these.

Failure to follow these instructions will be considered academic misconduct and consequences will follow University policies.

When you use generative AI, you are also encouraged to review that tool's "terms of use" with regard to data privacy and raise any concerns with your instructor.

Adapted from Kristopher Purzycki (University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, 18 Jan 2023) (CC BY 4.0) @ Medium.

Academic Learning Center

All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamus.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App.

The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.

Emergency Preparedness

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit this [website](#). More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found [here](#). Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Meeting Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a [CARE report](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; click [here](#) for hours and contact information.

Military Affairs

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Pregnant/Parenting Students

Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources. Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (210) 784-2636.

Religious Observances

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the wide variety of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

Statement about Harassment and Discrimination

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion,

national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamus.edu.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator.

Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamus.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

If you wish to receive information from a center that is not affiliated with the university, you may want to call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673 or visit [this website](#).

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System. This includes the A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or visit the resources available in the [OSRR website](#).

The Six-Drop Rule

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

University Email Policy and Course Communications

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamus.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them. I will distribute course materials, including announcements and updates, via Blackboard, so I encourage you to log-in to that system at least twice per week.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. The Writing Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an “Online Appointment.” Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an “eTutoring” appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our [website](#). The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamus.edu.