

SOC 357/C&E SOC 357: Methods of Sociological Inquiry

Spring 2017
TR 11-11:50 a.m.
Education L196

Michael Halpin
mahalpin@wisc.edu
Office: 7109 Sewell
Office hours: Tuesdays 12-2pm, by appointment

Kerem Morgul Sections 303 and 304 Office: 8120 Social Sciences Office hours: TR 10-1050am	Samina Hossain Sections 305 and 306 Office: 7102 Office hours: T 1230-230
Frank Lin Sections 301 and 302 Office: 7110G Social Sciences Office hours: MW 11-12, or appointment	Emanuel Ubert Sections 307 and 308 Office: TBA Office hours: TR 930-1030

This is a basic course in how to do social science research and how to evaluate the research of others. It provides a general overview of the ways sociologists collect information about social phenomena with a special emphasis on what can be done to yield information that is trustworthy and useful for our theoretical understanding of social life. You will have the opportunity to practice a range of sociological methods, and will learn how to identify and evaluate how these methods are used in future sociological readings.

This course assumes no background in research methods or statistics. Over the course of the semester, you will be introduced to basic statistical concepts and the methods of statistical computing and will use these tools to analyze the data that you collect.

Department learning objectives. Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content I will cover in this course, I have designed this course to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of sociology:

- *Conduct Research and Analyze Data (quantitative or qualitative).*
- *Critically Evaluate Published Research.*
- *Communicate Skillfully.*
- *Work effectively in groups.*
- *Improve project management skills.*

My goals in this course are: (1) to introduce you to the elements of research design so that you will have a good foundation for future learning, (2) to teach you how to read a research report or journal article with a critical eye, so that you can know how trustworthy its information is, (3) to expose you to a variety of research methods that you may encounter in the future, (4) to convince you that research is a relatively straightforward, systematic set of procedures by which you can

get answers to questions you have, (5) to let you experience some of the limitations and problems of doing research into human behavior, and (6) to show you that doing research can be fun.

Required Readings

There are two required textbooks:

Dixon, Singleton, and Straits. *The Process of Social Research, 1st Ed.* Oxford University Press.

This textbook is available through the university bookstore and from many online retailers. A reserve copy is available at College Library.

Matthew Desmond. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City.* Crown.

This is UW's 2016 **Go Big Read** book. You get this book for **FREE**. Your TAs will distribute coupons for this book, which can be exchanged for a free copy of the book at campus libraries.

In addition to these books, there are additional assigned readings. Electronic copies of these articles will be posted on Learn@UW. Hard copies of the articles in the reader will be available on reserve in the Social Science Library on the 8th floor of the Social Science Building (use the elevator at the rear of the building). I expect you to bring the assigned readings with you to section in order to facilitate discussion.

Course Requirements:

Homework (15%)

- Two types of homework will be assigned in section: reading responses (5%) and assignments (10%).
- *Reading responses:* For selected readings, you will be asked to write a short reading response that addresses a specific set of questions. Reading responses will be submitted via Learn@UW and will be graded on a five-point scale.
- *Assignments:* There will also be three small assignments that will be distributed in section. Two of the three assignments will be begun in class and finished at home. These assignments include:
 - Homework #1: Ethics certification
 - Homework #2: Sampling exercise
 - Homework #3: Stata exercise

Group Projects (45%)

- The primary goal of this class is to introduce you to the methods of social research. You will have the opportunity to try a range of data collection methods. This will require you to spend time outside of class working in groups of 2-4 students to collect and analyze your data. You may write the reports summarizing these exercises either individually or

as a group. When you write the paper as a group, each member is responsible for the paper in its entirety, not just the portion she/he writes.

- The three research projects are:
 - Project #1: Field Observation (15%)
 - Project #2: Randomization (15%)
 - Project #3: Survey (15%)
- In preparation for each project, your group will submit a memo or proposal that sketches your plan. This will be discussed in the section and your TA will provide feedback. You may be asked to revise and resubmit your proposals. These proposals will count toward your grade for the project.

Quizzes (20%)

- At the end of each week, students will complete a quiz based on assigned readings and lectures from the week before. Some quiz questions will cover material included in the readings but not in the lecture, while others can only be answered by attending and paying attention in lecture. The quiz will be administered through Learn@UW. The quizzes will consist of true/false questions. You will have two chances to take each quiz and only the higher score will be counted. At each attempt, the questions will be drawn randomly from the “question library” and you will not get the same set of questions in your two attempts.
- **It is your responsibility to complete the quiz during the open window.** You will be given 60 hours to complete the quiz (e.g. W 9 am – F 9 pm), which is sufficient time for most students to find time in their schedule. If you forget to complete the quiz, it **will not be re-opened** for you after the quiz deadline. We can, however, negotiate the deadline for submitting your quiz **if you contact me before the quiz deadline**. Things happen; in the event that you have scheduled university-related travel, religious observations, severe illness, computer problems, or rescheduled work shifts, email me and I can extend your quiz submission deadline. **I will be very accommodating but only if you contact me before the quiz deadline.**
- Your lowest quiz score will be dropped from the final quiz grade.

Participation (20%)

- Lecture Participation (5%)
 - **You are expected to attend and participate in lecture.**
 - Participation will be registered through use of **Top Hat**, an app that can be accessed through your phone, tablet, or laptop computer.
 - An invitation will be sent to you by email, but if don't receive this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website: <https://app.tophat.com/e/172552>
Note: our Course Join Code is **172552**
 - A semester subscription to Top Hat is \$16. You can set up your Top Hat account at <https://kb.wisc.edu/luwmad.page.php?id=59937>. I have sent out email invitations to facilitate enrollment in the class; check your messages and contact me ASAP if you have not received an invitation. We'll start using Top Hat on January 19th.
 - Participation scores will be adjusted for **excused** absences. You must contact be **before** lecture in order for your participation to be adjusted.

- Section Participation (7.5%)
 - You are expected to attend and participate in all sections.
 - In order to receive full credit for section participation, you are expected to arrive on time and attend all sections, and to be engaged in classroom activities. **You are expected to be prepared for section, including planned workshopping for the components of the group projects.** If you must miss a meeting of your discussion section, you must arrange it in advance with your TA in order to not affect your participation grade.
- Presentation (7.5%)
 - You will be expected to lead section discussion of at least one assigned article
 - Groups will present their results from Project #3 in the final meetings of section.
 - All presentations will be evaluated on a five-point scale.

Honors Credit:

If you are eligible to receive honors credit for SOC 357, it is your responsibility to make the appropriate course registration and to contact me as soon as possible. In order to receive honors credit, you must write a brief research proposal, following the guidelines for the Hilldale Undergraduate Research Competition (<http://awards.advising.wisc.edu/hilldale-undergraduatefaculty-research-fellowship/>). For grading purposes, your grade on the proposal will be averaged with that of your group projects.

Submission of work:

- All assignments must be submitted via Learn@UW.
- All submissions to Learn@UW are time-stamped and must be submitted on time in order to receive the full credit. Points will be subtracted for each day late.
- Homework and group project reports must be submitted via Dropbox on Learn@UW. We recommend that you submit these assignments in Microsoft Word format, if possible.
- Your TA will provide more detailed instructions on how to submit your written work, such as project appendices.

Communication:

I receive many, many emails each day. Please use “Soc 357” in the subject when you email me so that I can prioritize a response.

All questions about assignments and grading should first be directed toward your TA.

Issues or problems with Top Hat should be sent directly to Top Hat. They have great support resources, don’t hesitate to use them.

Accommodations: Please send the instructor and your TA an email by the end of the second week of the course if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. This may be the case if English is your second language, you have a travel schedule from student athletics, or you experience a physical or

psychological condition that makes it difficult for you to complete assignments without some modification of those tasks. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the [McBurney Center](http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/). Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>. Provide a copy of your accommodations request (VISA) to the instructor and your TA by the end of the second week of class.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university's [web page](https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698) for details: <https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698>

Academic Integrity: As with all courses at the University of Wisconsin, you are expected to follow the University's rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. The standards are outlined by the [Office of the Dean of Students](http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/) at <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/> According to UWS 14, academic misconduct is defined as:

- seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance;
- assists other students in any of these acts.

For a complete description of behaviors that violate the University's standards as well the disciplinary penalties and procedures, please see the Dean of Students [website](#). If you have questions about the rules for any of the assignments or exams, please ask your instructor or one of the TAs.

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights. The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the me or to the chair, 8128 Social Science (jraymo@ssc.wisc.edu).

Deadlines

Note: all quizzes, homework, and projects must be submitted **before 9 p.m.** to receive full credit.

Deadline	Assignment	Comment
1/27	Quiz #1	Lectures 1/19-1/24
2/3	Quiz #2	Lectures 1/26-1/31
2/7	Homework #1	Research ethics certification
2/10	Quiz #3	Lectures 2/2-2/7
2/17	Quiz #4	Lectures 2/9-2/14
2/27	Quiz #5	Lectures 2/21-2/23
3/3	Project #1	Observation project
3/6	Quiz #6	Lectures 2/28-3/2
3/7	Homework #2	Sampling exercise
3/13	Quiz #7	Lectures 3/7-3/9
3/20	Quiz #8	Lectures 3/14-3/16
3/27	Project #2	Randomization project
4/3	Quiz #9	Lectures 3/28-3/30
4/10	Quiz #10	Lectures 4/4-4/6
4/14	Homework #3	Stata exercise
4/17	Quiz #11	Lectures 4/11-4/13
4/24	Quiz #12	Lectures 4/18-4/20
5/1	Quiz #13	Lectures 4/25-4/27
5/1	Quiz #13	Lectures 4/25-4/27

Schedule of Classes

1/17

Introduction

Reading: The syllabus

Section:

1/16-1/17: No discussion sections

1/18-1/19: Introductions

Assignments: None

1/19-1/24

Sociology as Science

Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 2

Reading for section: Article TBD by your TA (1/23-1/24)

Desmond, "Prologue: Cold City" and "About This Project," *Evicted* (1/25-1/26)

Section:

1/23-1/24: How to read a research article (discuss Article TBD)

1/25-1/26: Objectivity and the role of values in social science research (discuss Desmond)

Assignments:

Quiz #1 must be completed by **Friday, 1/27 at 9 p.m.**

Note: Quiz #1 covers 1/19-1/24 and associated lecture readings

- 1/26-1/31 **Elements of Social Research**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 4
Reading for section:
Sudhir Venkatesh, 2008, "The Hustler and the Hustled,"
Gang Leader for a Day, pp. 185-218 (1/30-1/31)
Section:
1/30-1/31: Ethical issues in studying human subjects (discuss Venkatesh)
Homework #1 distributed
2/1-2/2: In class exercise: hypotheses
Assignments:
Quiz #2 must be completed by **Friday, 2/3 at 9:00 p.m.**
Homework #1 must be submitted by **Tuesday, 2/7 at 9:00 p.m.**
- 2/2-2/7 **Measurement in Social Research**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 5
Reading for section: Li Zhou, 2015, "Obama's New College Scorecard Flips the
Focus of Rankings," *The Atlantic* (2/8-2/9)
Section:
2/6-2/7: In class exercise: measurement
2/8-2/9: Discussion of Zhou
Assignments:
Quiz #3 must be completed by **Friday, 2/10 at 9 p.m.**
- 2/9-2/14 **Qualitative Research**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 9
Reading for section: Desmond "Christmas in Room 400."
(2/13-2/14)
Nelson, 2009 "Bio Science: Genetic Ancestry Testing and the Pursuit of
African Ancestry," (2/13-2/14)
Section:
2/13-2/14: Discuss readings (Desmond; Peterson)
2/15-2/16: Introduction Project #1
Assignments:
Quiz #4 must be completed by **Friday, 2/17 at 9:00 p.m.**
****This quiz will include material from our guest speaker on 2/16****
Project #1 due **Friday, 3/3 at 9:00 p.m.**

*** Quizzes will now occur on Monday***

- 2/16 **Careers in Sociology**
Guest Speaker: Joel Clark, Sociology Career Counsellor
Section:
2/20-2/21: Work on Project #1

- 2/21-2/23 **Sampling**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 6
Reading for section: None
Section:
2/22-2/23: Work on Project #1 in Section
2/27-2/28: Homework #2 (Sampling exercise) distributed and begun in Class
Assignments:
Quiz #5 must be completed by **Monday, 2/27 at 9:00 p.m.**
Homework #2 must be submitted by **Tuesday, 3/7 at 9:00 p.m.**
- 2/28-3/2 **Causality and Experiments**
Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 7
Reading for section: Ernest-Jones et al. "Effects of eye images on everyday cooperative behavior: a field experiment" (3/1-3/2)
Levine et al. "Identity and emergency intervention: How social group membership and inclusiveness of group boundaries shape helping behavior" (3/1-3/2)
Massey and Lundy. "Use of Black English and Racial Discrimination in Urban Housing Markets: New Methods and Findings" (3/6-3/7)
Ludwig et al. "Neighborhood Effects on the Long-Term Well-Being of Low-Income Adults" (3/6-3/7)
Section:
3/1-3/2: Discuss Ernest-Jones et al., Levine et al. articles
3/6-3/7: Discuss Massey and Lundy, Ludwig et al.
Assignments:
Quiz #6 must be completed by **Monday, 3/6 at 9:00 p.m.**
- 3/7-3/9 **Designing Field Experiments**
Reading for lecture: No assigned reading
Reading for section: None
Section:
3/8-3/9: Project #2 distributed - plan randomization project
3/13-3/14: Plan randomization project (discuss proposals)
Assignments:
Quiz #7 must be completed by **Monday, 3/13 at 9:00 p.m.**
Project #2 due **Monday 3/27, 9:00 p.m.**
- 3/14-3/16 **Survey Methods**
Reading: Dixon Ch. 8
Reading for section: Rubin, "Measurement of Romantic Love" (3/15-3/16)
Peterson et al., "Orientations to Happiness and Life Satisfaction: the Full Life versus the Empty Life" (3/15-3/16)
Monk. "The Cost of Color: Skin Color, Discrimination, and Health among African Americans" (3/27-3/28)

O'Brien. "Depleting Capital? Race, Wealth, and Informal Financial Assistance" (3/27-3/28)

Section:

3/15-3/16: Discuss Rubin, Peterson et al. articles

3/27-3/28: Discuss Monk, O'Brien articles

Assignments:

Quiz #8 must be completed by **Monday, 3/20 at 9:00 p.m.**

3/21-3/26 **Spring Break.** Have a good one.

3/28-3/30 **Analyzing Quantitative Data/Social Science Computing Introduction**

3/28: Guest speaker Caitlin Teft from SSCC about Winstat

Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 12

Reading for section: None

Section:

3/29-3/30: Winstat/Stata training in computer lab

4/3-4/4: Stata exercise (Homework #3)

Assignments:

Quiz #9 must be completed by **Monday 4/3 at 9:00 p.m.**

Homework #3 due **Friday, 4/14 at 9:00 p.m.**

4/4-4/6 **Multiple Methods**

Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 11

Reading for section: None

Section:

4/5-4/6: Distribute Project #3

4/10-4/11: Plan Survey Project (critique questionnaires in class)

Assignments:

Quiz #10 must be completed by **Monday, 4/10 at 9:00 p.m.**

Project #3 due **Friday, May 5 at 9:00 p.m.**

4/11-4/13 **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Reading for Lecture: Dixon Ch. 13

Reading for section: Anderson 2003 "Jelly's Place"

(4/17-4/18)

Section:

4/12-4/13: Qualtrics training

4/17-4/18: Discuss Anderson & in class coding exercise

Assignments:

Quiz #11 must be completed by **Monday, 4/17 at 9:00 p.m.**

4/18-4/20 **Unobtrusive Research**

Reading for lecture: Dixon Ch. 10

Reading for section: None

Section:

4/19-4/20: Download Project #3 data from Qualtrics

4/24-4/25: Survey data analysis

Assignments:

Quiz #12 must be completed by **Monday, 4/24 at 9:00 p.m.**

Continue work on Project #3

4/25

Research Methods in Practice

Guest Speakers: Dagoberto Cortez (Ethnography) & Kathy Lin (Surveys)

4/27

Current Debates and Controversies in Social Research Methods

Reading for Lecture:

Open Science Collaboration “Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science”

Singal “The case of the amazing gay-marriage data: How a graduate student reluctantly uncovered a huge scientific fraud”

Section:

4/26-4/27: Survey data analysis

Assignments:

Quiz #13 must be completed by **Monday, 5/1 at 9:00 p.m.**

****This quiz includes content from guest speakers (4/25) and lecture (4/27)**

5/2-5/4

No lecture

Reading: No reading

Section:

5/1-5/2: Project #3 presentations

5/3-5/4: Project #3 presentations

Assignments:

Project #3 due **Friday 5/5, 9:00 p.m.**

No quiz this week