

## **SOC210(02): Research Methods**

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Carney 009  
T.Th: 4:30-5:45

### **Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the process of engaging in social research. Research in the social sciences requires learning techniques for doing research and also paying attention to the art of gathering and interpreting the data. Various research methods help us to understand different angles on a social situation, each offering various strengths and limitations. Human life is a complex, agency-filled, phenomenon that does not lend itself to finding definitive predictive patterns. That being said, however, social patterns can be found that help people to understand and act upon social structures

In addition to the general study of research methods, particular attention will be given in this course to the role of research in understanding the nature of power, as well as to various ways that research can be used in an empowering way to give voice to the powerless. In other words, I approach the topic of research methods as an opportunity to think about how sociology can be used to address the challenges of various social problems (such as homelessness, affordable housing, discrimination, etc.)

### **Course Materials**

Tim May. 2001. Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)  
Kerry J. Strand and Gregory L. Weiss. 2005. Experiencing Social Research: A Reader.  
Reserve Readings

### **Course Requirements**

Mid-Term Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Exploratory Research Project	25%
Mini-Research Proposal	25%

### **Class Attendance**

Class attendance and participation are expected and may affect your final grade. If it is obvious to me that you have really engaged the course and have learned the material, I am likely to increase your final grade to match that perception. Alternatively, if you have missed classes and seem to be trying to “slide through” the course, you will not be given any “benefit of the doubt” in your final assessment.

## *Course Schedule*

- Jan. 17                    Introduction to the Course
- Jan. 19                    Overview of a Social Research Process  
\* S&W, ch.1, ch. 2 (pp.33-46)
- Jan. 24                    Perspectives on Social Research  
\* May, ch.1
- Jan. 26                    Discussion of Exploratory Research Project (ERP)  
\* Handouts
- Jan. 31                    Discussion of ERP (continued)  
\* RR: Snow and Anderson, “Researching the Homeless”
- Feb. 2                     Theory and Research  
\* May, ch.2  
\* RR: Becker, “Tricks of the Trade”
- Feb. 7                     Whose Voice? Research and Social Change  
\* RR: Feagin and Vera, “What Is Liberation Sociology?”
- Feb. 9                     Ethical Conduct in Social Research  
\* May, ch.3
- Feb. 14                    Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research  
\* S&W, ch.3
- Feb. 16                    Conceptualization and Operationalization  
\* RR: Weider, “Telling the Convict Code”
- Feb. 21                    Reliability and Validity  
\* RR: Steinar Kvale, “The Social Construction of Validity”
- Feb. 23                    Review
- Feb. 28                    **Mid-term Exam**
- March 2                    Video
- << Spring Break: March 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Classes >>**
- March 14                   Using Official Statistics  
\* May, ch.4
- March 16                   Sampling  
\* RR: Arber, “Designing Samples”
- March 21                   Survey Research  
\* May, ch.5

**<< March 21 – Exploratory Research Project Due >>**

- March 23            Survey Research (continued)  
\* S&W, ch.5
- March 28            Interviews  
\* May, ch.6  
\* RR: Kondo, “How the Problem of ‘Crafting Selves’ Emerged”
- March 30            Narrative Research  
\* RR: Richards, “Born Illegal”  
\* Handout on McAdams IV process
- April 4              Field Research  
\* May, ch.7
- April 6              Field Research  
\* S&W, ch.7
- April 11            Processing Social Data: Coding  
\* RR: Fielding, “Coding and Managing Data”  
\*\* RR: Charmaz, “Grounded Theory”

<< **Easter Break** >>

- April 18            Content Analysis  
\* S&W, ch.6
- April 20            Action Research  
\* RR: Feagin and Vera, “Doing Liberation Social Science”
- April 25            Community-Based Research  
\* RR: Spittal, et al, “We Are Dying. It is Finished”
- April 27            ‘Needs Assessment’ Research  
\* RR: Ryan, “Uses of Action Research”
- May 2                Class Discussion about Research Roles  
<< **May 2<sup>nd</sup> : Research Proposal Reflections Due** >>
- May 4                Review of Course

Final Exam: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\* The above schedule is tentative and subject to change according to class needs \*\***

Overview of Data Collection Methods

Science vs. Social Science

- \* objectivity

- \*

Overview of Research Steps

Theory and Research

- Grounded theory

Research Design

The Place of Values and Ideology

Whose voice?

Types of Social Science

Doing a Literature Review

Ethics in Social Research

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research

Measurement/Reliability/Validity

- \* indexes/Scales

Sampling

Conceptualization and Operationalization

Researchers role

Data processing/analysis/interpretation

Elaboration model?

Data Collection Methods

Experimental Research

Survey Research/survey instrumentation

- Pre-test surveys

Nonreactive research/Secondary Analysis

Field Research/Participant Observation

- \* field notes

- \* interviewing in the field

In-depth interviewing

Unobtrusive Research

Narrative Research

Interviews

Historical/Comparative Research

Existing Stats

Document analysis

Evaluation Research

Action Research

Case Studies

Content Analysis

Needs assessment research

Focus group research

Writing a Research Proposal