

SOC 357: Methods of Sociological Inquiry

Section 307

Spring 2017

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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.

Section Requirements:

Homework (15%)

- Two types of homework will be assigned in section: reading responses and assignments.
- 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.
- 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
 - Project #2: Randomization
 - Project #3: Survey

- 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.

Section Participation (20%)

- You are expected to attend and participate in all sections (10%)
- Presentation (10%)
 - 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.

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.
- 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.

Required Readings

The in class exercises, assignments, and projects will draw heavily from the assigned reading for lecture, Dixon et al.'s *The Process of Social Research*. A copy of this text is on reserve at College Library. We will also discuss journal articles and other readings on specified days in section. 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.

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 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](#). 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](#) 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, the instructor, or to the chair, 8128 Social Science (jraymo@ssc.wisc.edu).

Schedule of Classes

- 1/17 No Section
- 1/19 Introductions
Distribute Coupons for *Evicted*
Set up presentation schedule
- 1/24 How to read a research article
Article: Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record"
- 1/26 Discuss Desmond, "Prologue: Cold City" **and** "About This Project," *Evicted*.
- 1/31 Discuss Venkatesh, "The Hustler and the Hustled" from *Gang Leader for a Day*
Assignments: Homework #1 distributed (due **Tuesday, 2/7 at 9:00 pm**)
- 2/2 In class exercise: hypotheses
- 2/7 In class exercise: measurement

- 2/9 Discuss Li Zhou, 2015, “Obama’s New College Scorecard Flips the Focus of Rankings;”
in class exercise
- 2/14 Discuss Desmond “Christmas in room 400”
Petersen “All that is solid”
- 2/16 Introduction to Project #1
Assignments: Project #1 (due **Friday, 3/3 at 9:00 p.m.**)
- 2/21 Work on Project #1
- 2/23 Work on Project #1
- 2/28 Work on Homework #2
Assignments: Homework #2 (due **Tuesday, 3/7 at 9:00 p.m.**)
- 3/2 Discuss Ernest-Jones et al. “Effects of eye images on everyday cooperative behavior: a
field experiment”
- Levine et al. “Identity and emergency intervention: How social group membership and
inclusiveness of group boundaries shape helping behavior”
- 3/7 Discuss Massey and Lundy. “Use of Black English and Racial Discrimination in
Urban Housing Markets: New Methods and Findings”
- Ludwig et al. “Neighborhood Effects on the Long-Term Well-Being of Low-Income
Adults”
- 3/9 Plan Project #2
Assignments: Project #2 (due **Monday 3/27, 9:00 p.m.**)
- 3/14 Work on Project #2
- 3/16 Discuss Rubin, “Measurement of Romantic Love”
- Peterson et al., “Orientations to Happiness and Life Satisfaction: the Full
Life versus the Empty Life”
- 3/23 Spring break, no sections.**
- 3/28 Discuss Desmond and Shollenberger. “Forced Displacement from Rental
Housing: Prevalence and Neighborhood Consequences”
- O’Brien. “Depleting Capital? Race, Wealth, and Informal Financial Assistance”

- 3/30 Winstat & Stata Training in computer lab
- 4/4 Work on Homework #3
Assignments: Homework #3 (due **Friday, 4/14 at 9:00 p.m.**)
- 4/6 Introduction to Project #3
Assignments: Project #3 (due **Friday, 5/5 at 9:00 p.m.**)
- 4/11 Work on Project #3
- 4/13 Qualtrics Training
- 4/18 Discuss Desmond 2012 “Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor”, in class coding exercise
- 4/20 Download Project #3 data from Qualtrics
- 4/25 Analyze Survey Data
- 4/27 Analyze Survey Data
- 5/2 Project #3 Presentations
- 5/4 Project #3 Presentations