

Social Research Methods

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| Professor Brian Gran | Case Western Reserve University |
| Classroom: Mandc 106 Class meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9-10:15 am | SOCI 303, Spring 2008 |
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Course description: This course is designed to introduce students to the logic of sociological inquiry and to the process of social research.

Main topics: We will explore a range of approaches to empirical social research used in Sociology but also in related fields including public administration, education, marketing, and health services research. We will gain experience in formulating a research question, developing a research design, generating and analyzing data, and presenting your results. Perhaps most important, we will become critical consumers of social research.

Readings: We will rely on one book, which is available at the Case Book Store (located at the Thwing Center, 11111 Euclid Avenue). The instructor will occasionally provide supplemental readings. The primary book is:
Schutt, Russell K. 2006. *Investigating the Social World*. Pine Forge Press. Fifth edition. ISBN: 141292734X.

Format: This course will rely on lecture and discussions, supplemented with in-class exercises and practicum assignments. Reading assignments are listed in the syllabus. Lectures, discussions, practicums, and exams will be based on this material, so please complete the readings before class and bring questions and responses with you. The course material is cumulative; what we read and discuss in January will be necessary for the material we cover in April, so please keep up with the syllabus. Topics in the syllabus are tentative; please do not worry if we run ahead or (more likely) get behind schedule.

Students should come to class on time and prepared to discuss the week's readings. Students are responsible for all material covered in class. Good discussions (interesting and useful to you and me) depend on the preparation of participants. If the instructor determines classroom participation is wanting, he will require students to take a pop quiz. Students cannot make up pop quizzes, unless the absence is excused (see below). I encourage you to communicate with me via email and to stop by during office hours if you have questions or the material seems confusing.

Throughout the semester students will complete practicum assignments. Some of these practicum assignments will require that you enter the field to practice social research. All sociologists improve their research skills through practice—doing is better than listening. This course relies on a series of practicum exercises that offer an opportunity to test out and refine your research skills. Practicum exercises will also introduce you to SPSS, a software package for statistical analyses of quantitative data. Practicum assignments will be distributed over the course of the semester. Their deadlines are below and are highlighted in the syllabus. I also encourage students to meet with me during the semester to discuss these projects. Writing up your thoughts about the readings and practicum assignments should not be summaries of the course readings. Instead, they should employ concepts from readings and class discussions in studying social phenomena. We will work together to prepare a class project that may incorporate a student-designed survey and on preparing the data for analysis. Students will use this class database for the final project.

In addition to these practicums, students will take two exams. The first exam will be primarily used to check whether students and instructor are on the same wavelength. The second exam, which will be the

mid-term exam and cumulative, will include short answer, essay, multiple choice, and practicum-like questions. This class will not have make-up exams (without dire and documented excuses presented in advance or without satisfying university requirements (see below)). This class will not have a final exam. Instead, on the day of the final is due a written report of a research project undertaken over the course of the semester. The final research project is designed to demonstrate your ability to formulate a research question, identify and gather appropriate data, analyze those data, and write-up the results. The instructor will provide details of this research project in January. For the last class (prior to the final exam), the professor will review the course's significant ideas. This class does not offer the opportunity to earn "extra credit."

Classroom Conduct: One goal of this course is to promote constructive discussions of the class materials and the work we undertake in pursuit of the course's objectives. To achieve this goal, please keep in mind that probably all course participants, including the instructor, employ different means of reaching this goal. Please refrain from behavior that disrupts classroom learning. The instructor requests that cell phone owners silence their phones and use the silent ringing option during class attendance. Cell phone use and ringing will negatively impact course participation scores. Arriving late for the start of the class meeting will result in reductions in participation scores. Classroom conduct that positively influences classroom learning will positively influence the actor's participation grade.

Major Course Deadlines (in order of date):

Exam #1: Wednesday, January 23
Practicum #1: Wednesday, February 6
Practicum #2: Wednesday, February 20
Exam #2: Wednesday, March 5
Practicum #3: Wednesday, March 26
Practicum #4: Wednesday, April 16
Practicum #5: Monday, April 28
Final Project: Tuesday, May 6, 10:00 am

Grade: All students start the course with an A. Classroom participation, pop quizzes, practicums, exams, and the final project affect your final course grade in this manner:

1. Classroom participation: 10%
 - a. 10%: regular attendance with regular and relevant participation
 - b. 9%: regular attendance with regular participation
 - c. 8%: regular attendance with occasional, relevant participation
 - d. 7%: regular attendance with irregular participation.
 - e. 4%: irregular attendance with regular participation.
 - f. 2%: occasional attendance.
2. Pop quizzes: 5%
3. Practicum #1: 10%
4. Practicum #2: 10%
5. Practicum #3: 10%
6. Practicum #4: 10%
7. Practicum #5: 10%
8. Exam #1: 5%
9. Exam #2: 15%
10. Final project: 15%

A: 90-100
B: 80-89
C: 70-79
D: 60-69
F: < 60

Practicums: *Each practicum is due in class on the stated deadline, which will be a Wednesday (except practicum 5, due on Monday, April 28).* If late, please slide your paper underneath my office door at Room 224, Mather Memorial Hall. *Please do not email practicums.*

Grade reductions involving practicums:

- a) If I receive your paper after 10:15 am on the day it is due but by 9:00 a.m. Thursday, the next day, the highest possible score your paper will receive is 90. This is a 10% reduction.
- b) If I receive your paper by Thursday afternoon by 3:00 p.m., the highest possible score your paper will receive is 80. This is a 20% reduction.
- c) If I receive your paper by Friday morning by 9:00 a.m., the highest possible score your paper will receive is 70. This is a 30% reduction.
- d) If I receive your paper by Friday afternoon by 3:00 p.m., the highest possible score your paper will receive is 60. This is a 40% reduction.
- e) If I haven't received your paper by 3:00 p.m. of the Friday following the paper's deadline, the highest possible score your paper will receive is 50.

Unless falling within an exception, I will not accept any work after May 6, 10 a.m.

REGARDING UNIVERSITY DEFINITIONS AND RULES ON PLAGIARISM, CHEATING, and INCOMPLETES

DEFINITIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Plagiarism

“Plagiarism is defined as the submission of work done by another with the intent that it be viewed and evaluated as one's own. Thus copying on an examination, turning in a term paper or homework assignment done by someone else, and making extensive use of sources without acknowledging them are all interpreted as acts of plagiarism. Plagiarism can range from sloppy citation practices which obscure the line between a student's own ideas and those borrowed from others, to careless assumptions about what is and isn't common knowledge, to full-fledged presentation of borrowed, stolen, or purchased papers written by someone else” (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 21). See www.plagiarism.org for a review of plagiarism.

Cheating

Cheating is defined by its general usage. It includes, but is not limited to, the wrongful giving, taking, or presenting any information or material by a student with the intent of aiding himself or herself or another on any academic work that is considered in any way in the determination of the final grade.

Incompletes

“The grade of Incomplete (I) is assigned at the discretion of an instructor provided that:

1. There are extenuating circumstances, explained to the instructor before the assignment of the grade, which clearly justify an extension of time beyond the requirements established for other students in the class. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of the circumstances preventing completion.
2. The student has been passing the course and only a small segment of the course remains to be completed, such as a term paper, for which the extenuating circumstances justify a special exception.

An Incomplete grade may not be assigned if a student is absent from a final examination unless the Dean of Undergraduate Studies has authorized the absence” (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 28).

The instructor must submit the change of grade to the Office of the University Registrar “no later than the 11th week of the session following the one in which the I was earned. In certain cases (such as students on probation or graduating students) the dean may establish an earlier date for completion of courses with Incomplete grades. Failure to meet the deadline for removing the Incomplete will result in a failing grade.” University policy indicates the student must request a grade of Incomplete.

Rules and Procedure for Academic Infractions

Official CWRU Procedure for Academic Infractions (source: General Bulletin, chapter on Undergraduate Studies)

If a faculty member suspects that an undergraduate student at CWRU has presented the work of another as his or her own, or is otherwise guilty of academic dishonesty, the faculty member shall so advise the student and the departmental chair and consult with the Dean of Undergraduate Studies about the basis for those suspicions and appropriate disciplinary action. If the faculty member and the dean agree that the evidence is not adequate to support a complaint, the matter will be dropped, and the student will be so notified. If they do not agree to drop the matter, the following procedures will be followed.

If the infraction is a first offense, the dean and the faculty member may agree to leave the disposition of the matter to the faculty member. The student and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies will be notified in writing and a confidential record of the event and action shall be put on file in the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Alternatively, following consultation with the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, under any of the following circumstances, the faculty member will transmit a report of the infraction to the assistant vice president for student affairs or his/her designate for judicial action:

1. The student pleads innocent to having committed an infraction or pleads that the penalty is excessive.
2. It is the view of the faculty member and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies that the student's first offense is of a nature and seriousness to justify such a referral.
3. The records maintained by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies show the student to have been guilty of one or more previous academic infractions.
4. The faculty member, after consultation with the Dean, prefers such a referral to the alternative of assuming responsibility for the disposition of the matter.

In the event of any of the circumstances listed above, the Dean of Student Affairs will convene a University Judicial Board to hear the case as promptly as is feasible and fair.

When hearing a case with an academic infraction the University Judicial Board shall consist of a representative of the Office of Undergraduate Studies, a representative of the Office of Student Affairs, and one student and one faculty member qualified to serve as a result of their participation in the judicial board training program. Should the Board find there was insufficient evidence to support the charge, the faculty member will be so informed and asked to evaluate the student's performance for the assignment in question by his/her normal grading practices. If the Board upholds the complaint of the faculty member, the panel will transmit notification of its findings and action to both the faculty member and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies for implementation. The action taken by the University Judicial Board may include recommendations for a grade made to the faculty member and the imposition of additional disciplinary sanctions, as outlined in the Student Services Guide. In addition, the University is required to report to the funding agency the identity and misconduct of anyone, including a student, found guilty of falsification, fabrication, or plagiarism in the performance of research that is receiving support from federal sources (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 24-25).

Instructor's Loopholes:

1. I may adjust the reading load as we proceed through the course. If an adjustment is made, the readings will be reduced, not increased.
2. Likewise, I may adjust course requirements. If an adjustment is made, the requirements will be reduced, not increased.
3. Over the semester guests of the university are invited to speak to the class. All of these guests have demanding careers. It is possible that the guests will need to reschedule their class visit.
4. The instructor will be evaluated by the students a fourth into the semester. Evaluations will be conducted and reviewed by a member of the University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education (UCITE).

Student's Loopholes:

1. Throughout the syllabus I note university deadlines dealing with changing your course schedule.
2. The instructor and the university expect students to attend class regularly. If a student has absences in excess of one-fifth of class contact hours, he or she shall meet with the instructor and the chair of the Department of Sociology. In compliance with university policy, if the instructor "feels a student is jeopardizing his or her class work by absence," the instructor will submit a report "to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies for such action as the dean considers appropriate." (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 11). Students missing work due to an excused absence bear the responsibility of informing the instructor about their excused absence within one week following the period of the excused absence (except where prior notification is required), and of making up the missed work. The instructor shall give the student an opportunity to make up the work and/or the exams missed due to an excused absence, and shall do so, if feasible, during the semester in which the absence occurred.
3. In general, exceptions exist only for illness, death, participation in athletic events, or religious holidays.
 - a. Illness: If you want to claim an exception for illness, I require a statement from a medical doctor indicating that you were ill, briefly describing the illness, and on what dates you were ill. University Health Service (UHS) "will provide written verification of the date of a student's visit, and with student permission will communicate with the appropriate dean's office in the event of hospitalization or prolonged illness" (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 11). This UHS written verification is sufficient documentation for an absence.
 - b. Death: "In the event of a death in the family or other personal crisis requiring the student's absence from class, the student should notify the Office of Undergraduate Studies, 368-2928, which will provide documentation of such absences to instructors. In the event of such excused absence, arrangements should be made with the student to make up an exam or any other missed work within a period of time comparable to the period of the absence; for example, if a student must be absent for three days, work should be made up within a week" (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 12).
 - c. Athletic events: "Students who are involved in athletic or other extra-curricular activities may present written explanations of an event-related absence provided by the coach or sponsor. Such explanations are not automatically excuses for absences from class. Any such events are scheduled well in advance; students should let the instructor know about the absence ahead of time and make prior arrangements to make up work" (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 12).
 - d. Religious holidays: "Any student who is unable to attend classes or participate in any examination, study, or work requirement on a particular day because of his or her religious beliefs is excused from any such activity. The student will be given the opportunity to make up the examination or work that was missed, to the extent possible, at the discretion of the instructor" (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 11). The instructor asks that students please inform the instructor in advance of religious observances.

If a student encounters substantial difficulties or has a complaint, the instructor recommends contacting him.

Assistance Outside the Classroom

General

"The Office of Undergraduate Studies oversees all undergraduate academic advising, maintains the academic records of all undergraduates, and monitors and enforces academic regulations and standards" (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 10). You can contact the Office of Undergraduate Studies at Sears 357 or 368-2928.

Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction

"The Office of Educational Support Services (ESS) offers free tutoring for students enrolled in most undergraduate courses.... Students can avail themselves of several modes of tutoring. Individualized tutoring is available to students who prefer more personalized attention. Request forms for individual tutors are available from ESS in Kelvin Smith Library. Instructors must sign the student's request form before a tutor will be assigned; this is to ensure that faculty are aware of student difficulties and that students will have taken all possible steps within the class before turning to the assistance of a tutor" (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor's Manual 1999: 9-10). Walk-in tutoring is available for students enrolled in some classes.

"Supplemental Instruction (SI), a form of group tutoring and review, is also available for students enrolled

in” some courses. (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor’s Manual 1999: 10). Educational Support Services is located in Sears 470, 368-5230.

The Writing Center

“The Writing Center, operated by the English Department, offers writing instruction free of charge to undergraduates in thirty-minute one-on-one tutoring sessions. Most tutoring is done on a weekly appointment basis, although limited walk-in time is available. Students may also have their papers for specific courses critiqued with the permission of the instructor.” (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor’s Manual 1999: 10). The Writing Center is located in Bellflower House, Room 104; the phone number is 368-3799.

International Student Services

“The Office of International Student Services assists all international students with non-academic concerns, including immigration procedures as well as housing, legal, financial, social, and cultural considerations.” (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor’s Manual 1999: 35). International Student Services is located in Sears 210, 368-2517.

Counseling

“University Counseling Services (UCS) provides individual, group, and couples counseling for undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students and their spouses. The staff of psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists respect the student’s need for confidentiality and, therefore, will not disclose information to any other person without the student’s written consent except in cases of imminent danger. Walk-in counseling is available every day at 3:00 pm.” (CWRU Undergraduate Instructor’s Manual 1999: 10). UCS is located at Sears 201 and its telephone number is 368-5872.

Readings and Class Calendar: *An Introduction to Sociological Research*

January 14 Science, Society, and Social Research
Schutt, Chapter 1, pages 1-30

January 15: Late Registration Fee (\$25) Begins

January 16 Process and Problems of Social Research
Schutt, Chapter 3, pages 53-68

January 18: Last Day to Withdraw Without Financial Penalty

No class: January 21

Exam #1: Wednesday, January 23

January 23 Social Research Strategies
Schutt, Chapter 2, pages 69-90

January 25: Drop/Add Ends

January 25: Late Registration Ends

January 25: Deadline Credit/Audit

January 28 Theories and Philosophies for Social Research
Schutt, Chapter 2, pages 31-52

January 30 Institutional Review Board: Discussion of Protocol

February 4 Conceptualization and Measurement: Concepts and Operations
Schutt, Chapter 4, 91-109

Practicum #1: Wednesday, February 6

February 6 Conceptualization and Measurement: Levels and Evaluations of Measurement
Schutt, Chapter 4, 110-131

February 11 Introduction to Survey Research: Preparing Questionnaires
Schutt, Chapter 8, pages 233-256

February 13 Introduction to Survey Research: Organizing Surveys
Schutt, Chapter 8, pages 257-285

February 18 Sampling I
Schutt, Chapter 5, pages 132-170

Practicum #2: Wednesday, February 20

February 20 Sampling II
Schutt, Chapter 5, pages 132-170

February 25 Causation and Research Design I
Schutt, Chapter 6, pages 171-199

February 27 Causation and Research Design II
Schutt, Chapter 6, pages 171-199

Data Gathering, Data Generation, and Data Analysis

March 3 Experimental Designs and Review
Schutt, Chapter 7, pages 200-232

March 5 Midterm exam

Exam #2: Wednesday, March 5

March 10: Midterm grades are due

March 10-14 Spring break

March 17 Getting Quantitative Data Ready for Analysis
Schutt, Chapter 14, pages 441-446

March 19 No class (tentatively)

March 24 Displaying and Summarizing Univariate Distributions
Schutt, Chapter 14, pages 446-466

Practicum #3: Wednesday, March 26 and Monday, March 31

March 26 In-class Practicum 3

March 28: Deadline for removal of previous “I” grades

March 28: Deadline for Class Withdrawal

March 31: Registration for Summer classes begins

March 31 Crosstabulating Variables: Bivariate Distributions
Schutt, Chapter 14, pages 466-474
Handouts

April 2 Controlling for a Third Variable: Nominal and Ordinal Data
Schutt, Chapter 14, pages 474-488

April 7: Registration for Fall classes begins

Other Data Approaches and their Analyses

April 7 An Introduction to Analyses of Interval Data
Handouts

April 9 Comparative and Historical Approaches
Schutt, Chapter 12, pages 385-410

April 14 Participant Observation, Intensive Interviewing, and Focus Groups
Schutt, Chapter 9, pages 286-324

Practicum #4: Wednesday, April 16

April 16 Visual Sociology
Handouts

April 21 Analyzing Qualitative Data: Coding and Applications of Qualitative Research
Schutt, Chapter 10, pages 325-356
Handouts

April 23 Comparative and Historical Data Analyses
Handouts

Practicum #5: Wednesday, April 28

April 28 Visual Data Analyses and the Big Picture
In-class presentations

April 28: Last day of classes

Reading Days: April 29 and 30

Final Project deadline: Tuesday, May 6, 10:00 am