

PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH DESIGN
SOC/A 510

M 9:00 - 11:50 am
400 Knapp Hall
Fall 2005

Dr. Melissa Latimer
315 Knapp Hall
Office Hours: T 9:00-11:00 am, 1-2:00 pm,
and by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a required foundation course for the M.A. in Applied Social Research. It is designed to introduce students to conceptual and design issues central to the research process and to assist them in the preparation of a thesis proposal.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) Understand the major conceptual and methodological issues involved in research design and implementation
- 2) Understand the advantages and disadvantages of various study designs and methods of data collection
- 3) Awareness of ethical and practical research concerns
- 4) Skills in library research methods
- 5) Knowledge of publicly available data
- 6) Critical thinking and analytical skills
- 7) Professional writing skills
- 8) Professional research presentation skills
- 9) Preparation of a research proposal
- 10) Familiarity with applications and policy relevance of research
- 11) Practice constructive peer reviews

REQUIRED TEXTS

- (AC) Adler, Emily Stier and Roger Clark. 2003. *How It's Done: An Invitation to Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- (JC) Creswell, John. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- (HY) Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Michelle L. Yaiser. 2004. *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- (JRSG) Johnson, William A, Jr., Richard P. Rettig, Gregory M. Scott, and Stephen M. Garrison. 2006. *The Sociology Student Writer's Manual, 5th edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

(MH) Holosko, Michael J. 2006. *Primer for Critiquing Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Thomson.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and participation:

This is a graduate level class which is conducted in a seminar format. Attendance and class participation are expected and are evaluated subjectively by the instructor after each class session and then cumulatively for the full term. Attendance will not be regularly taken during class, but regular attendance is assumed and the instructor will note any absences. In addition, there will be four required in-class exercises designed to assist you in your proposal development. You are expected to complete all assigned readings and completion of the readings should be evident in your classroom discussions. You will need to do additional readings beyond the books required for the course in order to develop your own research proposal and deepen your understanding of the research design process. As the course proceeds, we should be able to note in your classroom discussion contributions evidence of your specialized reading related to your own proposal. A pattern of poor contributions to discussions, evidence of failure to complete the readings or in-class exercises, and failure to attend class will be grounds for lowering your grade by one letter grade. In cases of emergency, class absences may be excused. Please contact the instructor immediately if you must miss class.

2. In-Class Exam:

There is one in-class exam designed to test your basic understanding of the research process.

3. Review of published articles:

You will prepare a written critique of two published journal articles relevant to your research topic. You will need to conduct a library search of appropriate Sociology journals and find two articles to review. Critiquing published research helps you to learn to formulate research questions and problem statements, use theory, conduct literature reviews, identify and define concepts, assess writing clarity and style, understand various design selections, and assess the quality of the data (i.e., sample and measures) and data analysis.

4. Class Discussion Leader:

You will be responsible for leading the class discussion on either November 7 or November 14. Make sure you develop discussion questions that tease out the main arguments in the article, compare and contrast this article with previous class readings, and take us beyond the information in the reading. There are 5 discussant leaders on November 7 and so each individual will have approximately 30 minutes to lead the discussion on their assigned chapter. The other five class discussants will also have approximately 30 minutes each for their discussion on November 14. I am willing to meet with any of you before your presentation

5. Research proposal:

You will prepare a research proposal on the substantive area of your choice. You should make major progress on your Thesis (or Dissertation) proposal or your professional degree project

through this project. Sociology students should refer to the division's "Guidelines for the Preparation of a Master's Thesis" for specific guides to their proposal development. Students in other programs should follow their own program's guidelines. Bring copies of these guidelines to me immediately. This proposal is due by noon December 12.

6. Research proposal hearing:

At the end of the semester (December 5) you will orally present your research proposal to the class at a proposal hearing. Each student will have fifteen minutes to present their research to the class.

GRADING

Class attendance and participation:	20 points
Four In-class exercises:	80 points (20 points each)
One In-class exam:	100 points
Class discussion leader:	50 points
Critique of two published journal articles:	100 points (50 points each)
Research proposal:	100 points
Presentation of research proposal:	50 points

You may anticipate the following point ranges for each letter grade at the end of the course:

A	450-500
B	400-449
C	350-399
D	300-349
F	299 or below

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

1. Student Rights and Responsibilities: West Virginia University and the Division of Sociology and Anthropology have official documents about your rights and responsibilities as students. Consult these documents concerning questions on any course.

2. Different abilities: If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me early in the semester and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

3. Social Justice: West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with this commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

August 22	Introduction to the course--Sign up for presentations Taking the first steps in the research process: (1) Identifying a topic to study “My study is about.....” or “What question needs to be answered in my proposed study?” (2) Reflecting on whether it is practical (finding or creating a data set) and useful to undertake the study. (3) Conducting a literature review-why and how and now In-class survey -Taking the first steps in your research proposal
August 29	Required readings: (AC) Chapters 1,2,4,5,6 Required readings: (JC) Chapter 1,2 In-class exercise #1
September 5	Labor Day Holiday, No class (MH) Chapters 1-10
September 12	Required readings: (AC) Chapters 7-14 Data Sets for Sociologists
September 19	In-class exam Ethical Issues in the Research Process--What does it mean to be a Sociologist? Required readings: Chapter 3 (JC), Chapter 3 (AC), Chapter 5 (JRSG), and the American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (you should download from their website)
September 26	Demystifying the writing process Required readings:(JRSG) Chapters 1-4 Writing the Introduction, Purpose Statement, Research questions and Hypotheses Required Readings: Chapters 4-6 (JC) In-class exercise #2
October 3	Article review #1 is due --Use the criteria outlined in the Holosko book for your article evaluation. You should also assess the pros and cons of the research technique and (2) discuss whether or not you could/should use this technique in your proposed research project. Turn in a copy of the article with your review. Map your literature review and bring your literature review to class Update on research proposal--problems and progress
October 10	The role of theory

- Identifying the limitations and significance of your research
 Required readings: Chapters 7-8 (JC), review Chapter 2 (AC)
In-class exercise #3
- October 17 Selecting Your Approach and Designing a Methods Section for the Proposal
 Developing a Time line for your Research
 Required Readings: Chapters 9-11 (JC)
In-class exercise #4
- October 24 Required readings: Chapters 15-16 (AC)
- October 31 Challenging the Traditional Research Paradigm
 Required Readings: Chapters 1-8 and 10 (HY)
Article review # 2 is due-Critique of second article from your literature review. Use same criteria as in first review. In addition, reflect on feminist approaches to social research. **Turn in a copy of the article with your review.**
- November 7 Required Readings: Chapters 12,13,15,20,22, and 23 (HY)
Class members lead class discussion
- November 14 Required readings: Chapters 9,14,16,18,19, and 21 (HY)
Class members lead class discussion
- November 19-26 Thanksgiving Break!! Work on Your Proposal
- November 28 Meet with each student to discuss final proposal (sign up in 25 minute intervals).
- December 5 **Last week of classes**
 Research proposal oral presentations–15 minutes each
- December 12 **RESEARCH PROPOSAL IS DUE BY NOON–Exam week**