



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

Sociology 251.003  
**Measurement and Data Collection**  
Fall 2010  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:00-9:15am  
Bingham 103

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(or by appointment)

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### Course Goals

*Measurement and Data Collection* (Soci 251) introduces you to the logic and methods of sociological research – why and how sociologists conduct research. This course will enable you to critically assess the research of others as well as being able to better evaluate your own assumptions and ideas about how society works in domains such as education, politics, culture, religion, health care, criminal justice, or the economy. Further, you will develop the skills necessary to design and conduct your own ethical and rigorous social scientific research. In these ways, this course is an important foundation for *Data Analysis* (Sociology 252) and independent research projects that you could conduct through an Independent Study or an Honors Thesis.

Major topics covered in the course include the relationship between theory and research, variables and measurement, causality, the political and ethical dimensions of research, and the chief methods of data collection in social science – including experiments, ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, surveys, content analysis, and comparative or historical methods.

This course is designed to facilitate your training in research methods through readings, lectures, class discussion and activities, and a multi-method class research project.

### Course Materials

I have assigned one textbook, *Investigating the Social World*, which is available at UNC Student Stores. Other assigned readings will be posted online in Blackboard.

Schutt, Russell K. 2006. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [Referred to as ISW in the Course Schedule below]

### Course Website

<http://blackboard.unc.edu>

### Course Format

We will meet two times a week for 75 minutes. The class will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, and research activities. Along with the assigned readings and homework assignments, the class sessions are designed to help you learn and practice key concepts of social research. Lectures are meant to reinforce, but not replace, textbook readings and to provide basic information about social research. Discussions provide the chance for you to participate in the thinking-through of more difficult concepts, and to analyze and critique the required readings. Class activities will give you a chance to practice skills learned.

You should come prepared each day to take notes, ask questions, and participate in any activities. On days when a homework assignment is due, I will collect it at the beginning of class. If you come in late on a day when an assignment is due, please hold your paper until the end of class. If I am returning a homework assignment or an exam, I will try to do it a few minutes before class. If you are not able to pick yours up at the beginning, please wait until the end of class to retrieve your paper.

### **Preparing for class**

For each hour spent in class, you will probably need to set aside two hours for work outside of the class session for reading, reviewing your notes, and completing your assignments.

Readings are listed in the syllabus on the day you will need to have read them by. You are welcome to do the readings earlier than assigned. It is your responsibility to prepare for class each day. In general, this will mean doing the reading for a topic before we discuss that topic in class.

I recommend doing the reading for each day before our class meeting, and then reviewing them again briefly afterwards. Your textbook is an important resource to succeeding in this course. You will need to be familiar with the terms and concepts we discuss, and periodically reviewing your text book is the best way to stay familiar with important ideas. When we are discussing additional readings provided on Blackboard, you will find our discussions much more meaningful if you spend some time before class to make some notes listing what you think are the main points of the author's argument, as well as any questions you have.

### **Evaluation**

The majority of your grade will come from your homework assignments and participation in the class research project. There will be 7 assignments. The due dates and point values for each assignment are listed in the course schedule. Assignments range from 5 points for reading notes completed at the start of the course, to 20 points for a report on the research you conducted as a part of this class. I will hand out a copy of each assignment in class, and they will also be available on Blackboard.

All written assignments must be turned in hard-copy. I will not grade papers that I receive over email. Grammar and composition will be considered when grading your written assignments. Both are necessary to clearly present your ideas and experiences in a relatively small number of pages.

If you cannot turn in homework the day it is due, the best option is to bring it to the next class period. You can also turn your paper in by hand to me during my office hours, or slide it under my office door (Hamilton Hall 204).

Assignments will be considered late after the end of the class period they are due. I will deduct 20% of the assignment's grade each class day a paper is late. For example, if a 5-point assignment is due Tuesday, I will deduct 1 point from papers turned in from 9:15 Tuesday to 8:00 Thursday, 2 points from papers turned in from 9:15 Tuesday to 8:00 the next Tuesday, and so on.

If you will be unable to complete an assignment on time due to illness or a personal problem, I will consider granting an extension, as long as you contact me at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. If you have a serious or long-term problem you should consider speaking to the dean of students, who can help you make the necessary arrangements with all of your instructors.

You will be given four exams, on September 14<sup>th</sup>, October 12<sup>th</sup>, November 9<sup>th</sup>, and December 16<sup>th</sup>. Each exam will be worth 40 points. These exams are not cumulative, however, you will find it difficult to keep up with later material unless you understand the concepts we cover before the first exam. I will drop your lowest

exam score and average the other 3 for your total exam grade for the semester. This total exam grade will be combined with the other 60 points you earn through assignments to determine your final grade.

Although regular class attendance and participation are necessary for achieving a good grade in this course, they are not a formal part of your course grade. You will simply do much better on the assignments and exams if you attend class each day and actively participate in discussions and group-work.

Grade components:

Assignments	7 assignments	60 points
Exams	3 best exams	40 points
Total		100 %

I do not grade on a curve and there is no extra credit available. You will receive point values, but not letter grades, for individual tests and assignments. I intend to award final grades using this scale:

A = 91-100    B = 81-90    C = 71-80    D = 61-70    F = 0-60

**Attendance and Participation**

Class will begin at 8:00 and end at 9:15. To show respect for your classmates, please arrive on time. Turn off cell phones. Don't read newspapers or other outside materials during class. Please come prepared to share and participate in class discussions and activities.

Succeeding in this class will require consistent daily attendance. Please do not schedule any appointments, association meetings, or trips that would require you to miss class. If you know that you will be out of town and will have to miss a class, please let me know ahead of time. Also, if there is a family emergency, please contact me.

**Contacting Your Instructor and TA**

The best way to contact us outside class is by email. We will respond to most email the day we receive it; however, emails sent later in the evening may not get a response until the next morning. Email is best for simple questions. If you have a more difficult question, I recommend that you visit one of us during our office hours. Our office locations and office hours are listed at the top of this syllabus. If you can't make these hours, please let us know, and we will arrange to meet with you another time. If you feel that you are having a problem, please come with specific questions so that we can help you. These could be questions about a reading you do not understand, a concept we have covered in class, or something you have seen in the news or on the internet. This will allow us to make the best use of our time. You are also welcome to visit my office if you are not having a problem; you can also stop by if there is something you would just like to chat about.

**Honor Code**

The University Honor Code is in effect for all written assignments and exams. Please read the provisions of the Honor Code carefully, and make certain that you understand and follow them. Violations of the Code will not be tolerated.

You can view the Honor Code online -- <http://honor.unc.edu/>.

**UNC Resources**

The Learning Center -- <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>

The Writing Center -- <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Date		Topic	Assigned Reading	Assignments/Exams	Points
<b>Aug</b>	24	T	Course Overview and Introduction		
	26	TH	Foundations of Social Research	ISW, Chaps 1 & 2	Reading notes 5
	31	T	Research Ethics and Philosophies	ISW, Chap 3	Complete CITI training
<b>Sept</b>	2	TH	Conceptualization and Measurement	ISW, Chap 4	Reading notes 5
	7	T	Our Class Project	Project IRB Application; Morgan et al. 2010	
	9	TH	Research Design and Causation	ISW, Chap 6	Reading notes 5
	14	T	EXAM 1—Research Concepts and Design	--	EXAM 1 40
	16	TH	Ethnographic Observation	ISW, Chap 9, pp. 313-337	
	21	T	Ethnographic Observation in Practice	Example	
	23	TH	Semi-Structured Interviews	ISW, Chap 5, Chap 9, pp. 338-351	
<b>Oct</b>	28	T	Interviews in Practice	Example	Field notes due 10
	30	TH	Survey Research	ISW, Chap 8	
	5	T	Surveys in Practice	Survey Draft	Sample questions 5
	7	TH	Experiments	ISW, Chap 7	
	12	T	EXAM 2—Research Methods	--	EXAM 2 40
	14	TH	Debriefing Qualitative Data Collection	Transcripts, Field notes provided	Transcript due 10
	19	T	Discussing Survey Progress		
	21	TH	FALL BREAK	--	
	26	T	Secondary Data Analysis/Content Analysis	ISW, Chap 13	
	28	TH	Qualitative Data Analysis	ISW, Chap 10	
<b>Nov</b>	2	T	Qualitative Analysis Lab	Software documentation	
	4	TH	Qualitative Analysis Lab	Example	
	9	T	EXAM 3—Qualitative Data Analysis	--	EXAM 3 40
	11	TH	Quantitative Data Analysis	ISW, Chap 14	
	16	T	Quantitative Data Analysis Lab	Software documentation	
	18	TH	Quantitative Data Analysis Lab	Example	
	23	T	Summarizing and Reporting Research	ISW, Chap 15	
	25	TH	THANKGIVING BREAK	--	
	30	T	Presentation and Discussion of Results	--	
	<b>Dec</b>	2	TH	Presentation and Discussion of Results	--
7		T	Debriefing the Research Experience	--	
13		M	RESEARCH REPORTS DUE BY NOON	--	Research report 20
16		TH	FINAL EXAM, 8am	--	FINAL EXAM 40