



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Sociology 251.001
Research Methods

Fall 2016

Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30-4:45pm

Peabody 104

Instructor: Dr. Lisa D. Pearce

Email: ldpearce@unc.edu

Phone: 919.966.1450

Office: Hamilton Hall 266

Office Hours: Wed 2-3:30pm

TA: George Hayward

Email: georgemh@live.unc.edu

Office: Hamilton Hall 210

Office Hours: Wed 10:30am-12pm

Course Goals

Research Methods (SOC1 251) introduces you to the logic and methods of sociological research – why and how sociologists conduct research. This course will equip 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, the environment, or the economy. You will develop the skills necessary to design and conduct your own ethical and rigorous social scientific research. This course is an important foundation for *Data Analysis* (SOC1 252) and independent research projects that you might 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 ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, surveys, content analysis, comparative or historical methods, and experiments.

This course is designed to facilitate your training in research methods through readings, lectures, class discussion and activities, and a multi-method, hands-on class research project conducted over the course of the semester.

Course Materials

There is one assigned text book (see below). Other assigned readings will be posted online in Sakai.

Jeffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, and Bruce C. Straits 2015. *The Process of Social Research*, Edition: 16. Oxford University Press. [Referred to as “PSR” in the Course Schedule]

Companion Website: <http://www.oup.com/us/dixon>

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 design and data collection. 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 think through 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 to each class meeting prepared to take notes, ask questions, and participate in activities.

Preparing for Class

For each hour spent in class, you will need to set aside about two hours for work outside of the class session. This time will involve 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. Keep good notes as you read, and bring any questions you might have to class. Your textbook is an important resource to succeeding in this course. You will need to be familiar with the terms and concepts in it, and periodically reviewing your text book is the best way to stay familiar with important ideas. The summaries, review questions, and exercises at the end of each chapter should be very helpful.

When we are discussing supplemental readings provided on Sakai, 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 or would like to hear discussed.

I provide all PowerPoint slides used in class on Sakai before class. Therefore, you have the option of using these slides to assist you in note-taking and subsequent review of the material.

Evaluation

The majority of your grade will come from your homework assignments and participation in the class research project. There are 10 assignments in addition to a final research brief. The due dates and point values for each assignment are listed in the course schedule. I will hand out a more detailed description of each assignment in class and post them Sakai.

Assignments will be collected via Sakai. 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.

Assignments will be considered late after the start of the class period they are due. I will deduct 20% of the assignment's grade each day an assignment is late. For example, if a 5-point assignment is due Tuesday, I will deduct one point from papers turned in less than 24 hours later, two points from papers turned in between 24 and 48 hours later, 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 are having serious or longer-term issues with completing the work of this class and/or others, I highly recommend speaking to someone in the Office of the Dean of Students, who can help you make the necessary arrangements with all of your instructors. They are very helpful.

You will be given three exams. These exams are cumulative, because concepts learned early in the semester remain relevant throughout the course. The exams are worth 50, 75, and 100 points, respectively.

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	10 assignments, 10-30 points each	200 points
Research Brief		75 points
Exams	50, 75, and 100 points	225 points
Total		500 points

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+ = 98-100%	B+ = 88-89%	C+ = 78-79%	D+ = 68-69%	
A = 92-97%	B = 82-87%	C = 72-77%	D = 62-67%	F < 60%
A- = 90-91%	B- = 80-81%	C- = 70-71%	D- = 60-61%	

Attendance and Participation

Class will begin at 3:30pm and end at 4:45pm. To show respect for your classmates, please arrive on time. Turn off cell phones. You are allowed to use a laptop for taking notes, but please refrain from non-class-focused activity as it will distract those around you. If we notice laptops being regularly used for non-class-related reasons, I will change this policy and not allow the use of laptops except for class activities.

Succeeding in this class will require regular attendance. Please do not schedule any appointments, meetings, or trips that require missing class. If you must miss a class for something out of your control, please let me know ahead of time. If a last-minute emergency situation arises, please contact me as soon as you can.

Contacting Professor Pearce and Your TA

Often the most efficient line of communication with us is email. We will respond to most email within 24 hours. For some questions, you may prefer to come to office hours or set an appointment to meet with one of us. We will gladly work with you on a reading you do not understand or a concept we have covered in class, we will happily clarify assignments, and we are available to discuss your class performance. We also welcome the opportunity to get to know you better and answer any questions you might have about sociology, social research, graduate school, or related topics.

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/Research Task	Assignments/Exams	Points
Aug	23	T	Welcome and Introductions			
	25	TH	The Importance of Research	PSR, Chapter 1	Exercise #1, p. 13 in PSR	10
	30	T	Logics of Inquiry	PSR, Chapter 2		
Sept	1	TH	The Ethics and Politics of Research	PSR, Chapter 3 & Stein (2010) on Sakai	Exercise #2, p.72 in PSR	10
	6	T	Research Designs	PSR, Chapter 4		
	8	TH	Class Project Workshop	TBA	One page proposals due	20
	13	T	Measurement	PSR, Chapter 5		
	15	TH	Sampling	PSR, Chapter 6	Exercise #2, p. 170 PSR	10
	20	T	Review			
	22	TH	<i>EXAM 1</i>		<i>EXAM 1</i>	50
	27	T	Field Research and In-Depth Interviewing	PSR, Chapter 9		
	29	TH	Observation	TBA		
Oct	4	T	Interviewing	Spradley 1979		
	6	TH	Class Project Workshop		Field notes	30
	11	T	Experiments	PSR, Chapter 7	Interview guide section	20
	13	TH	Surveys	PSR, Chapter 8		
	18	T	Surveys continued	TBA	Survey section	20
	20	TH	<i>FALL BREAK</i>			
	25	T	Class Project Workshop	Review survey draft		
	27	TH	Multiple Methods	PSR, Chapter 11	Interview transcript	30
Nov	1	T	Review			
	3	TH	<i>EXAM 2</i>		<i>EXAM 2</i>	75
	8	T	Reading and Writing in Social Research	PSR, Chapter 14		
	10	TH	Qualitative Data Analysis	PSR, Chapter 13		
	15	T	Qualitative Data Analysis	TBA		
	17	TH	Quantitative Data Analysis	PSR, Chapter 12	Qualitative analysis memo	25
	22	T	Quantitative Data Analysis	TBA		
	24	TH	<i>THANKSGIVING BREAK</i>			
	29	T	Report Workshop			
Dec	1	TH	Existing Data Analysis	PSR, Chapter 10	Quantitative analysis memo	25
	6	T	Review for Exam			
	7	W	<i>RESEARCH BRIEFS DUE BY 11:59 PM</i>		<i>Research Brief</i>	75
	15	TH	<i>EXAM 3 (4-6pm)</i>		<i>Final Exam</i>	100

*Course schedule is subject to change occasionally, and any revisions will be announced in class, via email and on Sakai