Sociology 3111-90  
ONLINE  
Research Methods  
Summer 2011

Instructor:  Kelin Li, graduate instructor  
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Office Hours:  TBA or by appointment

System Requirements:  This is an online class that can be “attended” from anywhere there is an internet connection. Assignments and possible discussions will be submitted electronically. However, in order to take part in the course, you must have access to a computer that meets the system requirements. If you do not have your own system, you may use computers available to students located throughout the U of U campus. However, some of the material has an audio component, so you should have headphones or an earpiece if you are using a computer in a public place. If you are using a private system, you will need to ensure that it is compatible. There is a “Check Browser” tab on the Blackboard Vista homepage. You must use this feature right away in order to ensure that your system will operate efficiently within the context of this course. The recommended browser is Firefox (www.mozilla.com/firefox). You must also be able to view PowerPoint presentations, as well as have a Media Browser on your system. Students must be able to use an internet browser, send attached files via the mail feature of Blackboard Vista (WebCT), and create text messages in Blackboard Vista in the event that we utilize “live” sessions.

The focus of this course will be learning about the systematic ways in which sociologists are able to learn about, describe and explain social life. You will learn about the logic of scientific explanations of social relations and social institutions. You will explore the techniques and methods which sociologists use to gather the information they use in attempting to explain, and verify their explanations, of various social relations. The course will also cover some of the assumptions underlying these methods, as well as ethical issues involved in social science research. The class uses online lectures which have been archived, reading, exercises/assignments, and applications to teach about how sociologists go about collecting data that they use to learn about social life.

Objectives of the course include:

- To become familiar with various methods used in sociological research.
- To understand the reasons for choosing particular data collection methods and techniques, and learn how to organize the data to address particular questions and problems.
- To learn to make informed, critical judgments about research in sociology courses, as well as about social research you encounter as a citizen, for example in political presentations and in the mass media.

Special thanks to Professor Michael Timberlake, who has graciously provided his syllabus
The course will employ online presentations of “lectures” in the form of PowerPoint presentations, available at the WebCT/Blackboard Vista virtual location for the course. You will need to log on to WebCT each time you want to go into the class environment. (You can do this easily from www.utah.edu; under Students near the center of the page you will find the link to WebCT.) In addition to the electronic lectures, this environment will also provide you with access to some of the other materials required for the course, including assignments and supplemental material. Students should check for course material and Announcements on WebCT/Blackboard Vista on a regular basis.

There are several assignments which require you to do some of the work that would go into developing a research proposal even though writing a research proposal is not something you will do for this course. These include identifying a social science topic to explore, finding library resources on the topic, and reading a scientific journal article and writing briefly about it. You will also be asked to develop a hypothesis related to your topic and choose a method to explore your topic and test your hypothesis. These assignments are made available on WebCT/Blackboard Vista and are to be submitted through the WebCT/Blackboard Vista. There is an easy-to-use Assignment feature on the menu on the left side of the homepage for the course.

**Evaluation** of students will be based on several assignments, class participation, and three examinations. Together, the assignments count for 20% of the final grade, and class participation counts for another 5%. (Participation is available in the form of using the Discussion board, under Course Tools, to pose questions, answer questions, make points, etc. to the whole class.) Each examination will count for 25% of the final grade, and there are three of them. The assignments are made available under the Assignments tab under Course Tools. There will be no extra credit work available, and except in exceptional circumstances, arranged in advance with justification carefully documented, and there will be no make-up work. Late assignments will be accepted for partial credit. Since the reading and online material (i.e., lecture, discussion, videos, etc.) will not always overlap, it is important that students both complete the reading as scheduled (below) and use the online class material. You cannot be successful in the course by only doing one of these. You must do both.

**Special Accommodations**
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (CDS), 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services. Please discuss any concerns with the professor before they become problems.
**Academic Misconduct**
You must understand that all work submitted to a professor is your own work. When you have used the ideas of others, you must properly indicate that you have done so. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, failure in the course, and/or expulsion from the university. All students should be familiar with the University of Utah Student Code http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html.

**Required Reading**

**Attendance & Participation:**
Learning through practice as well as through lecture requires regular, consistent and active participation in the class. Active participation means making use of the materials related to the course online as well as in your books, posting and answering questions, and being prepared. The WebCT/Blackboard Vista classroom lets me know how many times you have visited and for how long. You can use the mail feature to ask and answer questions. Finally, the virtual classroom will have a “discussion board” which will allow you to comment on anything as well as ask questions of each other.

**Assignments**
There will be a few assignments throughout the term. These assignments are to be submitted individually, although you are encouraged to discuss with other students. Refer to the Assignment tab for objectives and instructions. (I will also put them in a weekly folder on the Home Page.) The grading criteria used in evaluating work are provided at the end of the syllabus. Assignments are due by midnight of the due date. They are to be submitted using the Assignment function found under Course Tools on the course homepage.

**Examinations**
There will be three examinations, each covering about one third of the course material. The examinations require choosing True/False or multiple choice answers or, possibly, writing in short answers. You will take the exams online. You will have limited to take each examination, but you may start the exam any time over a four or five day period. The period of time for which the exam is available is indicated on the syllabus, below.

**Online Exam Schedule:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>June 9-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>July 7-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 3</td>
<td>August 4-8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Grading
Final grades will be calculated on the basis of the each exam contributing 25% to the total grade, the assignments 20%, and participation 5%.

Assignments 20%
Participation 5%
Exams 75%

A (100-93 points)  A - (90-92 points)
B + (89-87 points) B (86-83 points)  B - (80-82 points)
C + (79-77 points) C (76-73 points)  C - (70-72 points)
D + (69-67 points) D (66-63 points)  D - (60-62 points)
E (< 60 points)

All grades will be posted on WebCT/Blackboard Vista. It is the student’s responsibility to report and discuss grade discrepancies with the instructor as soon as they are noticed. Assignments may be accepted late for partial (e.g., half) credit. Extra credit will not be available. Final grades will not be curved.
Course Schedule

Week 1  May 16  The Goals of Social Science Research; The Logic of Scientific Discovery & The Role of Theory in Social Research.

Reading: Chapter 1, 2

Week 2  May 23  Ethics in Social Research

Reading: Chapter 3

Assignment #1: IRB Ethics Certification

Week 3  May 30  Conceptualization and Operationalization; Choosing a Research Topic and Developing a Literature Review, Research Design, & The Research Report

Reading: Chapter 4, Appendix C

Assignment #2: Topic & Research Question Due

Week 4  June 6  Sampling

Reading: Chapter 5

EXAM 1 (Available Thursday June 9-Midnight Monday June 13)

Week 5  June 13  Research Design and Correlation & Causation

Reading: Chapter 6
Week 6  June 20  Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs

*Reading: Chapter 7*

**Assignment #3: Short Bibliography**

Week 7  June 27  Survey Research

*Reading: Chapter 8*

**Assignment #4 Hypothesis & Questionnaire Item (develop a hypothesis, design one question)**

Week 8  July 4  Qualitative Research/Qualitative Data Analysis

*Reading: Chapter 9, 10*

**EXAM 2 (Available Thursday July 7- Midnight July 11)**

Week 9  July 11  Evaluation and Policy Research

*Reading: Chapter 11*

Week 10  July 18  Historical and Comparative Research

*Reading: Chapter 12, Appendix A, Appendix B*

**Assignment #5: TBA**

Week 11  July 25  Secondary Data Analysis and Content Analysis

*Reading: Chapter 13*

Week 12  August 1  Quantitative Data Analysis & Wrap up

*Reading: Chapter 14 & Chapter 15*

**EXAM 3 (Available Thursday August 4- Midnight August 8)**
Grading Assignments (not Exams, which are graded on 100-point scale)

The instructor will grade each Assignment on a ten-point scale according to the following guidelines:

10 EXCELLENT The student exhibits a critical understanding of the concepts, can articulate concepts in his/her own words, and shows an active mastery over the concepts. The work shows creativity and innovative thinking. Written work is complete, on-time, and is free from errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The assignment adheres to all instructions. The assignment is perfect or near perfect.

9 VERY GOOD The student’s work shows a good mastery of the subject. Some innovation, creativity, and critical thought, but may show some very minor lapses in reasoning or understanding. Written work is complete, on-time, and is free from errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The assignment adheres to all instructions.

7-8 GOOD The student’s work shows a basic mastery of the subject. The work is solid, but is not necessarily innovative or creative. The otherwise ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ work is marred by careless editing or poor presentation.

5-6 LESS THAN SATISFACTORY The work shows incomplete mastery of the subject. The work exhibits major spelling and grammar errors or is very sloppy. The assignment is incomplete or fails to follow the instructions. The assignment is turned in outside of class-time.

1-4 POOR The student’s work shows gaps in understanding, is very sloppy, or is incomplete.

0 NOT ACCEPTABLE The student’s work does not satisfy the learning requirements of this exercise. The student failed to turn in an assignment altogether.

Assignments are due on the date indicated by midnight, to be submitted via the Assignment function on the WebCT/Blackboard Vista.