Sociology 3111    Research Methods
ONLINE      SPRING 2010

Instructor: Michael Timberlake
Office: 426 BEH S
Phone: (801) 581-8132
E-mail: Use WebCT/Blackboard Vista mail feature
Office Hours: Wednesday 4-6:30PM with Advanced Notice
Other times 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 and practicing how sociologists are able to 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. You will learn to use some of these techniques in
your own research. The course will also cover some of the assumptions underlying these
methods, and ethical issues involved in social science research will be covered as well. 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class uses online lectures which have been archived, reading, exercises/assignments, and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:
• Become familiar with various methods used in sociological research;
• Understand the logic for choosing particular data collection methods and
techniques, and learn to organize the data to address particular questions and
problems..
• Learn to make informed, critical judgments about research in sociology
courses, as well as social research presented in the mass media.
• Learn how to design a research proposal and to communicate findings from
this research to appropriate audiences.

The course will employ online presentations of “lectures” in the form of Powerpoint presentations with voice/webcam accompaniment made 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. In addition to the electronic lectures, this environment will also provide you with access to 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. We will also experiment with live sessions on WebCT. These sessions will allow you “enter” a Wimba classroom within the online course environment to participate in live sessions. If you cannot attend these sessions live, you will be able to “bring up” archived live sessions and watch/hear what took place.

Presently, the course fulfills the upper-division writing requirement (CW) for the University of Utah. This means that the course will involve a great deal of writing, and assignments will be due on nearly a weekly basis. These are to be submitted as Word attachments through the mail feature at WebCT/Blackboard Vista.

**Evaluation** of students will be based on nine assignments, class participation, and a research proposal and online presentation. Each of the nine assignments count for 6% of the final grade, as does class participation. The written proposal and presentation count for 40% of the final grade. There will be no extra credit work available, and except in exceptional circumstances, arranged in advance with justification carefully documented, 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.

**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 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](http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html). A copy will be distributed during the first week of the course.
Required Reading
There are two recommended textbooks. Additional reading assignments may be made available through Blackboard Vista. All readings should be completed prior to the class they are assigned.


Other: Assignments from news media may be made from time to time.

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, asking 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.

Assignments
There will be many assignments throughout the term. All assignments are to be done individually. Refer to the assignment sheet for objectives, instructions, and grading criteria for each.

Research Proposal:
Students will complete their own research proposal throughout the semester. This project involves developing a proposal to conduct research on a particular research question, clearing stating the research question, reviewing existing research on the same subject and writing a summary of this research, developing specific hypotheses, and designing an appropriate study emphasizing the plan for collecting data. Most of the assignments are related to this project, and you will provide two versions of the finished proposal. One is a Powerpoint presentation that will be made available to the other class members, and one is the finished, written proposal submitted to the instructor.

GRADING
Final grades will be calculated as a weighted average of nine assignments, class participation and one final paper and presentation.

Assignments 60%
Final Project 40%

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>January 11</th>
<th>Introductions, the Syllabus, and The Goals of Social Science Research</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Reading: Chapter 1</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>January 18</th>
<th>A. The Logic of Scientific Discovery &amp; The Role of Theory in Social Research.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>B. Ethics in Social Research</td>
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<td><em>Reading: Schutt, Chapter 1 &amp; 3, Appendix C.</em></td>
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<td><em>Booth, Pages 1-27.</em></td>
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Assignment #1: IRB Ethics Certification

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<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>January 25</th>
<th>Correlation &amp; Causation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Reading: Schutt, Chapters 2 &amp; 6</em></td>
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<td><em>Booth, Pages 31-67</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>February 1</th>
<th>Literature Reviews, Research Design, &amp; The Research Report</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Reading: Booth, Pages 68-101.</em></td>
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Assignment #2: Topic Approval

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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>February 8</th>
<th>A. Concepts &amp; Operationalization/Measurement/Observation</th>
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<td>B. Sampling</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Reading: Schutt, Chapter 4 &amp; 5; Appendices B, C, D</em></td>
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Assignment #3: Literature Review

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<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>February 15</th>
<th>Writing Workshop</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Reading: Schutt, Chapter 5; Booth, Skim pages 108-169.</em></td>
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</table>
Week 7  February 22  Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 7
Booth, Pages 171-202

Assignment #4: Draft of “Intro”

Week 8  March 1  Survey Research

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 8
Booth, Pages 203-212

Week 9  March 8  Qualitative Research/Qualitative Data Analysis

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 9, 10
Booth, Pages 213-231

Assignment #5: Surveys

Week 10  March 15  A. Writing & Presenting
B. Quantitative Data Analyses

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 14; Appendix F
Booth, Pages 231-248

Assignment #6: Qualitative Methods

Week 11  March 22  No Class: Spring Break

Week 12  March 29  Evaluation Research & Policy Analysis

Reading: Schutt, Chapter 11

Assignment #7: Draft of “Methods”
Week 13  April 5  
A. Comparative Historical Research  
B. Secondary Data Analysis & Content Analysis  

Reading: Booth, Pages 249-269.  
Schutt, Chapters 12 & 13  

Assignment #8: Draft of “Results”  

Week 14  April 12  
Presenting, Writing, Revising  

Reading: Booth, Pages 273-end.  

Week 15  April 19  
Student Research Conference  

Week 16  April 26  
Student Research Conference  

Assignment #9: Self-Evaluation Essay  

EXAM  May 3rd  
Turn in Final Research Proposal by 6PM  

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## REQUIRED PERIODIC ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conducting Ethical Research</td>
<td>Jan 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Topic Approval</td>
<td>Feb 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conducting Literature Reviews</td>
<td>Feb 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Draft of “Intro”</td>
<td>Feb 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Writing a Good Survey</td>
<td>March 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Collecting Qualitative Data</td>
<td>March 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Draft of “Methods”</td>
<td>March 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Draft of “Results”</td>
<td>April 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Self-Evaluation &amp; Self-Reflection</td>
<td>April 26</td>
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### Grading

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 date indicated by midnight, to be submitted as attachments via the mail function at WebCT/Blackboard Vista. Late assignments will be accepted, but penalized.