

Tell me and I forget; teach me and I remember; involve me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin

Introduction to Research Methods

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SOC 3111

Spring 2013—Sec 001

9:40 to 10:30 am

MWF—BehS 114

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

Research Methods is an introduction to the theory and practice of social science research. The primary objectives of the course are:

- ◆ familiarize students with the different types of methods that are used to accumulate evidence in the social sciences;
- ◆ expose students to the logic of data analysis;
- ◆ give students an opportunity to conduct their own research and to critique existing social science research;
- ◆ aid students in developing their skills in formal, scientific writing;
- ◆ offer students experience in both oral and written presentation of original work.

Group discussions, analysis exercises, sociological research and individual presentations will be used to achieve these learning objectives. The course will culminate in a student conference in which each student will present and discuss the results of his/her own research project.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Required Texts

Newman, W. Lawrence. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches*. 6th Ed. Pearson.

Pyrczak, Fred. 2008. *Evaluating Research in Academic Journals* (4th Ed). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publish.

Grading

Project Preliminaries	20%
Academic Journal Evaluations	20%
Research Project Proposal	40%
Attend/Participation/Presentations	20%

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 as soon as possible.

Grading Criterion

- A** An *excellent* work in all or nearly all aspects of the assignment. The student exemplifies originality of ideas, superior depth of thought, and extensive grasp of topics as well as technical superiority.
- B** A competent work with a lapse here or there. Ideas are clear and properly expressed; the writing is technically solid. The assignment is effective in meeting all criteria but does not rise to distinction.
- C** An adequate work, but not good. Student ideas tend to be oversimplified, reductionistic, and lack sufficient explanation or exploration. Problems may also exist with grammar, logic, or ability to express thoughts in a manner reflective of a junior level class.
- D** A minimal effort by the student—the work is marred by problems with almost all aspects of the assignment. This is not considered a competent performance.
- E** A failing mark, generally reserved for assignments which are not submitted or miss the target on virtually every criteria of the project.

+/- Plus or minus may be given in addition to each of the grade levels when deemed appropriate.

PARTICIPATION (20% of course grade)

Given the “hands-on” nature of this course, regular attendance is strongly encouraged. Active participation is also expected. This class will be conducted in a *Socratic format* with emphasis on professor and student interaction and understanding through questions and comments. The professor will use this forum to present key concepts not detailed in the major texts under consideration. The *Socratic* model is employed to encourage analysis, critical thinking, preparation, and long term learning on the part of the student. Each should come prepared to discuss the subject scheduled on the calendar. Note cards will be marked for every student, and response notes will be given based on the quality of comments offered: + (**plus**), ✓ (**check**), or 0 (**zero**).

ACADEMIC JOURNAL EVALUATIONS (20% of course grade)

One of the key aspects of understanding social research method is the direct application of principles to existing scholarly work as exemplified in current academic journals. During the course of the semester, students will choose two articles from any current social science journal (preferably articles they are using for their project paper) and evaluate these according to the criteria learned in the course and through the required texts. Each of the evaluations will count **10%** of the course grade, or **20%** for the total. The format will be distributed by the professor. **NOTE: Evaluations due 1 & 8 April.**

RESEARCH PROJECT PRELIMINARIES (20% of course grade)

The **research project/class presentation** is an *exercise* that will acquaint students with many elements involved in conducting social science research from beginning to completion. As you develop the project you will go through several steps that are building blocks. Each involves a cumulative piece of the project, beginning with elementary problem identification and moving to the two final pieces: the written report and oral presentation. **The *style guide of the American Psychological Association (APA)* will be the format of this project.**

- (1) **Topic approval**—Submit a one paragraph statement on a topic of interest as the subject of your **non-reactive data** research, explaining what the topic is and why it is important enough to be researched. This topic will be approved or modified as the semester progresses. A thorough discussion will be conducted in class concerning successful completion of the research project before the *topic approval* is due. **NOTE: The working topic is due 30 Jan.**
- 2) **Working literature review/references**—Researchers always begin a study by looking at what else has been done for that topic. So, after the topic has been approved, immediately begin work finding at least **six peer-reviewed social science journal articles** on that subject. The list should be in a standard format for bibliographic references (for a sample **format** of sources see the *Works Cited* in the Newman text.). To begin, see **Sociology Research Guide** (www.lib.utah.edu/ResGuides/sociology.html) **NOTE: Working References due 20 Feb.**
- (3) **Annotated References**—After researchers find reputable references to their research, they read this information in order to learn what else is known about the subject of their research. The **annotated references** consists of short summaries of each of the references appearing on your *working references*. The short summaries should not quote or paraphrase the published abstract for the article, but should include:
 - ◆ short descriptions of the author's objectives (major question(s) the author was seeking to illuminate),
 - ◆ a description of the *nature of the data* on which the conclusions were based (survey data, qualitative data, case studies, comparative historical studies, experiments, etc.);

- ◆ a description of *how the data were gathered* (face-to-face interviews, participant observation, quantitative analysis, etc.) and the nature of the cases studied, or the sample;
- ◆ a short summary of what the author(s) concluded. **NOTE:** The *annotated references* is due **6 Mar.**

(4) **Mini-proposal**—As researchers learn what is already known about their subject and create a bibliography, they write a **research proposal**. Proposals are used to gain clearance to proceed with research. Authorization typically issues from funding agencies, committees that safeguard human subjects, and others, such as faculty advisors. You will write a very brief version, or **mini-proposal**. The *mini-proposal* will be **3-4 pages** in length, and it will contain the following elements in this order:

- (1) statement of the subject of the proposal, including why it is important;
- (2) overview of what is known about the subject, including the literature review—based on the references;
- (3) working hypotheses (both null and working) which would facilitate the investigation of this topic;
- (4) listing and defining the key concepts, constructs and variables;
- (5) identifying possible *non-reactive data* to be collected and why;
- (6) likely operationalization (or measurement) of the key concepts;
- (7) probable population, sample size and description;
- (8) probable methods of data collection;
- (9) possible ethical considerations (if any);
- (10) desired results. **NOTE:** The *mini-proposal* is due **26 Mar.**

RESEARCH PROJECT (40% of course grade)

Students will design and conduct a research project. The project includes choosing a unique research topic, designing an appropriate study **using non-reactive data**, including specifying testable hypotheses, designing an appropriate data collection plan, and specifying an appropriate sampling strategy. The result will be a research paper presented to the class near the end of the semester and submitted in writing. Written reports will follow the standard format of a published research article. The report should be approximately 8 to 12 double-spaced pages of text. Each student will present the results of their research project during the “student conference” at the end of the semester. The formal presentation will be about 10 minutes. Presentations should be both creative and professional. Final project papers will include a completed version of the *mini-proposal* reporting the student’s findings in their research, as follows:

- (1) abstract;
- (2) the literature review—based on the references;
- (3) statement on how you propose to study the subject;
- (4) hypotheses (both null and working);
- (5) listing and defining the key concepts;
- (6) identifying data collected;
- (7) operationalization (or measure) of the key concepts;
- (8) population studied;
- (9) sample size and description;
- (10) methods of data collection;
- (11) ethical considerations (if any);
- (12) results;
- (13) limitations of study;
- (14) future work to be done.

NOTE: Final project due 22 April.

COURSE CALENDAR

- 7 Jan (M) Introduction to course material; presentation of syllabus
- 9 Jan (W) Why do research?
Newman—Chpt 1
- 11 Jan (F) Why do research?
Newman—Chpt 1
- 14 Jan (M) What are the major types of research?
Newman—Chpt 2
- 16 Jan (W) What are the major types of research?
Newman—Chpt 2
- 18 Jan (F) Background for evaluating research reports;
Evaluating titles;
Evaluating abstracts
Pyrczak—Chpts 1, 2, & 3
- 21 Jan (M) **HOLIDAY—MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY—NO CLASSES**
- 23 Jan (W) Theory and research
Newman—Chpt 3
- 25 Jan (F) Theory and research
Newman—Chpt 3
- 28 Jan (M) The meanings of methodology
Newman—Chpt 4
- 30 Jan (W) The meanings of methodology-----**WORKING TOPIC DUE!**
Newman—Chpt 4
- 1 Feb (F) Evaluating introductions and literature reviews;
A closer look at evaluating literature reviews
Pyrczak—Chpts 4 & 5
- 4 Feb (M) How to review the literature and conduct ethical studies
Newman—Chpt 5
- 6 Feb (W) How to review the literature and conduct ethical studies
Newman—Chpt 5

- 8 Feb (F)** Strategies of research design
Newman—Chpt 6
- 11 Feb (M)** Strategies of research design
Newman—Chpt 6
- 13 Feb (W)** Qualitative and quantitative measurements
Newman—Chpt 7
- 15 Feb (F)** Qualitative and quantitative measurements
Newman—Chpt 7
- 18 Feb (M)** **HOLIDAY—PRESIDENT’S DAY—NO CLASSES**
- 20 Feb (W)** Nonreactive research and secondary analysis -----*WORKING REFERENCES DUE!*
Newman—Chpt 11
- 22 Feb (F)** Nonreactive research and secondary analysis
Newman—Chpt 11
- 25 Feb (M)** Qualitative and quantitative sampling
Newman—Chpt 8
- 27 Feb (W)** Qualitative and quantitative sampling
Newman—Chpt 8
- 1 Mar (F)** Evaluating samples when researchers generalize
Pyrczak—Chpt 6
- 4 Mar (M)** Evaluating samples when researchers do not generalize
Pyrczak—Chpt 7
- 6 Mar (W)** Experimental research-----*ANNOTATED REFERENCES DUE!*
Newman—Chpt 9
- 8 Mar (F)** Evaluating instrumentation;
Evaluating experimental procedures;
Evaluating analysis and results sections: quantitative research
Pyrczak—Chpts 8, 9, & 10
- 11 Mar—15 Mar** **SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES**
- 18 Mar (M)** Survey research
Newman—Chpt 10

- 20 Mar (W) Survey research
Newman—Chpt 10
- 22 Mar (F) Analysis of quantitative data
Newman—Chpt 12
- 26 Mar (M) Field research-----**MINI-PROPOSAL DUE!**
Newman—Chpt 13
- 28 Mar (W) Field research;
Evaluating analysis and results sections: qualitative research;
Evaluating discussion sections
Newman—Chpt 13
Pyrczak—Chpts 11 & 12
- 30 Mar (F) Historical-comparative research
Newman—Chpt 14
- 1 Ap (M) Historical-comparative research -----**JOURNAL ARTICLE EVALUATION 1 DUE!**
Newman—Chpt 14
- 3 Ap (W) Analysis of qualitative data
Newman—Chpt 15
- 5 Ap (F) Writing the research report
Newman—Chpt 16
- 8 Ap (M) Writing the research report;-----**JOURNAL ARTICLE EVALUATION 2 DUE!**
Putting it all together
Newman—Chpt 16
Pyrczak—Chpt 13
- 10 Ap (W) **RESEARCH CONFERENCE—PRESENTATIONS TO CLASS**
- 12 Ap (F) **RESEARCH CONFERENCE—PRESENTATIONS TO CLASS**
- 15 Ap (M) **RESEARCH CONFERENCE—PRESENTATIONS TO CLASS**
- 17 Ap (W) **RESEARCH CONFERENCE—PRESENTATIONS TO CLASS**
- 19 Ap (F) **RESEARCH CONFERENCE—PRESENTATIONS TO CLASS**
- 22 Ap (M) **RESEARCH CONFERENCE—PRESENTATIONS TO CLASS**
RESEARCH PROJECT DUE!

NOTE: Those who wish their grades mailed to them should attach a ***legal size, peel & stick, self-addressed, stamped envelope*** with their final paper.

That's All, Folks! Have a great summer!