

ONLINE  
SPRING 2013

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E-mail: Use WebCT/Blackboard Vista mail feature for all mail with attachments. In a pinch, use [timber@soc.utah.edu](mailto:timber@soc.utah.edu)  
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](http://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, 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 The class uses online lectures which have been archived, reading, exercises/assignments, and applications to teach about how sociologists go about collecting data that they use to learn about social life.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:

- 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.

The course will employ online presentations of “lectures” in the form of PowerPoint presentations, sometimes 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. (You can do this easily from [www.utah.edu](http://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. We may also experiment with live sessions on WebCT. These sessions may allow you “enter” a Wimba classroom within the online course environment to participate in live sessions. These sessions may not work, and even if they do, you are not required to “attend”. If you cannot attend these sessions live, you will be able to “bring up” archived live sessions to watch/hear what took place.

This course no longer meets the CW requirement. Therefore, the number of writing-related assignments are far fewer than in previous classes. However, there are several assignments which require you to do some of the work that would go into developing a research proposal. 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 assignment, class participation, and three examinations. Together, the assignments count for 15% of the final grade, and class participation counts for another 10%. Each examination will count for 25% of the final grade, and there are three of them. These required elements of the course are described in more detail below. 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>.

### ***Required Reading.***

There is one textbook. Additional reading assignments may be made available through Blackboard Vista. All readings should be completed prior to the class they are assigned.

Russel Schutt's *Investigating the Social World* (6th edition, Pine Forge Press).

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. 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. Most assignments are to be done individually. Refer to the assignment sheet for objectives and instructions. The grading criteria used in evaluating work is provided at the end of the syllabus. Assignments are due by midnight on the date given. They are to be submitted using the Assignment function found on the menu for 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 writing in short answers. The setting for the examinations will be determined shortly. Students may be required to go to an actual examination room at particular times in order to take the exams.

### **Examination Schedule:**

## **GRADING**

Final grades will be calculated on the basis of the each exam contributing 25% to the total grade, the assignments 15%, and participation 10%.

**Assignments** 15%

**Participation** 10%

**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.

### **Reading/Topic/Assignment Schedule**

Week 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Introductions, the Syllabus, and The Goals of Social Science Research

*Reading: Chapter 1*

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Week 2 \_\_\_\_\_ The Logic of Scientific Discovery & The Role of Theory in Social Research.

*Reading: Chapter 2*

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Week 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Ethics in Social Research

*Reading: Chapter 3.*

Assignment #1: IRB Ethics Certification (\_\_\_\_\_)

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Week 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Conceptualization and Operationalization

*Reading: Chapter 4*

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Week 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Choosing a Research Topic and Developing a Literature Review, Research Design, & The Research Report  
LIVE CLASSROOM 7PM WEDNESDAY, \_\_\_\_\_. WILL BE ARCHIVED FOR THOSE WHO  
CANNOT ATTEND.

*Reading: Appendix C*

Assignment #2: Topic & Research Question (\_\_\_\_\_)

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Week 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Sampling

*Reading: Chapter 5*

**EXAM 1 [THUS., \_\_\_\_\_]**

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Week 7 \_\_\_\_\_ Research Design and Correlation & Causation

*Reading: Chapter 6*

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Week 8 \_\_\_\_\_ BREAK

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Week 9 \_\_\_\_\_ Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs

*Reading: Chapter 7*

Assignment #3: Short Bibliography (Thurs., October 21)

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Week 10 October 25 Survey Research

*Reading: Chapter 8*

Assignment #4 Hypothesis & Questionnaire Item (develop a hypothesis, design one question—October 28)

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Week 11 November 1 Qualitative Research/Qualitative Data Analysis

*Reading: Chapter 9, 10*

**EXAM 2 (THUS., \_\_\_\_\_)**

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Week 12 \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluation and Policy Research

*Reading: Chapter 11*

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Week 13 \_\_\_\_\_ Historical and Comparative Research

Reading: Chapter 12, Appendix A, Appendix B

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Week 14 \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary Data Analysis and Content Analysis



*Reading: Chapter 13*

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Week 15 \_\_\_\_\_  
*Reading: Chapter 14*

Assignment #5: Quantitative Data Analysis

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Week 16 \_\_\_\_\_ Summarizing and Reporting Research

*Reading: Chapter 15*

EXAM 3 (THUS., \_\_\_\_\_)

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## **Due Dates**

### **What is Due**

**Due Date (always Thursday)**

### **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 date indicated by midnight, to be submitted via the Assignment function on the WebCT/Blackboard Vista homepage for the course.**