

# **SOC 3111-090: Research Methods**

## University of Utah, Spring 2014

Credit Hours: 3  
Section No.: 090

Office Hours: By appointment via email  
Email: Canvas email (preferred) or Hao.jianmei@gmail.com

Instructor: Jianmei Hao  
Office: Beh S 327  
Course Website: Canvas

### **Prerequisite**

Students are not expected to have any background in social science research methods.

### **Course Descriptive**

This course is an introduction to social science research methods with investigations of our social world. In social science, research methods always serve as the most fundamental tool for systematically describing, explaining, and exploring social relations and social institutions. Sociology is no exception. Sociologists identify the logic of scientific explanations and explorations as the prerequisites of empirical research, so research methods are recognized as essential skills for doing research. In short, this course will show a big picture of how sociologists conduct research design and collect data to learn about social life.

In general, the course mainly consists of four sections. In the first section, we will introduce the theories in scientific research, especially what is research, how to think like a researchers, types of research, and the process of research. In the following section, we will thoroughly elaborate on research design, which is known as a comprehensive plan for data collection in an empirical research project, including collecting data and sampling. In the third section, we will focus on the specific research methods such as experiment, surveys and qualitative studies. Finally, we will extend the research method into practice, especially data analysis.

### **Course Objectives**

The main objectives of this course are to provide a whole picture of the theories, process, and practice of research methods in social science, especially in sociology. .

The specific goals of this course are listed as followed:

- To acquaint students with the ideas, concepts and research approach on social issues from a scientific sociological perspective;
- To offer students a wide exposure to various research methods;
- To have more in-depth understanding of the reasons for choosing particular data collection methods and techniques, and learn how to organize the data to address particular questions and problems.
- To improve critical think ability on the analysis of social world.

### **Required Textbook/Readings**

- *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research (7<sup>th</sup> edition)*, by Russel Schutt. Pine Forge Press, 2012(Referred as ISW).

## **Additional Textbook Readings**

- ***The Practice of Social Research(13<sup>th</sup> edition)***, by Earl Babbie. Wadsworth (Referred as PSR).

PPT will be available on the canvas course website.

## **Teaching & Learning Methods**

### **Canvas**

Access: <https://utah.instructure.com/>

Log in: uNID and password.

All of course syllabus and reading materials are available on Canvas.

If any questions about use of Canvas, please call the campus helpdesk at (801-585-5959).

## **Evaluation Methods and Criteria**

### **Discussions**

There will be 4 discussions to be posted on the discussion boards. Each student is expected to post 1 comment on the discussion thread based on that week's readings. The weekly discussions will provide opportunities to encourage students to be able to critically think. The weekly discussion will be accessible from 9:00 am on Wednesday to Sunday midnight, and worth 10% of your final grade.

### **Assignments**

There will be 4 assignments throughout the semester. These assignments are to be done individually, and will help students to gain insightful and in-depth information about how to conduct an empirical study on a specific topic that they're deeply interested in. Refer to the Assignment tab for objectives and instructions for each assignment. Assignments are due around midnight on the date given on the syllabus. They are to be submitted using the Assignment function found under Course Tools on the course homepage.

### **Exams**

There will be two exams. The midterm exam will cover the materials of the first half of class, and the final exam will cover the materials of the second half of class. Both the two exams will constitute of multiple choice and true/false questions. The exams will be posted at 9:00 am on the first day of the week the exam is scheduled. Students will have **2 hours** to complete the exams during the week before Sunday Midnight. Each exam will be worth 30% of your final grade. Please note make-up exams will only be allowed in the case of natural disaster, hospitalization or death of immediate family members. Written proof of such emergency situations is required. All make up exams will be given at the testing center during the week of the final exam. Students who have to take make-up exams at the testing center should email me in advance to make arrangements.

## **Grading**

Discussions: 15%

Assignments: 25%

Midterm Exam: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

Final letter grades will be guided by the following scales:

A (93-100) A- (90-92)

B+ (87-89) B (83-86) B- (80-82)

C+ (77-79) C (73-76) C- (70-72)

D+ (67-69) D (63-66) D- (60-62)

E (<60)

## **American With Disability Act (ADA):**

University guidelines for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require the following to be included in all syllabi:

“The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 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 alternate format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.”

## **Faculty Responsibilities**

According to the Faculty Code, it is the responsibility of the faculty to enforce responsible, respectful, trustful and professional classroom behaviors. Faculty members must competently perform their responsibilities as teachers.

## **Student Responsibilities**

According to Student Code, “‘Academic misconduct’ includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information, as defined further below. It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct”. In order to ensure that the highest standards of academic conduct are promoted and supported at the University, students must adhere to generally accepted standards of academic honesty. Appropriate behavioral guidelines are outlined in the University of Utah student code at (<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html>). Students should read the code carefully and be familiar with the content they are responsible for.

## **Weekly Schedule of Topics and Due Dates**

### **Part One Research Process and Ethics**

Week 1 (January 6) Introduction to Social Science Research (Syllabus)

Readings:

➤ ISW: Chapter 1(p1-24)

Additional Readings

➤ PSR: Chapter 1 (p1-29)

Week 2 (January 13) Theories, Foundations, and Ethics in Social Science Research

Readings:

➤ ISW: Chapter 2 & 3 (p25-92)

Additional Readings

➤ PSR: Chapter 2 & 3 (p30-86)

### **Assignment #1: IRB Ethics Certification**

### **Part Two Research Design**

Week 3 (January 20) Research Design and Correlation & Causation

Readings:

➤ ISW: Chapter 6 (p171-197)

Additional Readings

➤ PSR: Chapter 4 (p88-122)

Discussion 1

Week 4 (January 27) Conceptualization and Operationalization

Readings:

➤ ISW: Chapter 4 (p93-134)

Additional Readings

➤ PSR: Chapter 5 (p118-147)

### **Assignment #2: Topic & Research Question**

Discussion 2

Week 5 (February 3) Sampling

Readings:

➤ ISW: Chapter 5 (p135-170)

Additional Readings

➤ PSR: Chapter 7 (p175-213)

Week 6 (February 10) Review & Midterm Exam

### **Part Three Data Collection**

Week 7 (February 17) Experiments

Readings:

- ISW: Chapter 7 (p198-228)
- Additional Readings
- PSR: Chapter 8 (p228-251)

Week 8 (February 24) Survey Research

Readings:

- ISW: Chapter 8 (p229-279)
- Additional Readings
- PSR: Chapter 9 (p252-293)

### **Discussion 3**

Week 9 (March 3) Qualitative Research

Readings:

- ISW: Chapter 9 (p280-319)
- Additional Readings
- PSR: Chapter 10 (p294-328)

### **Assignment #3: Hypothesis & Questionnaire Item**

**Week 10 (March 10) Spring Break**

## **Part Four Data Analysis**

Week 11 (March 17) Qualitative/ Quantitative Data Analysis

Readings:

- ISW: Chapter 10 & 14(p320-357, 445-491)
- Additional Readings
- PSR: Chapter 13 & 14 (p389-440)

### **Assignment #4: Quantitative Data Analysis**

Week 12 (March 24) Policy research, Historical Comparative Research, and Secondary Data Analysis

Readings

- ISW: Chapter 11, 12 & 13 (p358-444)
- Additional Readings
- PSR: Chapter 12 & 17

### **Discussion 4**

Week 13 (March 31) Historical Comparative Research

Readings

- ISW: Chapter 12 (p387-412)

Week 14 (April 7) Secondary Data Analysis and Content Analysis

Readings

- ISW: Chapter 13 (p413-444)

Week 15 (April 14) Evaluation, Policy research and Report

## Readings

➤ ISW: Chapter 11 & 15 (p358-386, p492-518)

## Additional Readings

➤ PSR: Chapter 12 & 17

## Week 16 (April 21) Review & Final Exam

## Notes:

Any changes about the syllabus throughout the semester will be announced.