SYLLABUS

SOCI 4308: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS - Summer II 2010
Index: 364839  Section: 751

Instructor: Ms. Kay Newling
Meeting time and place: DERR- 229, MTWHF: 2pm - 3:45pm
Office hours: DERR 101: M-H 12noon – 1 pm or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Students will learn about basic issues in the social research process. The course emphasizes the
design and analysis of quantitative research studies using scientific methods and logic. To help
students apply the material presented, students are required to complete several research exercises
(writing survey questions, entering data, etc.) and a mini research paper analyzing secondary data
(The General Social Survey or similar data set). In addition, students will read and critique
published research articles to help them become critical consumers of research.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Required reading (reading should be done before the class day for which it is
assigned):
   b) Additional Course readings will be posted to TRACS or handed out in class.

2. Research Applications: There will be three types of research application assignments:
   Critical analysis quizzes, research exercises, and a mini research paper.
   a) Critical analysis quizzes: You will be assigned published research articles to read that
      use a particular method (articles will be in the Resources folder on TRACS). You will
      need to read these articles carefully, taking notes as to the purpose of the study, the
      particular methods used, key findings, and strengths and weaknesses of the methodology
      employed. There will be an in-class quiz on each of readings. You may use your notes
      when taking the quiz, but not the article(s). You will take the quiz individually and then
      in a group setting. The group will allow you to discuss these issues with other students to
      help you gain a clearer understanding of the concepts and the articles, and in essence, to
      pool your knowledge. If all of the group members have done a good job, the sum of your
      work should be strong, an improvement over what you could have accomplished alone.
      You will receive the average of your individual score and your group score. If however,
      your individual quiz is missing or reflects that you did not complete the assignment on
      your own first, you will not receive your group grade.

   b) Research exercises: throughout the semester you will be given assignments that require
      you to apply course information given on how to conduct research. You will be
designing questionnaires, entering data, analyzing statistics, etc. At least one of the
assignments will require substantial preparation outside of class, but most will be in-class
exercises.
c) **Mini Research Paper:** For this research paper you will conduct an analysis of existing survey data. The dataset you will use will be the General Social Survey (GSS), or a similarly appropriate data set. The GSS is a survey done by the National Opinion Research Center on the attitudes, behaviors and background characteristics of the American population. I will provide you with this dataset. You may choose any sociological topic that is covered by variables in the assigned data set. You will review 4 published research articles on this topic, develop one hypothesis related to your topic, test your hypothesis, and draw conclusions from your analysis. Detailed instructions and practice exercises will be provided to help you with this project.

**Writing Intensive:** This course is designated WI. One of your goals this semester should be to learn the basics of scientific/technical writing and to improve your writing in one way, even if it’s one “small” or specific improvement (for example, learning the correct use of commas). Tips on improving your writing and writing for an academic audience will be provided throughout the semester. Students will be expected to apply this information on exams and to incorporate these tips into your final paper.

**Online and library research for your final paper:** You are required to do scientific research for your final course paper. You will have to find and print sociological articles for the papers in this course. Many sources--all of which must be peer-reviewed journal articles-- are available on the Web but some are only available in the library.

3. **Tests:** Two tests will be given (one mid-semester and one final). The tests will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The tests will require you to address issues using the text book, assigned readings and lecture notes. The final will require you remain conversant with material from throughout the semester.

   a) In case of MAJOR emergencies (e.g. death in the family, a severe illness of your own), you must both contact the instructor prior to the exam (email or phone call before class time), receive permission to miss the exam, and provide a valid and verifiable written excuse (i.e. documentation of your visit to the doctor’s office) the next class period that you attend. Students who have to miss an exam due to a legitimate emergency (as defined by me) and who fulfill these requirements can take an essay makeup exam directly after the final exam. After you take the final exam, you will write the make-up essay exam on the same day/time as the final exam for this course. Students who do not contact me prior to missing one of the first two exams will be unable to make up their exam and will receive a “0” on their exam.

   b) **There are no make-ups for final exams. You must take the final exam at the university assigned date and time unless this time overlaps with the final in another class and its university assigned time.**

   You must arrive to exams on time. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes late on exam days will receive a zero for that exam, regardless of the reason for being late. If you commute, you should leave earlier on exam days to account for potential traffic problems, including the trains going through San Marcos.

   c) I keep all copies of exams. There will be scheduled time during class when exams are handed back and this will be the only time students will be able to see their exams outside of office hours. If you wish to discuss your grade (including advice on preparing for the next exam), you will need to make an appointment to come by my office during office
hours (listed above) or during another time period. Note: Coming by to see me about your score, does not mean that I will automatically change your exam score. If you feel that your exam was graded incorrectly, you will need to provide written evidence from the lecture or reading and we can review the material to determine if a grading error has occurred.

CLASS POLICIES
1. No incompletes
2. I strongly dislike making arrangements for late assignments. Do not ask to make up any research application unless you have a doctor’s note or documentation of an extreme extenuating circumstance, such as a family emergency. Printer problems, work conflicts, oversleeping, car problems, etc. are not extreme extenuating circumstances. If you know you are going to miss an assignment ahead of time, you can arrange to turn it in early. You must meet with me to clear this. I will not accept research papers late under any circumstances.
3. Please be courteous and respect others who are sharing this course experience with you.
4. The Texas State Student Handbook contains an Academic Honesty Statement. It prohibits cheating on an examination or other academic work to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion, and/or abuse of resource materials. It subjects students who have committed an act or acts of academic dishonesty to penalties and provides a procedure to follow in cases of academic dishonesty. The handbook can be accessed on-line at:
5. Academic Honesty Statement/Student Handbook/Texas State University San Marcos
   http://davinci.mrp.swt.edu/mrp/publications/studenthandbook/academicprocedures.html#academic

Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services regarding their accommodation policies. If you qualify for accommodation practices, please let me know early in the semester so that arrangements can be made.

GRADING

Research Applications:
Critical analysis quizzes 25
Research exercises 25
Mini research paper 100

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150

Test 1 – Mid-Term 60
Test 4 – Final 80

Attendance 10

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TOTAL POINTS 300

Grades will be assigned as follows:
A – 270 +
B – 240 to 269.99
C – 210 to 239.99
D – 180 to 209.99
F – < 180
**Extra Credit** - You may submit a 2 page (12 pt font, 1” margins, double spaced) scholarly analysis of a peer reviewed research article from a sociological academic journal. It is due the last day of class. It is worth 2 points.

**Rounding** - Most research exercises are an easy buffer for your grade and because extra credit is offered, ‘rounding-up’ of grades will be considered only if the following conditions are met:

1. It will require that your aggregate points put you within 0.40 of a point or less of the higher grade (e.g. 269.60 is a ‘B’ and would require 0.40 of a point to reach 270 which is an ‘A’).
2. The grade desired was achieved on at least one test.
3. No more than 2 class absences without instructor’s permission.
4. All assignments and other work have been handed in on time.

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**CLASS SCHEDULE**

* I reserve the right to make alterations to readings, topics, due dates, and test days as I see fit.

**JULY 12 - 16**

**Read:** Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 15 in textbook (Babbie: The Basics of Social Research 5th Ed.)
- Articles as assigned
  - Introduction to course – using TurnIt-In.com
  - Positivism and Social Theory
  - Ethics and Social Research
  - Reading research articles and writing literature reviews
  - **July 16th:** Written assignment due - turned in to TurnItIn.com and TRACS Drop Box by 5pm

**JULY 19 - 23**

**Read:** Chapters 4, 5 & 7 in textbook
- Articles as assigned
  - Statistics review
  - Concepts and measurement
  - Introduction to research paper and writing a research proposal
  - Secondary data, code book
  - Operationalization
  - Sampling
  - **July 23rd:** Research proposal due to TurnItIn.com and TRACS Drop Box by 5pm

**JULY 26 - 30**

**Read:** Chapters 11 and 14 in textbook
- Articles as assigned
  - **Mid-Term Test: Monday July 26th**
  - Forming Hypotheses
  - Data analysis and research design/methods
  - Review Research Proposals
  - Introduction to SPSS
  - SPSS labs
  - SPSS assignments

**AUGUST 2 – AUGUST 6**
Read: Chapters 8 & 9 in textbook
Articles as assigned

- Using ASA Style Guide
- Creating a Reference page
- Literature Reviews due to TurnItIn.com and TRACS Drop Box by 12 midnight Tuesday June 29th
- Experiments
- Surveys
- Presenting data analysis in tables and charts
- Review ethics of research writing; Institutional Review Boards

AUGUST 9 – AUGUST 11

Read: Chapters 11 & 12
Articles as assigned

- Monday August 9th: Flex day to complete research paper
- Tuesday August 10th: Research paper due to TurnItIn.com and TRACS Drop Box by 5pm
- Evaluation Research
- Comparative Research
- Wednesday August 11th: Presentation of Research Papers (counts as 10 points of research paper) and review for Final.

Thursday AUGUST 12:

- FINAL - will be held from 5pm to 7:30pm
- Hand in Reflection paper (counts as 5 points of research paper)