



**Course Name** Research Methods and Techniques  
**Course Number and Section** SOCI-A335/A338

**Course Term:** Fall 2018

**Course Location:** Monroe 318 + 319

**Class hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-4:45

**Lab:** Thursdays 4:45-6 Monroe 319

**Instructor:** Wesley Cheek

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**Office hours:** Monday and Wednesday 12:30-1:30 and by appointment.

**Required Materials:**

**Title** *Approaches to Social Research*

**Author:** Royce A. Singleton, JR. and Bruce C. Straits

**Edition:** Sixth

**ISBN:** 978-0-19-061424-9

**Title:** *The Craft of Research*

**Author:** Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph Williams

**Edition:** Third

**ISBN**978-0-22-6065663

**(This syllabus is subject to change. )**

\*\*\*\*This syllabus was developed entirely by Dr. Carol Ann MacGregor

### **Brief Course Overview:**

The two primary goals of this class are to give you the tools necessary to critically evaluate research studies and to enable you to develop feasible research projects on topics of sociological importance.

### **Expected Student Learning Course Outcomes:**

- Introduce the basic methodological toolkit of sociological analysis including: survey design, analysis of secondary data, interviewing, focus groups, participant observation, and content analysis.
- Establish best practices for the development of research projects in sociology including the development of a feasible research questions and the choosing of an appropriate methodology for answering the question of interest.
- Introduce software for the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data.

- Establish criteria for evaluating the methodological soundness of sociological scholarship.
- Introduce the basics of program evaluation and employ hands-on application of the methods and techniques of social science research to help local non-profit organizations better manage, understand and use their own data. **Student Learning Outcomes**
- Students will be able to recognize researchable sociological questions.
- Students will be able to identify, distinguish, and critically evaluate a variety of research designs.
- Students will be able to discuss the theoretical and practical contributions of sociological scholarship.
- Students will be well prepared to pursue additional statistical or methodological training and to undertake Senior Capstone projects.
- Students will be able to highlight their hands-on experience performing program evaluation and data analysis for a non-profit organization if they apply to research oriented programs or positions in the future.

**Assignments:**

- *Weekly Lab Assignments*—Each week in the lab section we will undertake a small hands-on activity designed to let you practice the methods covered in the lecture. If the activity will extend beyond lab time or involve a written assignment, a handout describing the exercise will be circulated in class the Thursday before. Many of these activities can be used as stepping-stones for the final research proposal and program evaluation report. Given how close the final two assignment deadlines are I encourage you to spend some time each week thinking a little about each project.
- *Research Proposal*—A separate handout details the formal expectations of this 10 to 12 page (double spaced) research proposal. A series of ungraded drafts will be submitted prior to the final product. These drafts will receive feedback designed

to improve your final proposal. The dates associated with these drafts are noted on the handout. Again, I urge you to use these deadlines to keep this project moving and not to wait until the last few weeks of the semester. Additionally, if you are a Sociology major I would encourage you to use this exercise as an opportunity to think about your capstone project.

### **Participation Expectations:**

Active and thoughtful participation in class discussions is an important part of the learning experience for everyone in the class. Participation in class requires that you know the material, engage in analytical discussion, and that you listen and respect other points of view. As part of your participation, you will be responsible for thoroughly and thoughtfully reading all of the week's material, formulate key questions or topics for class discussion, and come to class prepared with those questions.

### **Criteria for Assigning the Course Grade:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Weekly Lab Assignments</b></li></ul>	<b>45% (15 x 3% Each)</b>
<b>Research Proposal (see separate Guidelines Handout) Due: December 7<sup>th</sup></b>  <i>(Check back with me on this date)</i>	<b>45%</b>

<b>Attendance and Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>
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**Assignments and Computation of Final Grade:** You can earn a total of 100 points in this class, which are distributed as follows among the required assignments:

### **Grading Scale**

A 95-100 A- 90-94 B+ 85-89 B 80-84 B- 75-79 C+ 70-74 C 65-69 C- 60-65 D 50-59 F <50

Evaluation Breakdown

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### **Attendance Policy:**

- *Class Attendance and Lateness*—Attendance will be taken at all sessions. I always appreciate courtesy emails if you are ill or otherwise unable to attend a session but I do not require documentation. Even if there is a “good reason” after three absences each absence will result in a 1% reduction of your final grade. Lateness is especially frowned upon and students who are more than 15 minutes late will be considered absent for the purpose of class attendance.
- **Late Assignments**
- This class is based in many ways on cumulative knowledge. I strongly discourage you from getting behind in your weekly lab assignments. Except for cases of severe health problem or other emergency, lab assignments will not be accepted more than two weeks after the original session. The penalty is 0.25 (out of 3) for each day of lateness. If the lab assignment is a group activity and you are away from class you are responsible for completing the activity on your own.

**Policies:**

*Office Hours:* Please take advantage of my office hours to come in and discuss questions about class material or problems you having with the course. If you wish to meet with me but cannot during regular office hours, please see me before or after one of the lectures to arrange a suitable time. If you have read this far into the syllabus email me a picture of your favorite animal by the first day of class and I will give you one bonus point to your final grade.

*Reading:* Reading assignments are an essential component of this course. Failing to do all the reading will be detrimental to your grade because you are responsible for material covered in the reading, even if it is not covered in class. *Reading assignments should be completed prior to the class for which they will be discussed.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Lab</b>
<b>Monday 8/20</b>	<b>Getting Started</b>		
<b>Wednesday 8/22</b>		<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 1 + Chp. 3	Exercise # 1 Ethics Certification
<b>Monday 8/27</b>	<b>Consumers and Producers of Knowledge</b>	<i>The Craft of Research</i> Chp 3+4 <i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp 2	
<b>Wednesday 8/29</b>		<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 4	Exercise #2 Developing Research Questions
<b>Monday 9/3</b>	<b>Defining the Shape and Nature of Your Inquiry</b>	<i>Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences.</i> (on Blackboard)	
<b>Wednesday 9/5</b>		<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 5	Exercise #3 Finding Peer Reviewed Articles and Analyzing Their Contribution
<b>Monday 9/10</b>	<b>Operationalization</b>	<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 12	

<b>Wednesday 9/12</b>		<i>The Craft of Research</i> Chp. 6	Exercise #4 Finding and Getting to Know Data
<b>Monday 9/17</b>	<b>Survey Research</b>	<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 6	
<b>Wednesday 9/19</b>		<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 9	Exercise #5 Designing a Survey
<b>Monday 9/24</b>	<b>Experimental Research Designs</b>	"Experimental Study of Inequality and Unpredictability in an Artificial Cultural Market" (On Blackboard)	
<b>Wednesday 9/26</b>		<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp.7	Exercise #6 Designing an Experiment
<b>Monday 10/1</b>	<b>More Research Methods</b>	"Research Using Available Data/Content Analysis- 'Close Your Eyes and Think of England': Protonatalism in the British Print Media; Reflection by Jessica Brown"	



		(on Blackboard)	
<b>Wednesday 10/3</b>		<i>Selections from Weber. Basic Content Analysis</i> (on Blackboard)	Exercise #7 Content Analysis
<b>Monday 10/8</b>			
<b>Wednesday 10/10</b>	<b>Ethnography</b>	<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 11	Exercise #8 Ethnographic Field Notes
<b>Monday 10/15</b>	<b>Qualitative Research Methods</b>	"Making Friends in Violent Neighborhoods: Strategies among Elementary School Children." (on Blackboard)	
<b>Wednesday 10/17</b>			Exercise #9 Interview and Transcription

<b>Monday 10/22</b>	<b>Odds and Ends</b>	"Ethnography, the Ecological Fallac, and the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave" (on Blackboard)	
<b>Wednesday 10/24</b>			Exercise #10 Peer Review Lab
<b>Monday 10/29</b>	<b>Troubles and Trouble Shooting</b>	<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 13	
<b>Wednesday 10/31</b>		Handouts on SPSS Basics	Exercise #11 SPSS Basics
<b>Monday 11/5</b>	<b>Review and Question and Answer</b>	One on One Meetings	
<b>Wednesday 11/7</b>		One on One Meetings	Exercise #12 One on One Meetings
<b>Monday 11/12</b>	<b>Review</b>	"Creating Effective Tables" (on Blackboard)	
<b>Wednesday 11/14</b>		<i>Approaches to Social Research</i> Chp. 17	Exercise #13 Making Tables, Graphs, and Figures

<b>Monday 11/19</b>	<b>Odds and Ends</b>	An interactive Final Review. Come with questions!	
Wednesday 11/21			
Friday 11/23			
<b>Monday 11/26</b>	<b>Research Proposal Presentations</b>	Presentations	
<b>Wednesday 11/28</b>		Presentations	Exercise #14 Peer Review Lab 2
<b>Monday 12/3</b>		Presentations	
<b>Wednesday 12/5</b>		Presentations	

"Approaches to Social Research views research as a process, breaking it down into a series of stages and decision points. I find this approach one of its greatest strengths. I regularly recommend this book to colleagues teaching graduate research methods courses, citing its comprehensiveness, clarity, and key strengths."--Zachary Neal, Michigan State University. "I have consistently used Approaches to Social Research in my graduate quantitative methods course. It stands out as one of the best, offering well-rounded approaches to social scientific research. In addition, the book