
INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS

SOC 3111-001 | Spring 2018 | Yvette Young, PhD.



COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course introduces students to systematic methods that organize the research process and multiple forms of research that it includes. The course explains the logic of research design, explores some common forms of data-gathering (such as interviews, surveys, observation, etc.), and links them to issues of data reporting. The course provides basic research skills for use to students as either original producers or critical consumers of social research.

Objectives include:

- Familiarize students with the different types of methods that are used to accumulate evidence in the social sciences. Examples include survey research, intensive interviewing, participant-observation.
- Expose students to the logic of data collection and analysis, and
- Give students an opportunity to conduct their own research and to critique existing social research.

See the “Learning Outcomes” matrix posted on Canvas for how course objectives and assessments map onto the Sociology Department’s Expected Learning Outcomes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Website

All course materials, including lecture notes and assignment sheets, will be posted on Canvas (<https://utah.instructure.com/courses/478658>). All students are expected to check the course website frequently.

Textbook

Required: Gaultney, Jane F. and Hannah D. Peach. 2016. *How to Do Research: 15 Labs for the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc. ISBN: 978-1-4833-8512-0

Recommended:

- Russell K. Schutt. 2014. *Investigating the Social World. The Process and Practice of Research*, 8th edition. Sage Publishing.
- Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd edition. University of Chicago Press.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (continued)

Attendance and Participation

Given the “hands-on” nature of this course, regular attendance and active participation is expected. Attendance will be taken on occasion. Participation points will be accrued through in-class exercises, discussions, and activities.

Exams & Quizzes

None.

Assignments

There will be a series of assignments throughout the term, many of them serving as building blocks for your final research project. Some are individual assignments (to be completed on your own). These are designated with an “I”. Others are group assignments, designated with a “G”

1. **Research Ethics Certification (I)**—Submit the completion certificate for the social/behavioral CITI training.
2. **Topic approval (I)**—Submit the topic approval worksheet which includes:
 - A one paragraph statement presenting a topic of interest and explaining what the topic is and why it is important enough to be investigated (The topic may be approved or modified as the semester progresses.);
 - A working (i.e. preliminary) research question;
 - A working hypothesis — this will evolve over the semester.
3. **Preliminary bibliography (I)**—Submit a short list of bibliographic references to show that you are beginning some research on your topic. The list must contain at least 10 references from social science journal articles. The list should be in a standard format for bibliographic references according to the ASA Style Guide.
4. **Annotated bibliography (I)**—Submit short summaries of each of 5 of the key references appearing on your working bibliography. 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.
5. **Draft of “Intro” (G)**—Submit a first draft of your introduction. This will provide an overview of your project, it’s purpose, and why it is important. It will briefly reference a few of your central bibliographic references. This will be approximately 500 words.
6. **Survey Assignment (G)**—Write and administer a short survey. Submit the survey, a description of your sample of respondents, and a one-paragraph summary of responses (you don’t have to analyze the data, just provide examples of notable or typical responses to key questions).
7. **Qualitative Assignment (G)**—Choose a qualitative method such as an interview, case study, or content analysis. Draft questions or preliminary themes appropriate for your method and collect data. Submit the your questions/themes, a description of your sample of informants, and a one-paragraph summary of responses (you don’t have to analyze the data, just provide examples of notable or informative responses).
8. **Draft of Methods (G)**—Write a description of the method you chose to you for your final project. You will most likely modify your survey or qualitative method, adding and/or revising questions and themes. You will also use a larger sample. Describe your final sample, and give details about the final survey, interview questions, case study, or content analysis.
9. **Draft of Results (G)**—Analyze your data and write a detailed summary of the results.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (continued)

Final Research Project

Students will complete a research project throughout the semester, which includes choosing a unique research topic, designing an appropriate study, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting findings in both a written and oral format. This project will be done in groups.

GRADING

Course grades will be calculated as a weighted average of assignments, final research project, and attendance/participation.

- Assignments 45%
- Final Research Project 15%
- Attendance & participation 15%

Late Assignments

Assignments and course requirements for each section or topic are listed in the reading schedule and on Canvas. The deadlines listed on Canvas are firm (*The Canvas clock is the final word on the time “stamp” on all assignments, assessments, discussions, and other submissions.*)

Late assignments will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor. **Arrangements must be made BEFORE the assignment deadline.** I will deduct points for any late assignments I agree to accept. *Any assignment that is more than one week late will not be accepted.*

Grading Scale	
A	94–100
A-	90–93.9
B+	87–89.9
B	84–86.9
B-	80–83.9
C+	77–79.9
C	74–76.9
C-	70–73.9
D+	67–69.9
D	64–66.9
D-	60–63.9
E	0–59.9

The only exceptions to this policy are those due to officially sanctioned University activities, and illness with medical documentation. If you believe you qualify for an exception **you must inform the instructor in a timely manner.** Please plan ahead in order to submit assignments early or no later than the deadline to avoid the loss of points due to late submissions or missed opportunities.

COURSE FORMAT

Format

This is a hybrid course which means we will use a mix of traditional and online learning approaches. As a result, it is crucial that you have consistent access to a computer with an internet connection. Examples of online learning include: web exercises, Assignment #1’s online training (described above), library research, and videos and video lectures.

Computer Skills Required

Ability to use a web browser to surf the Canvas pages and upload files is required. Familiarity with YouTube is recommended. Most of the required course materials are posted online. **It is your responsibility to maintain your computer and related equipment in order to participate in the online portion of the course.**

If you experience computer issues, you are required to notify the instructor **before** any assignments are late. Please familiarize yourself with campus technical support resources and computer labs in the event of any computer issues.

Help Desk:
 (801) 585-5959, M-F, 8am – 5pm
tacchelpdesk@utah.edu

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Date	Topics	Assignment
Week 1	Introduction and Overview of the Class What is “Social Science”?	
Week 2	The Research Process Research Ethics	
Week 3	Questions, Theories, Hypotheses Causality & Research Design	Assignment #1: Research Ethics Certification
Week 4	Literature Review The Research Report	Assignment #2: Topic Approval
Week 5	Measurement	Assignment #3: Preliminary Bibliography
Week 6	Sampling A Focus on Writing	Assignment #4: Literature Review
Week 7 & 8	Survey Research	Assignment #5: Draft of “Intro”
Week 9	Qualitative Methods	Assignment #6: Survey Assignment
Week 10	Other Research Designs & Data Collection Methods	Assignment #7: Qualitative Assignment
Week 11	Quantitative Data Analyses	
Week 12 & 13	Data Analysis	Assignment #8: Draft of “Methods”
Week 14	Presenting, Writing, Revising	Assignment #9: Draft of “Results”
Week 15	Student Research Forum	
Exam Week	Final Projects Due	

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. It is the your responsibility to check Canvas for corrections or updates to the syllabus and schedule. Any changes will be clearly noted in advance through course announcement or Canvas email.