SOCIOLOGY 16: The Logic of Social Inquiry

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CLASS MEETS: 10:00 – 11:50 T, Th, Rocky 208; x-hours: 3:00 – 3:50 W

OFFICE HOURS: 3:00-4:00 p.m. MWF or by appointment only.

REQUIRED TEXTS: Babbie, The Basics of Social Research, 4th
Note regarding Babbie: I realize that text books are expensive and that there is not that much difference between editions. If you’d like to purchase an earlier edition of this book in order to save money, that’s fine with me. You also have the luxury of selecting from a range of methods textbooks in the library!

Additional readings will be listed throughout the syllabus. It will be your responsibility to get these from the library.

OTHER MATERIALS: A cheap hand calculator (optional, but very useful).

GOALS: I have several goals for this course. I want to provide you with an understanding of why and how social research is done, enable you to evaluate social science research critically, and give you hands-on practical experience with two to three basic types of social research. The course should give you competence in the logic and conduct of research. The course also provides you with a strong foundation for further study of methods and statistics. It should also make you a stronger consumer of sociological research in your other classes.

You will come to understand the importance of theories and hypotheses, learn different ways of collecting data, and practice the fundamentals of elementary data analysis using STATA, one of the most widely-used statistical programs in the world. No previous statistics classes or statistical experience is required for this course, although if you have taken or are taking statistics, this will be helpful to you.

REQUIREMENTS: Three research reports are required. I will also give many short assignments; typically, these allow us to give you feedback on steps you have taken in your research before you start finalizing each research
The first project will be a participant observation study, the second a content analysis study, and the third a computer analysis of survey data. I will provide several alternatives for each project as well as guidance in carrying out and reporting on each one. Students who wish to pursue their own ideas for a project may do so but **must** obtain prior clearance from me before proceeding. You will also be asked to read and analyze the substantive articles that we read in class, with an eye towards identifying and assessing the concepts we learn in class.

**PROCEDURES:** Unless I announce otherwise, you should read the assigned readings for a topic by the day that we begin that topic. However, I will be lecturing pretty closely from the book, so it may make more sense to skim before class and then return to the material as a resource afterwards and when you are preparing your reports.

I do, however, expect you to have read additional articles quite closely before coming to class, particularly the part you normally skip—that is, the **methods sections**!

I expect you to ask questions in class about both the readings and my lectures. If you don't understand something, the probability is 99.9% that someone else is puzzled, too, so do us all a favor and ask! I am happy to answer questions not only in class but during office hours.

**GRADING:** Reports are weighted equally in contributing toward your final grade (20% each). I convert scores on exams to letter grades, based on the distributions of scores in the class. Letter grades on reports and exams are then made equivalent to points, where A+=12, A=11, A=10, B+=9, B=8 and so on down to F=0. Normally, your points on the two exams and three reports are summed and divided by 5. And normally, scores of x.4 or lower are rounded down to x, scores of x.6 or higher are rounded up to x+1, and scores of x.5 may be rounded up or down, depending on class attendance and performance on short assignments.

It should be noted that all students’ final grades will be influenced by class attendance and short assignments. If you miss multiple classes, your final grade will drop a part of a grade (for example, if you have earned a B+ but have missed multiple classes, it will drop to a B); if you fail to hand in **any** short assignments, it will drop another part of a grade; and if you earn only check-minuses on your short assignments, it will drop yet another. (Short assignments are graded with check-plus, check, or check-minus, corresponding roughly to A, B, and C quality work.)
There are no extra credit assignments—there is plenty to do in this class without additional work!

LATE REPORTS: You can turn in reports late, but you will lose part of a grade for each day late. So a B+ report becomes a B if it's one day late, a B- if two days late, a C+ if three days late, and so on. A report becomes late if it is not handed in on the day that it is due. Please try to meet deadlines; your instructors have a need for closure, too. If you are experiencing extraordinary circumstances (e.g., serious illness, death in the family) that slows your work, please see me as soon as possible to arrange alternative due dates. Weddings, parties, and early plane flights for breaks do not constitute extraordinary circumstances; you can hand in your work early or take a penalty, your choice. This is not to penalize you individually, rather it is to be fair to your classmates who also have things to do.

SAFETY ISSUES: It is crucial that you keep a rough draft or a backup file of each of your assignments and reports; should your work be lost, you will be able to supply us with another copy. When you work in the computer lab, plan to back up your programs and data routinely on a second disk or email them to your blitz account frequently. Each quarter, without exception, someone fails to back up his/her work, loses all of it through a mistake or worse (computer crash, computer virus), plunges briefly into despair, and then knuckles down and does the work all over again. Please make a vow that this will not be you!

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism means "to steal and use [the ideas or writings of another] as one's own" (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1970, p. 1001). You plagiarize if you copy an author's words without placing them in quotes and citing the source, and you plagiarize if you copy part or all of another student's work. Close paraphrasing of another's text can be considered plagiarism, too.

When quoting, use the appropriate conventions to indicate this. When you worry that you have paraphrased too closely, rephrase the ideas much more extensively in your own words or resort to a formal quote and a cite. If you plagiarize, you will receive an F on your assignment, and this violation will be reported formally.
SCHEDULE

1 Tuesday January 8  Intro to the Course
Thursday January 10  Why Do Research?
Read: Babbie, Chapt 1 (Human Inquiry and Science)

2 Tuesday January 15  Steps in the Research Process
Read: Babbie, Chapt 4 (Research Design)
Thursday January 17  Field Research: Participant Observation Methods
Read: Babbie, Chapt 10 (Qualitative Field Research)

FIRST PROJECT ASSIGNMENT

3 Tuesday January 22  Field Research (continued)
Thursday January 24  Field Research Sampling and Ethics

4 Tuesday January 29  Measurement Issues
Read: Babbie, Chapt 5 (Conceptualization ...) p. 134 to end
Thursday January 31  Measurement (cont'd)

5 Tuesday February 5  Concepts and Theories, Variables and Hypotheses
Conceptualization (continued)


Thursday February 7 Theories

Read Babbie, Chapt 2 (Paradigms, Theory, and Research)

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6 Tuesday February 12 Analyzing Data: Constructing Tables

Read: Babbie, Chapt 13 (Qualitative Data Analysis)

Thursday February 14 Elaboration Methods

Read: Elaboration Models (Hand Out)

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7 Tuesday Feb 19 Unobtrusive Research Methods

Read: Babbie, Chapt 11 (Unobtrusive research)

SECOND PROJECT ASSIGNMENT

X - hour Feb 22 Coding and Analyzing Content

Thursday Feb 21 Content/Archival/Document Analysis (continued)


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8 Tuesday Feb 26 Sampling

Read: Babbie, Chapt 7 (The Logic of Sampling)

X-Hour Feb 27 Sampling (continued)
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Feb 28</td>
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<td>Sampling Issues in Content Analysis</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Tuesday Mar 4 Unobtrusive Methods (cont’d): Analysis of Existing Statistics</td>
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<td>Elementary Statistics: Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion</td>
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<td>Read: Babbie, Chapt 14 (Quantitative Data Analysis) and</td>
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<td>(Handout: Social Statistics) but skip pp. 450-457</td>
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<td>X-Hour</td>
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<td>Statistics: the Chi-Square Test</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Mar 7 Elaboration Analysis with Stata</td>
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<td>Additional Reading: To Be Announced</td>
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<td>Second Project Due</td>
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<td>Take home project handed out in class</td>
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<td>FINALS WEEK Final REPORT DUE (March 13th, 4:00, Silsby 103)</td>
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