

# Sociology 311 – Introduction to Social Research

Fall 2009

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-3:20 p.m., 302 GERLINGER

Mandatory Attendance

Prerequisites: 204 or 207

## Professor Elaine Replogle

Office hours: Mondays or Wednesdays by appointment

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**Blackboard:** Please check the course's Blackboard site weekly for announcements, selected details from the lectures (i.e., graphs or overheads), and additional readings. When necessary, I will communicate to the class as a whole through Blackboard. If you need technical assistance with your Blackboard account, please go to the staff at the Information Technology Centers at either the Knight or Science libraries. I DO NOT POST MY LECTURES.

**Course Description:** This course will give you a general understanding of how sociologists do research. This course does not favor one type of methodology over another, so we will cover broad ground, learning about research design, sampling, data collection, data coding, data analysis, interviewing techniques, ethnography, historical/comparative methods, and content analysis. We will also touch on issues of ethics, discuss triangulation, and do some rudimentary statistical analyses. You should, by the end of this course, be able to understand the methods section of research articles and be able to judge for yourself whether the research was done well enough to justify the conclusions the authors drew from it. You will also be prepared to take Soc 312 😊

**Comment on Text and Lectures:** I have only assigned one text and a few readings which will be posted on Blackboard. I am, however, gathering my lecture materials from several sources. You are responsible BOTH for the content of the text AND for the content of my lectures. There is significant overlap, but please do not think you can get by with only reading or only coming to class. You will have to do both (awake) in order to do well.

### Teaching Assistants

Jesse Lowe and Seth Crawford, contact information and office hours TBA

## Course Readings

MAIN TEXT:

Earl Babbie. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research* 12<sup>th</sup> Edition. Wadsworth. Available in the bookstore.

Any additional readings will be on Blackboard.

## Grading

IF you attend every class, take notes, ask questions when you have them, AND read (carefully) the assigned material, you should do reasonably well in this class. There will be TWO TESTS and a FINAL EXAM, each of which comprises 25% of your grade. **There are no extra-credit assignments, nor are there make-ups for missed tests.** If you TRULY have a LEGITIMATE EXCUSE (DEATH of a close family member which you can certify, ILLNESS of rare severity which you can prove with a doctor's note, etc.), please raise the issue with me and I may take pity on you. **Be Warned: Make-up exams are always a good deal harder than the original ones!**

There will also be five short homework assignments, which will together comprise the remaining 25% of your grade.

## Schedule

### Wednesday, September 30

Course Introduction, Syllabus Review, 3x5 cards completed with the following information:

- AGE
- GENDER
- Year in school
- Religious or Not Religious
- Measure of religiosity: (1) not at all religious, (2) somewhat religious, (3) quite religious, (4) extremely religious
- # of siblings
- Hours of television you watch in a typical week
- Do you think the president of the U of O is doing a good job? (Yes      No      Don't Know)

READING: Babbie, Chapter 1

### Monday, October 5

1<sup>st</sup> Lecture: Key Theories and Concepts to Get Started (possibly continued from first lecture)

READING: Babbie, Chapter 2

**Wednesday, October 7**

2<sup>nd</sup> Lecture: Causation in Social Science

**Monday, October 12**

3<sup>rd</sup> Lecture: Research Design

Reading: Babbie, Chapter 4

Article on Triangulation (on Blackboard)

**Assignment #1:** Pick something to observe – fans at a sporting event, mothers at a soccer game, teenagers in an elevator, people standing in a line, etc. Spend a half-hour observing and **WRITE DOWN OBSERVATIONS ONLY; LEAVE OUT INTERPRETATIONS.** Give as much detail as you can. Bring (typed) observations to class on Wednesday.

**Wednesday, October 14**

**ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**

**Collect and Discuss observations assignment.**

Lecture 4: Defining What We Study

**Monday, October 19**

Lecture 5: Operationalization

READING: Babbie, Chapter 5, Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

**Wednesday, October 21**

Continue 5<sup>th</sup> Lecture: More on Operationalization

**\*\*Lots of overheads during this lecture – bring coffee if you'll need it! ☺**

Hand back assignment #1

**Assignment #2:** Complete the following and bring your typed answers WEDNESDAY.

1. What kind of measurement – nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio – describes each of the following variables?
  - a) Race
  - b) Order of finish in a race
  - c) Number of children in families
  - d) Population of nations
  - e) Attitudes toward nuclear energy (strongly approve, approve, disapprove, strongly disapprove)
  - f) Region of birth (Midwest, Pacific NW, East Coast, South, etc.)
  - g) Political orientation (very liberal, somewhat liberal, somewhat conservative, very conservative)
2. For each of the open-ended questions listed, construct a closed-ended question that could be used in a questionnaire.
  - a) What was your family's total income last year?
  - b) How do you feel about the athletic program here at U of O?
  - c) How important is religion in your life?
  - d) What was your main reason for attending college?
  - e) What do you feel is the biggest problem facing the U of O community?

**MONDAY, October 26**

**First Test: Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 Babbie & article on triangulation (AND LECTURES)**

**WEDNESDAY, October 28**

**ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE**

6<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Indexes, Scales and Typologies

Reading: Babbie, chapter 6, Indexes, Scales and Typologies

**\*\*Lots of overheads during this lecture, too: sitting up front a good idea...**

**MONDAY, November 2**

**Hand back Exam #1**

7<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Sampling

Reading: Babbie, Chapter 7, The Logic of Sampling

Reading: Description of sampling method for AdHealth Survey (on Blackboard)

## **Wednesday, November 4**

### **Hand back assignment #2**

8<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Experiments, Interviewing, Surveys

Reading: Babbie, Chapters 8 and 9

**Assignment #3:** Find a survey (they are everywhere...). Bring a copy of it to class, with some typed notes reflecting your ideas on why it's good or not good, and whether you think it is able to answer the question it sets out to answer. Turn in the survey and your notes on it. We will also discuss what you found in class. DUE next WEDNESDAY

## **Monday, November 9**

9<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Qualitative Field Research

Reading: Babbie, Chapter 10

**TEST #2: Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 , AdHealth survey and lectures**

## **Wednesday, November 11**

### **Assignment #3 due**

**Assignment #4:** Pick a topic for field research. Tell me which of the "thinking units" it represents. Observe it for one hour. (It's OK if it's the same thing you observed for Assignment #1, but you have to observe it AGAIN.) Write up your field notes – this time, include BOTH observations and interpretations, but keep observations separate from interpretations. Please include a brief description of how you would study this if you had the chance – what kind of sample would you use? What questions would you ask? What would you hope to find out? Due next Monday.

Continue 9<sup>th</sup> lecture (Qualitative Field Research)

Begin 10<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Unobtrusive Research

Reading: Babbie, Chapter 11

In class Exercise about ideal types

## **Monday, November 16**

### **Review Test #2 and hand back**

Finish 10<sup>th</sup> lecture(unobtrusive research)

Begin 11<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Quantitative Data, Coding, Getting a Handle on It

Today, you find out why you filled out those 3 x 5 cards...

Reading: Babbie, Chapters 14 and 15

In Class Exercise on suppressor and distorter variables

## **Wednesday, November 18**

### **Assignment #4 due; Assignment #3 handed back.**

12<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Statistics

Reading: Babbie, Chapter 16

Don't be scared! 😊

In-Class Exercises for Chi-Square Analyses

## **Monday, November 23**

13<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Qualitative Data Analysis

Reading: Babbie, Chapter 13

**Assignment #5:** Take one of the assignments that you didn't do so well on and DO IT OVER, as well as you can. If you did outstandingly well on all assignments so far (or are happy with the AVERAGE grade you have from them), you can skip assignment #5 (and get credit for it equal to the AVERAGE of your assignment grades so far). Due one week from today (November 25).

## **Wednesday, November 25**

14<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Ethics and Politics of Research

Reading: Babbie, Chapter 3

Selection from *Tearoom Trade* (on Blackboard)

### **Assignment #5 due**

**Monday, November 30**

**Catch-up or review**

**COME PREPARED WITH QUESTIONS**

**Wednesday, December 2**

**Another review day if we need it**

## **FINAL EXAM: December 10, 3:15-5:15**

The final exam will cover chapters not covered in previous tests (chapters 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 3), as well as the selection from *Tearoom Trade* and lecture materials. You will be expected to do ONE Chi-Square analysis on the exam.