



**COURSE SYLLABUS: Introduction to Social Research
SOCIOLOGY 331.01W
Spring, 2014**

Instructor: Yvonne Villanueva-Russell; Associate Professor

Class Time: online

Office Location: Social Sciences 232

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays: 8AM-10AM and 1PM-3PM ; Fridays 8AM-10AM

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Course website: <http://online.tamuc.org> [try this if the MyLeo portal is down]

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Textbook, Required:

- 1] Babbie, Earl. 2013. The Practice of Social Research (13th edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. ISBN: 978-1-133-04979-1

Course Description:

An introduction to the process, logic and skills of social science research inquiry. The range of research designs, their strengths and weaknesses and the specific research tools needed for the collection of sociological data, and introductory analytical techniques are examined. Required of all majors and a prerequisite for Sociology 332 (Intermediate Methods of Sociological Analysis).

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate their **comprehension** of major concepts and methodological techniques through scores on objective quizzes.
2. Students will demonstrate their **comprehension** of using the library databases to gain access to peer reviewed literature
3. Students will demonstrate their **comprehension** of citing peer-reviewed literature according to APA format

4. Students will **synthesize** peer-review literature by writing a literature review
5. Students will demonstrate their ability to **critique** the literature in written assignments
6. Student will demonstrate the ability to **assess and evaluate** the merits of particular methodological techniques in written assignments
7. Students will show their ability to **apply** social scientific logic, reasoning and theorizing through written assignments.

Course Format:

I like to approach this course as a *thinking* course. That is, what I want students to get out of this class is the ability to ask questions and question answers. In pursuing this, I have set up the course around 5 broad themes: 1) the nature and process of research & science, 2) the specifics of methodological jargon and concepts, 3) the process of writing scientifically, 4) the process of collecting and interpreting research as well as 5) exposure to a wide range of research methodologies. Throughout the semester, we will mix PowerPoint lecture with exercises, research and writing to gain experience with all phases of methodology

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

This will be a “hands-on” course, giving students the opportunity to gain experience in all phases and types of sociological research. To accomplish this, the course utilizes short exercises which will be combined to complete a research proposal. We will spend much of our time thinking through, discussing and formulating the approach to each section of this project.

EEK! YOU MEAN I HAVE TO WRITE A PROPOSAL???

Writing a research proposal does not have to be nearly as intimidating as it sounds. You may be relieved to know that most of her students in the class are dreading and fearing the project as much as you! There is no “best way” to write a proposal. But, we will write this project in bits and pieces spread out over time. When assembled, students find that they have the majority of the proposal completed!

Our course has been organized around 3 types of assignments. Detailed instructions for each of these assignments follow:

1] Quizzes: 4 @ 25 points each

This assignment has been designed to meet Student Learning Objective #1: Students will demonstrate their **comprehension** of major concepts and methodological techniques through scores on objective quizzes.

Assignment description:

There will be a total of six quizzes, of which you will need to **complete FOUR** over the semester. Each quiz is worth a total of **25 points**. **Quizzes will always be open from Tuesday – Thursday.**

Students will be required to complete the quiz within a set period of time accessible through eCollege. You will receive an instant score on the multiple choice and true false questions, but will not be able to see the correct answers. Any short answer questions will be graded separately; with you score on these items added to your original grade manually by your

professor. After all students have completed the quiz you will be able to go back into the quiz to see the questions you missed along with the correct answers.

Quizzes are open book & open notes, but will be timed. You will not be able to take and do well on the quiz without having read and studied the material first. Make sure that you are fully prepared and have done all the readings prior to logging on to attempt the quiz. Should you run out of time, **no additional minutes will be granted to you**, and you will have to accept the grade based on your work completed. If you find yourself continually referring to your notes or book during a quiz, this is an indication that you did not study nor comprehend the material well enough. You will need to be more diligent in your preparation before the next quiz.

FOUR of your quiz grades will be used to calculate your final grade. If you complete more than four quizzes, the highest scores will be recorded. You may not use an additional quiz as extra credit in the course. Quizzes cannot be made up or re-taken.

Assignment. Complete any four	Dates	Time	Points
Quiz 1	Open Tuesday, February 18 through 11:59PM on Thursday, February 20th	20 minutes	25 points
Quiz 2	Open Tuesday, February 25 through 11:59PM on Thursday, February 27 th	20 minutes	25 points
Quiz 3	Open Tuesday, March 18 through 11:59PM on Thursday, March 20 th	20 minutes	25 points
Quiz 4	Open Tuesday, March 25 through 11:59PM on Thursday, March 27 th	20 minutes	25 points
Quiz 5	Open Tuesday, April 8 through 11:59PM on Thursday, April 10th	20 minutes	25 points
Quiz 6	Open Tuesday, April 24 through 11:59PM on Thursday, April 24 th	20 minutes	25 points

Any written work in this class is subject to turnitin review (including short answer questions on quizzes). Turnitin.com is a website that checks for plagiarism and generates an originality report that notes which parts of a paper appear unattributed to other student papers, internet sources or articles and books. Please make sure that you cite wherever appropriate. If you need help or advice on how to do this, please contact your professor.

If you lose Internet connectivity during the exam, log back in immediately and continue on with the exam. **Save your answers often** (every 5-10 minutes). If you experience any issues while taking the exam, you must contact the eCollege Helpdesk immediately so that your issue is documented with a helpdesk ticket number. Considerations regarding exam issues will be made by the instructor on an individual basis based on the documentation.

Avoid Being Timed Out

MyLeo times out after 20 minutes. To avoid being kicked out of an eCollege course:

1. Login to MyLeo
2. Click on eCollege link
3. Access an eCollege course
4. Close (use X in right top corner) MyLeo

This will stop MyLeo from timing out. eCollege times out after “No Activity” for 45 minutes. As long as you are working in the eCollege course (not just having it Open), it should not time out. The Working in the eCollege course means; entering text in a Discussion, viewing grades in Gradebook, uploading assignments, taking an exam etc.

Policy for Reporting Problems with eCollege

Should students encounter eCollege-based problems while taking an online quiz, the following procedure **MUST** be followed.

- Students must report the problem to the help desk. You may reach the helpdesk at helpdesk@online.tamuc.org or 1-866-656-5511
- Students **MUST** file their problem with the helpdesk and obtain a helpdesk ticket number
- Once a helpdesk ticket number is in your possession, students should Email me to advise me of the problem and to provide me with the helpdesk ticket number
- At that time, I will call the helpdesk to confirm your problem and follow up with you

PLEASE NOTE: Personal computer/access problems are not a legitimate excuse for filing a ticket with the helpdesk. I strongly encourage you to check for compatibility of your browser BEFORE the course begins and to take the eCollege tutorial offered for students who may require some extra assistance in navigating the eCollege platform. ONLY eCollege-based problems are legitimate.

Makeup Quizzes

Makeup quizzes will NOT be given, and the instructor will not extend the due date of this assignment.

Important notes:

- Quizzes cannot count for extra credit
- Quizzes cannot be re-done, re-graded, or re-taken
- Quizzes are always open from Tuesday-Thursday

2] Short written assignments 9 assignments: points vary

This assignment has been designed to measure the following student learning outcomes:

2. Students will demonstrate their **comprehension** of using the library databases to gain access to peer reviewed literature
3. Students will demonstrate their **comprehension** of citing peer-reviewed literature according to APA format
4. Students will **synthesize** peer-review literature by writing a literature review

5. Students will demonstrate their ability to **critique** the literature in written assignments
7. Students will show their ability to **apply** social scientific logic, reasoning and theorizing through written assignments.

a) Assignment description

Each assignment will provide hands-on experience with some aspect of the research process: conceptualizing, researching, comprehending and critiquing the literature as well as gaining experience in the various techniques used by social scientists. Each of these assignments will accumulate and become part of the final research project due at the end of the semester. Detailed instructions will be provided in class, but an overview of each assignment and the corresponding due dates appear below.

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Research Proposal Worksheet	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on Friday, February 7 th	30 points
Database/Library Skills Assignment	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on Friday, February 14 th	25 points
Citing the Literature	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on Friday, February 14 th	20 points
Literature Review Exercise	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on Friday, February 21	25 points
Critiquing the Literature	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on Friday, February 28	20 points
Content Files	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on Friday, March 21	40 points
Survey Exercise	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on April 4	30 points
Content Analysis Exercise	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on April 18 th	30 points
Observation Exercise	Submit as an attachment to the dropbox on eCollege no later than 11:59PM on May 2	30 points

b) Assessment

A grading rubric will be used to determine a student's grade on each assignment. This will be made available on the assignment instructions, found on eCollege

c) Important notes

- 1) All written work is due by 11:59PM on FRIDAYS
- 2) Submit your work as a .doc or .rtf file, and save like so:
Smith/your last name_Observation Exercise.doc
- 3) Late assignments will receive a 10% deduction in points
- 4) No written assignment will be accepted beyond one week of the original due date.
- 5) Any written work in this class is subject to turnitin. Turnitin.com is a website that checks for plagiarism and generates an originality report that notes which parts of a paper appear unattributed to other student papers, internet sources or articles and books. Please make sure that you cite wherever appropriate. If you need help or advice on how to do this, please contact your professor. See document sharing for guidelines on how to cite. **Students who plagiarize will receive a zero on the assignment in question.**

3] Research Proposal: 1 @ 100 points

This assignment has been designed to measure student learning outcomes #6 & 7:

6. Student will demonstrate the ability to **assess and evaluate** the merits of particular methodological techniques in written assignments
7. Students will show their ability to **apply** social scientific logic, reasoning and theorizing through written assignments.

a) Assignment description:

This written project will be the culmination and accumulation of all that we have learned about this semester! You will be able to utilize most of your written assignments in crafting each section of the proposal. More detailed instructions will be provided in class about this final project. The proposal will consist of these sections:

• INTRODUCTION

- *Provide me with background on your topic (who, what, where, when and why).
- *How many people does it affect?
- *Define key topics that will be used
- *State your **research question**
- *Why is this problem of interest or importance—who cares?
[Feel free to integrate aspects of your RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS WORKSHEET for this section]

• LITERATURE REVIEW

- *Cite and discuss the literature relevant to your topic- focus on peer-reviewed literature
- *What key studies (theories, methods, etc.) have used the concepts relevant to your study?
- *Group and categorize previous studies: what do they have in common?
- *What key findings from these studies have been useful for your study?
- *How are each of these studies important to your own research?

*What's your "hook?" Will you replicate, revise, expand, correct, replicate or challenge previous work?

[Feel free to integrate your LITERATURE REVIEW ASSIGNMENT & CONTENT FILES ASSIGNMENT for this section]

- **METHODS**

*What type of methods did you use? (Survey, secondary data, observation, focus groups, content analysis, interviews, etc.)

* Why was this method chosen over other techniques? (advantages/disadvantages)

*Describe your sampling strategy

*Include a discussion of how concepts were operationally defined or categorized, if necessary

*How will you ensure validity and reliability?

*Are there any limits to your study?

*Are there any ethical concerns?

- **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Cite your works cited in the professional format of your discipline

*Be sure to cite sources correctly in the text of the paper, as well.

[Use what you have learned from the CITING THE LITERATURE ASSIGNMENT to cite your own literature]

- **APPENDIX**

*Include copies of the survey or interview questions, and informed consent, if applicable.

b) Assessment

A detailed grading rubric will be provided along with the project instructions on eCollege.

c) Important notes:

a. All written work is due by **11:59PM on WEDNESDAY, May 7th**.

b. Submit your work as a .doc or .rtf file, and save like so: Smith/your last name_Observation Exercise.doc

c. Students must cite in-text using APA, ASA or another style they are familiar with

d. Late assignments will receive a 10% deduction in points

e. No written assignment will be accepted beyond one week of the original due date.

f. Any written work in this class is subject to turnitin. Turnitin.com is a website that checks for plagiarism and generates an originality report that notes which parts of a paper appear unattributed to other student papers, internet sources or articles and books. Please make sure that you cite wherever appropriate. If you need help or advice on how to do this, please contact your professor. See document sharing for guidelines on how to cite. **Students who plagiarize will receive a zero on the assignment in question.**

Grading

There are a total of 450 **points** in this course. A breakdown of assignments and their point values is as follows:

Assignment	Point Value
Quizzes	4 @ 25 points = 100 points
Research Proposal Worksheet	30 points
Database/Library Skills Assignment	25 points
Citing the Literature	20 points
Literature Review Exercise	25 points
Critiquing the Literature	20 points
Content Files	40 points
Survey Exercise	30 points
Content Analysis Exercise	30 points
Observation Exercise	30 points
Research Proposal	100 points
Total Points Possible	450 points

Your grade for the course will be calculated using the following scale:

405 - 450 points	= 90% - 100%	= A
360 - 404 points	= 80% - 89%	= B
315 - 359 points	= 70%-79%	=C
270 - 314 points	= 60% - 69%	=D
0 - 225 points	= 0% - 59%	=F

Grades of Incomplete:

I do not assign grades of incomplete in this course. Your grade will assigned based on the points you have earned from all completed work at that time. It is your responsibility to finish assignments prior to their due dates or to make alternate arrangements for their completion. Do not assume I can or will extend due dates or course requirements for your individual needs or preferences.

I do not drop students from my courses. If you feel Sociology 331 is not the course for you, please take the necessary steps to remove yourself from this class. Simply not participating or logging on, in hopes that I will remedy the situation for you will not occur. You are responsible for the consequences stemming from either coming to class, or not coming to class. [Student may submit a “drop request” through MyLeo.]

Important dates:

Last Day to Drop: February 27, 2014

Last Day to Withdraw from the semester: April 25, 2014

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

This is an online course and some obvious technological resources will be required.

You will need access to a computer with:

- Internet access (high-speed preferred)
- Word processing software (Microsoft Word 2007 or later preferred)
- Adobe Acrobat, or ability to open .pdf files

As a student enrolled at Texas A&M University-Commerce, you have access to an email account via **myLeo** - all my emails sent from eCollege (and all other university emails) will go to this account, so please be sure to check it regularly. Conversely, you are to email me via the eCollege email system or your myLeo email as our spam filters will often directly send yahoo, hotmail, etc. to junk mail, and I will not regularly check for your email in spam.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

eCollege Technical Concerns: Please contact the eCollege HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by sending an email directly to helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling (toll-free) 1-866-656-5511, or through the Online Chat by clicking on the "Live Support" tab within your eCollege course. [You may also want to click on the "compatibility test" button on the main page of eCollege to see whether your computer has all of the necessary programs to work with eCollege.](#)

Course Concerns: If you have questions pertaining to the content of this course (e.g., questions about a paper or discussion board, about course due dates, etc.), please contact your instructor via email: Yvonne.VRussell@tamuc.edu

Other Questions/Concerns: Contact the appropriate TAMU-C department relating to your questions/concern. If you are unable to reach the appropriate department with questions regarding your course enrollment, billing, advising, or financial aid, please call 903-886-5511 between the hours of 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

Participation & Communication: I expect each of you to be active and thoughtful participants within the learning environment (eCollege) and your learning community. You may expect the same of me.

1. **Email is the best way to reach me as I check it daily.** If you do not hear from me within 24 hours, please resend your message as there is a good chance it was lost in cyberspace.

Check your MyLeo email account regularly for announcements about our class!!! I will send course-related emails to myleo accounts only.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures

Attendance & Participation:

This is an online class. Although attendance will not be taken, it is crucial that you regularly visit the eCollege website and work independently to keep up with reading assignments. Regularly check your MyLeo email account for notifications about our class, too.

Late Work:

Written work is due by the day and time assigned. Late work will result in a loss of points, usually 10%. See specific assignment for details.

Statement on Student Behavior:

As stated in the Student Handbook: "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, for more information).

Academic Honesty:

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must work to provide an environment in which each student has the opportunity to be evaluated fairly on the basis of his/her own performance. University regulations regarding academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. **At a minimum, any student found to be in violation of academic honesty policies will receive a zero on the exam or assignment involved.** ALL instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to both the Department Head as well as the Dean of the College of Humanities, Social Sciences & Art. These offices may also wish to evaluate the case and decide punishment independent of this professor's actions. In short, cheating, plagiarizing and engaging in unethical student behavior carries a high price for such short-term rewards—don't do it!

*****If in doubt, check with your professor on citing procedures, format and style. See notes above about the use of turnitin.com in this class. See also the handout "how to cite" in document sharing for guidelines. Feel free to use any citation style you are familiar with: APA, MLA, ASA, and Chicago are all acceptable.**

A Note about final grades:

Final grades are assigned on the 90, 80, 70% scale noted above. These percentages and their corresponding grades are firm. That is, if your final average is a 68% you have earned a "D." Let me spare you the conversation that inevitably follows: No, I cannot and will not round your grade up to a 70% or a "C." Students often protest this act, saying they were "only 2 points shy of a passing grade." This is not exactly correct. In truth, they were 2 percentage points away from the next grade, amounting to being 8 raw points off. This is the equivalent of an entire grade difference on a major quiz. Percentage points and raw points are two very different things.

Extra Credit and Curving:

From this syllabus it is very clear as to the number of assignments and the possible points to be attained in the course. It is your responsibility to read, listen and comprehend the

material presented. If you do not understand a concept or issue, please ask me to clarify. It is important for you to be consistently diligent in your efforts throughout the semester.

I have never and will never curve the grades of a class to conform to an artificial bell curve or other objective or subjective standard, so requests to do so will fall on deaf ears. That means that it is the students' responsibility to prepare for the exams, to make sure that they have acquired all information possible through attending lectures and doing the readings, and that they perform to the best of their abilities on the exams. I will assist the class by means of lectures, and discussions, but I do not intend to manipulate your quiz score, drop a quiz score or inflate your quiz scores so that it will be more to your liking. An improvement of grades will come from *your* studying efforts, and not from your instructor's generosity in grade, so please do not expect or ask for more, or extra points in this course.

University Specific Procedures:

ADA Statement:

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce**

Gee Library

Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Reading & writing assignments are scheduled tentatively at this time. They may be changed, but advanced notice will be given in class. You are expected to read the assigned material prior to its discussion in class.

Print off this course outline and post near your computer for reference through the semester

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
February 3-7	Formulating Hypotheses; Deductive versus Inductive approaches to research	Babbie, pages 44-59 AND 90-102 AND 111-119 Review PowerPoint Lecture	1) Introduce yourself in the ungraded discussion board by Wednesday, February 5th 2) Research Proposal Worksheet Due by 11:59PM on Friday, February 7th
February 10-14	What is this thing called "peer-reviewed literature?"	Chapter 17: Reading and Writing Social Research	1) Database/Library Skills exercise due by 11:59PM on Friday, February 14th 2) Citing the literature exercise due by 11:59PM on Friday, February 14th

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
February 17-21	Learning to see the unseen: Conceptualization & Measurement	Chapter 5: Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement Review PowerPoint	1) Quiz 1- open from Tuesday through 11:59PM on Thursday, February 21st 2) Literature Review Exercise due by 11:59PM on Friday, February 21st
February 24-28	Sampling Techniques	Chapter 7: The Logic of Sampling Review PowerPoint	1) Quiz 2- open from Tuesday through 11:59PM on Thursday, February 28 th 2) Critiquing the literature exercise due by 11:59PM on Friday, February 28th
March 3-7	Work Week	Work Week!	You should be working on the Introduction and Literature Review section of your RESEARCH PROPOSAL
March 10 -17	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
March 17-21	Protecting Human Subjects: Ethics, IRB and informed consent	Chapter 3: Ethics and Politics of Social Research	1) Quiz 3- open from Tuesday through 11:59PM on Thursday, March 21 2) Content Files due by 11:59PM on Friday, March 21st
March 24-28	Surveys & Questionnaire Construction	Chapter 9: Survey Research Review PowerPoint	Quiz 4 – open from Tuesday through 11:59PM on Thursday, March 27 th
March 31-April 4	Work Week	Work Week	Survey exercise due by 11:59PM on Friday, April 4th
April 7-11	Unlearning science and turning it on its head: the inductive approach	Chapter 10: Qualitative Field Research	Quiz 5 – open Tuesday through 11:59PM on Thursday, April 10 th
April 14-18	Content Analysis	“Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis” on eCollege	Content Analysis exercise due by 11:59PM on Friday, April 18th
April 21-25	Observation	Chapter 11: Unobtrusive Research	Quiz 6 – open from Tuesday through 11:59PM on Thursday, April 24 th
April 28-May 2	Work Week	Reserve Reading on eCollege-TBD	Observation exercise due by 11:59PM on Thursday, May 1st.
May5-9 FINALS WEEK	Submit Final Research Project by 11:59PM on Wednesday, May 7th	Submit final research project by 11:59PM on Wednesday, May 7th	Submit final research project by 11:59PM on Wednesday, May 7th

