

Sociology 100-001 Research Methods Ross Koppel, Ph.D.

Fall 2004; T & Th, 10:30-12:00 University of Pennsylvania Department of Sociology
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Course Description. This course introduces the principles and practices of sociological research. The course examines the: logic and practice of research design, the relationship between theory and research, several forms of data collection, analysis of data, and the presentation of findings. We also discuss evaluation research, ethical issues involved with social research, and the uses of research. Students will use computers and the student version of SPSS to become familiar with statistical software programs. The course balances lectures and readings with in- and out-of-class exercises.

Office Hours. Thursday, 1:30-2:30 PM, before class, and by appointment. At the Social Research Corporation, I may be called during usual business hours: 215 576-8221. (This number sometimes rings at my home: please be kind.) Also, as students work on assignments, my office hours are extended.

Text. (At the Pennsylvania Book Center on 34th St., just above Walnut St; not at the University of Pennsylvania Bookstore/B&N.) Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research. Tenth Edition.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004 (packaged with CD *SPSS for Students*). In addition, the instructor will provide a *Guide to SPSS* and an edited volume, *Readings in Social Research Methods, Second Edition.* Diane K. Wysocki, editor. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004. The SPSS guide and the book of readings are provided by the publisher and will be distributed without additional cost. Also, the instructor will provide data, articles, readings, and other handouts to students in class, via the internet or disk, and via Blackboard. There will be a demonstration from Penn's librarian for the social sciences.

Course Requirements. An in-class midterm exam (as scheduled below) and a final exam (at the college-specified exam period). Written assignments will be required throughout the semester. Some assignments will require use of a computer. Those without access to a computer may use the Undergraduate Computer Lab (UDAL). The course grade will reflect: 1. the midterm exam (25%); 2. the final exam (30%); 3. two or three very short unannounced quizzes on the chapters [a boldface attempt to encourage students to read the assignments in a timely fashion] and participation in class (10%); and 4. completion of research assignments which will include classroom work and presentations; e.g., moderating an in-class focus group (35%). Note that the assignments are not of equal weight to the grade.

You are responsible for the assignments on the dates listed. Please see the assignments and due dates. You should read ahead in this syllabus: some assignments will require planning and extra time.

- Readings: B=Babbie; W= Wysocki. Others distributed in class or via the net.
- Sept 9 Introduction (No assignment)
- Sept 14 B Ch 1 - Human Inquiry and Science *and* Ch 2 – Paradigms, Theory and Social Research (Note that Babbie presents short summaries of several social theories in Chapter 2. You might be familiar with these theories but you certainly can't be expected to understand these theories from just the few paragraphs devoted to each. Read them with care but don't worry if they seem too condensed to appreciate the theories. They are too condensed.) Handout: ASR reference format W. Pages 13-18 "The reality of everyday life," Berger and Luckmann.
- Sept 16 B Ch 4 - Research Design; B Appendix A - Using the Library;
Assignment 1 due today.
- Sept 21 More on Research Design and Reviewing Scientific Literature
W. Pages 84-92. *Public assistance receipts among immigrants and natives: How the unit of analysis affects research findings.* Hook, Glick, and Bean.
Assignment No. 2 due today. In-class discussion of the assignment. Hand out of several literature reviews from a variety of articles in sociology, medicine and communications. Hand out of articles from professional journals. Begin to select a topic(s) for class research.
- Sept 23 B Ch 5 Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement. Discussion of your literature review. Also: you will be handed examples of literature reviews) W. Page 104-111 Conceptualization of Terrorism. Gibbs. Note: Article was published in 1989 – more than a decade before 9/11.
- Sept 28 Demonstration from the Social Science Librarian (*In the library or in class; location to be announced*)
- Sept 30 B Ch 6 - Indexes, Scales and Topologies. Discussion of class project.
Assignment 3 due today
- Oct 5 B Ch 7 - Sampling and The Logic of Sampling (This is a large chapter. You can finish your reading of it for next session)
- Oct 7 More on Sampling. **Assignment 3A due today**
W. Pages 159-166 *Sex in America.* Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, Kolata.
- Oct 12 B Ch 8 – Experiments **Assignment No. 4 due today** --The literature review.
- Oct 14 More on experiments. AND B Ch 9 - Survey Research & Appendix, "Twenty questions a journalist should ask about polls")

Oct 19	More on Survey Research and Administration; exercises in class. W. Pages 187-193 <i>Sex in America</i> . Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, Kolata.
Oct 21	B Ch 10 Qualitative Field Research. Assignment 5 due today . Midterm review.
Oct 26	Fall term Break: No Class
Oct 28	<i>Mid Term Exam</i>
Nov 2	Test Review and work on research for class projects in class. ^a .
Nov 4	B Ch 14 – Quantitative Data Analysis Assignment 5A due today
Nov 9	B Ch 15 - The Elaboration Model.
Nov 11	B. Ch 16 Social Statistics
Nov 16	More on Social Statistics. Class focus groups on class-selected topic(s)
Nov 18	SPSS in class. Also: Using and interpreting statistics
Nov 23	B Ch 11 Unobtrusive Research and B Ch 13 Qualitative Data Analysis. Assignment No. 6 due today
Nov 25	No Class: T-day
Nov 30	B Ch 12 Evaluation Research Assignments Nos. 7A, 7B, and 7C due today^b
Dec 2	B Ch 17 Reading and Writing Social Research. B Ch 3 The Ethics and Politics of Social Research
Dec 7	Class Project Presentations Assignment 8
Dec 9	Class Project Presentations Assignment 8 (for next group of students) Review for final
Dec 10-13	Reading period; Dec 14-20, Exam period. Exam as per university schedule.

^a **Class projects:** We shall discuss the class project. You will be asked, with your classmates, to develop a survey or other research instrument. You will collect some data in a protected setting (e.g., in class or other limited setting) and report on your findings.

^b **Assignments 7A-C** will be demonstrated in class. They should take only a few minutes of time with the computer if you are even vaguely familiar with SPSS or if you follow the instructions with reasonable care.

ASSIGNMENTS LINKED TO SYLLABUS FOR SOCIOLOGY 100. Fall 2004.

Assignment No. 1 Read closely one empirical paper from a current social scientific journal (e.g., American Sociological Review, Public Opinion Quarterly, Cultural Anthropology). Submit a one-page synopsis that also notes how the article you read fits Babbie's discussion of research methods and theory in Ch 2. Make sure that you reference the article in an acceptable format. (See handout of ASR reference format).

Assignment No. 2 .

Last digit of your Social Security No.	Assignment
1 – 2	Write two hypotheses about relationship between class and TV watching
3 – 4	Write two hypotheses about relationship between crime and the economy
5 – 6	Write two hypotheses about relationship between health and income
7 – 8	Write two hypotheses about relationship between size of college and quality of education
9 – 0	Write two hypotheses about relationship between voting behavior and newspaper reading

Assignment No. 3 You will be handed an article from a recent professional journal. Answer these five questions.

1. What is the author trying to do?
2. What is (are) the hypothesis(es)?
3. Did the author (s) support the hypothesis(es)?
4. What were the methodological difficulties that affected the research?
5. How would you cite this article in a bibliography or reference page? That is, give the full reference.

Your answers, in total, should be only about one-half to one page. *Don't worry about the statistics in the article; we'll cover these later and discuss them in class.*

Assignment 3A. Locate one or more newspaper articles reporting the results of an opinion poll. What does the article provide on the sample? What additional information would you need to know if the sample was representative of the population discussed in the article.

Assignment No. 4 Write a literature review of one of the topics we have discussed in class. The class will select one to four topics for research. You must have at least six references from serious professional journals.

The literature review should be about two pages, which does NOT include the list of references. There is no room for padding or poor organization. References must be in proper format. Please

see the handout from the American Sociological Review on reference style.

Assignment No. 5 Develop a brief survey on the topic for which you are writing the literature review. The survey will not be administered except in class as a pedagogic exercise. It should contain questions on basic demographics, one scale-type question, one open-ended question, one or two contingency questions, and four closed-ended questions. It should be about 1 or 2 pages long.

Assignment No. 6 Focusing on the topic of the class project. Explain how you might go about studying this issue. What is your research design? What technique would you use (survey, observation, secondary data, etc). What are the weaknesses in your research design? Note that this is intended as a short exercise – just one page.

Assignment No. 5A. Select a social or political topic that’s been in the news recently. Explain how you would perform a content analysis for this topic, using newspaper articles. Define the population, selection of units of analysis, sampling plan and key variables. Then, try your plan to refine the coding and analysis.

Assignments No. 7A (on SPSS) (With 7B and 7C). The assignment will involve simple data entry and presentation of summary data. (Hint: If you know what you are doing, this assignment will take about 10 minutes. It’s in your interest to ensure you are clear about this work before you sit down to complete this. A. Enter the data for 5 variables and 9 records (people) indicated below. B. Insert variables labels. C. Insert value labels. D. Calculate the means, modes, medians on all relevant variables

ID	V1NAME	V2HT	V3WT	V4AGE	V5SEX
1	SUE	60	100	21	2
2	BARB	64	120	21	2
3	BOB	68	150	23	1
4	SAM	67	155	23	1
5	PAT	61	120	22	2
6	ANN	65	125	21	2
7	HARRY	65	151	32	1
8	TOM	69	170	24	1
9	DICK	70	168	20	1

Assignment No. 7B More on data entry, “recodes” and summary presentations.

- A. Recode V2HT into a new variable called RV2HT to short (below 66 or below) and tall (above 66)
- B. Open the GSS dataset. Run frequencies, means, modes, medians, on the variables: “age,” “age of first wedding.”
- C. Run crosstabs with variables specified in class for your group. Specify the column percentage. Request a chi sq.
- D. Tell us what the crosstabs and statistics say, i.e., write a sentence or two in English explaining the findings.

Assignment No. 7C The assignment will involve basic data analysis.

- A. Open the Worldpop dataset Run correlation and scattergram on “literacy” (any of the literacy variables) and “male life expectancy.”
- B. Using the Worldpop dataset: Run ANOVA on religion and a “literacy” measure (e.g., male literacy, female literacy, adult literacy...)
- C. Tell us what the correlations and the ANOVAs say.
- D. Using this dataset: run bar graphs on the variable “religion”

Assignment No. 8. The **class project(s)**

