

**Sociology 312 (001): Elements of Sociological Research
Fall 2009**

Class Time and Place: MW 3-4:40; Communications 1020

Instructor: Jessica Abbott

Instructor's Office: Faner 3427

Contact info for Instructor: Phone 453-7624; Email ab1227@siu.edu

Instructor's Office Hours: MW 11:50-2:50, and by appointment

Course Description/Objectives:

Have you ever seen a newspaper heading starting with “A new study shows...?” In this class, we will learn how this new study shows whatever it shows. Particularly, you will be introduced to the various methods used to conduct social research. Upon completion of the course, you should be able to critique the methods discussed by authors in published research reports, present the link between theory and research, outline various techniques of collecting, analyzing, and presenting research, and finally, propose your own study.

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Goals:

Sociology 312 is a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) class in the College of Liberal Arts (COLA). COLA has two major goals for students in WAC classes: 1) to understand writing as not only a tool of communication, but also as a way to learn and a personal and intellectual process; and 2) “to develop the ability to think, argue, and write in a manner appropriate to a specific discipline.” In this class, you will have several writing assignments which culminate in a final paper. With each assignment, I will provide you with feedback not only to assist you in developing better conceptual and methodological insight, but also to strengthen your overall writing skills. Upon successful completion of the course, you will be able to construct a strong scientific paper. Additionally, other assignments will require other styles of writing (e.g., field notes from observations).

Required text:

McIntyre, Lisa J. 2005. *Need to Know: Social Science Research Methods*. McGraw-Hill.

Also, you will be responsible for reading several articles of your own choosing (for your final paper) and other articles required of the entire class (TBA).

Course Requirements:

ASSIGNMENTS

Throughout the semester, you will complete 10 assignments worth 10 points each. 6 of these assignments will go toward your final paper (to be revised before handing in the final paper), while the other 4 demonstrate your understanding of particular research techniques. Below are very brief descriptions of each assignment. Before each assignment is due, we will discuss what is expected of you more thoroughly.

Assignment 1: Research Question. For this assignment, you will turn in a general question that you would like your final research paper to assess.

Assignment 2: Hypothesis. After reading several articles related to your research question, you will make a prediction (hypothesis) about what you expect to find. You will turn in this hypothesis.

Assignment 3: Survey. In this exercise, you will construct and conduct a survey (N=10). You will turn in a copy of the instrument and a brief tally sheet of your findings.

Assignment 4: Introduction. This is the first major section of your final paper. In this assignment, you will write 2-4 paragraphs introducing us to the rest of your research paper.

Assignment 5: Literature Review. The literature review follows the introduction, and gives the audience an outline regarding what is already known about your topic. Here, you will review several articles that build up to your hypothesis.

Assignment 6: Content Analysis. In this exercise, you will conduct a content analysis on any media of your choosing (e.g., TV, newspaper articles, etc.).

Assignment 7: Participant Observation. In this assignment, you will hand in notes you took while observing a social setting.

Assignment 8: Methods section. The methods section of your final paper describes how you intend to assess your research question. You will turn in a draft of this section.

Assignment 9: Interview transcript. In this exercise, you simply need to interview someone (while audio-recording), and type up what was said. Also, point out the important themes emerging from the interview. I would highly recommend conducting a semi-structured interview.

Assignment 10: Instrument. Here, you will turn in the instrument(s) you intend to use in your final paper. You can choose your instrument from any of the application assignments already completed.

**These are very brief descriptions. Before each assignment is due, I will provide more detailed instructions.

EXAMS

You will complete two exams in this class: the mid-term and the final. Each exam will consist primarily of multiple choice, true/false, and matching questions. In addition, there may be 1-2 short essay questions on each exam.

FINAL PAPER/PROPOSAL

The final proposal (we'll discuss this more thoroughly later) builds on some of the assignments mentioned above ("assignments" section). The proposal will mimic a typical academic article, though it will be shorter and will not include an analysis/results and discussion section. Overall, the proposal should span approximately 12-15 pages and be comprised of the following sections: Abstract, Introduction/Literature Review, and Methods.

Grading

Assignments (10 assignments, 10 points each): 100 points total

Attendance/Participation: 100 points

Mid-Term Exam: 100 points

Final Exam: 100 points

Final Paper/Proposal: 200 points

Total Possible Points: 600 points

A= 540-600

B=480-539

C=420-479

D=360-419

F=0-359

Attendance/Participation

At the beginning of each class, I will take attendance. You have 3 free misses before points begin to be deducted from the 100 points allotted for attendance/participation. Also, you are expected to be engaged with the material we discuss in class. Before each class, read the chapter to be discussed so that you can contribute to thoughtful discussion.

Classroom Respect:

Please turn off cell phones upon entering the classroom. Also, to ensure a conducive learning environment, refrain from speaking to your neighbor, text messaging, etc.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is taking someone else's work and using it as if it were your own. This is unacceptable in this course. If you believe you have mistakenly plagiarized on an assignment or the final proposal, please see me.

Emergency Procedures

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT'S website (www.bert.siu.edu), Department of Public Safety's website (www.dps.siu.edu [p-disaster drop down]), and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

August 24-26

24: Introduction to the course

26: How to look up articles via lib.siu.edu

August 31-Sept 2

Chapter 1: Why You Need to Know: An Introduction

Sept 7-9

7: Labor Day holiday (NO CLASS)

9: Chapter 2: The Nature of Scientific Enterprise

Sept 14-16

Chapter 3: The Logic of Inquiry

Sept 21-23

Chapter 4: The Vocabulary of Science

Sept 28-30

Chapter 5: Doing the Right Thing—Ethics in Social Research

Oct 5-7

5: Research Question discussion

7: Introduction/Literature Review Discussion; Research Question due

October 12-14

Chapter 6: Sampling

October 19-21

19: Chapter 7: Elements of Research Design; Hypothesis discussion

21: Mid-Term Exam (covers chapters 1-6)

Oct 26-28

26: Chapter 9: Survey Research: The art of Asking Questions; Survey discussion

28: Chapter 10: Survey Research: Design and Implementation; Hypotheses due

Nov 2-4

NO CLASS: Work on surveys and literature reviews

Nov 9-11

9: Introduction, Literature Review, and Survey due; Chapter 11

11: Chapter 11: Unobtrusive Methods; Content Analysis discussion

Nov 16-18

16: Chapter 12: Qualitative Methods

18: Chapter 12, cont.; Content Analysis due

Nov 23-25: NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break

Nov 30-Dec 2

30: Participant observation notes due; discussion of findings

2: Methods section due

Dec 7-9

7: Instrument due; Final Exam Review

9: Interview transcript due; Final paper discussion and review

Dec 14-18: Final exam week

Final exam date and time TBA

Final paper due on the day of final exam

**This schedule is subject to change according to progress made throughout the semester.

Reminder of Important Dates

