

Sociological Research Methods
Summer 2008
4 credits
T/Th 3:35-5:25
Anderson Hall 330

Instructor: Maureen Clark
Office: 972 Social Sciences Tower
Office Phone: 612-624- 1049

Office Hours: T/Th 1:00-2:30 or by appointment. I will also be available after class for any questions or concerns. However, when you try to conduct business with me in the moments before class starts, I sometimes feel harried and can't give your question or issue the attention it deserves. It's much better if you visit me during office hours; make an appointment to discuss your concern, or to send me an email.

Email: clar0514@umn.edu

The University expects that all students regularly check their student e-mail accounts. I expect that you all have, use and understand your e-mail account. If you are unfamiliar with e-mail, your university account or the internet in general, please come see one of us. I will be using your e-mail accounts to send you important notices. Please let me know if this will be a problem for you.

- Email is the best way to contact me.
- According to department policy, we cannot accept papers by e-mail or fax.

**My office does not have voice mail, so if it is an emergency leave a message with the Sociology Main office.

Sociology Main Office: 909 Social Sciences Tower
Sociology Main Office Phone: 612-624-4300

Course Blog: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/clar0514/class/>

This site will give you access to assignments, course updates, the syllabus and other course materials.

Discussion Labs

- Discussion Section 2

Lab time: T, 5:40-7:30

Blegen 430

TA: Meg Krausch

Office #: Social Sciences 1058

Email: kraus310@umn.edu

Office Phone: 612-624-1895

Office Hours: T 1:30-3:15, Th 2:15-3:15

- Discussion Section 4

Lab time: Th 1:25-3:15

Blegen Hall 210

TA: June Msechu

Office #: Social Sciences 1058

Email: msech002@umn.edu

Office Phone: 612-624-1895

Office Hours: Th 11:30-1:00

Course Synopsis and Goals: The goal of this course is to familiarize you with the logic and tools of analysis in the social sciences. We will discuss the ethical concerns involved with social research, learn to ask good research questions, to analyze research studies and learn a variety of research methods. You will also be expected to understand the principles of conceptualization, measurement, sampling, causality, operationalization and what counts as evidence. The core component of this course is the Research proposal. We will be working over the course of the semester to define and find good research. I hope that many of you may use this Research Proposal as the basis of your Senior Project (for Sociology Majors mostly). For more info on the Senior Project http://www.soc.umn.edu/undergrad/senior_project.htm

Course Goals:

- Analyze research articles and critique the use of theory and method
- Understand the concepts, terms and definitions of Sociological Research
- Use the practices and techniques of research
- Produce a Research Proposal that could be used as the basis of your Senior Project
- Learn how to write a good Sociological paper
- Enjoy practicing Sociology

Course Expectations:

- Define key terms and concepts.
- Expand ability to express ideas in writing.
- Exposure to multiple research methods
- Refine writing
- Practice oral presentations
- Use what we learn in class to analyze the world around you.
- Learn to use your Sociological Imagination
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Required Text:

Babbie, Earl. 2008. 4th edition. *The Basics of Social Research*. Thomson Wadsworth.

Suggested Text:

The Sociology Writing Group. 2001. 5th edition. *A Guide to Writing Sociological Papers*. Worth.

I suggest a Writer's reference book and/or a style manual. My favorites are:

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference* Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press. (You can purchase the book at this website. There are also some very useful writing exercises, tips and links to other useful sites.)

<http://www.dianahacker.com/writersref/>

American Sociological Association Style Guide (available at this website)

<http://www.asanet.org/pubs/ref.html>

Uof M Student Writing Guide

<http://writing.umn.edu/docs/sws/swgpdf.pdf>

Course Expectations and Policies

Participation:

You are expected to participate as active participation will increase your grasp and retention of course material. Small group work, oral presentations, short writing assignments and worksheets are all intended to help your retention of the material. In research methods, the best way to learn is by doing.

Respect:

Due to the real life nature of subjects of study by sociology, I expect you to have opinions and positions on various topics. I encourage everyone to present his or her views. To allow others to feel safe in this classroom, I ask that you use tact and understanding when presenting your ideas. Someone in this classroom may have been or currently is affected by the particular social circumstances we are discussing. Anyone who becomes out of control or verbally abusive will be asked to leave the classroom. This should not discourage discussion of any topics, but through mutual respect for the opinions and experiences of others, we will be able to discuss even the most sensitive of subjects.

Missed Exams:

Make ups will only be granted if you have written documentation for an excused absence (for example, funerals, school activities, or illness.). Please e-mail the instructor explaining the situation as soon as possible. If possible, please make arrangements in advance. For more information see:

<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/semclasses.html>

Scholastic Misconduct/Cheating:

By being a student at the University of Minnesota, you have agreed to the University's Student Code of Conduct. Thus, you have agreed not to participate in scholastic misconduct. Scholastic misconduct can include: collaborating on assignments without the instructor's permission, cheating on tests, essays, or papers, plagiarizing (misrepresenting someone else's work as your own), or interfering with another student's ability to complete course work. If you engage in scholastic misconduct, you can receive an F for the course and actions at the University level can be taken. This is a serious matter and the TAs and I will take it seriously. More information can be found at:

<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/grades&acadwork.html>

Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment is prohibited at this University and is a crime. The University's policy and definition of sexual harassment can be found at:

<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/scfa/sexualharassment.html>

Incompletes:

Except under extreme and documented circumstances, such as a prolonged illness or death in the family, I do not give out incompletes. If circumstances arise in which you think you will not be able to complete the course, you need to speak with me as soon as possible. An incomplete requires a written contract between the student and the instructor.

Support Services:

Disabilities:

I encourage students with disabilities to contact me at the beginning of the semester (preferably before the first assignment). I am committed to making this class accessible to everyone. Along with disability services (listed below) I can arrange to make this class work for you.

Physical or Learning Disabilities: Disability Services, 30 Nicholson Hall, (612) 626-1333

Test Taking:

Skill Building, test-anxiety, counseling, etc: Learning and Academic Skills Center

104 Eddy Hall, (612) 624-7546

University of Minnesota Counseling Program:

109 Eddy Hall (612.624.3323) <http://www.uccs.umn.edu/counsel> UCCS Counseling program helps students with their concerns and offers an opportunity to talk with an experienced counselor who can help students select and achieve goals for personal and career development. The center offers three types of counseling: personal counseling, academic counseling and career counseling. The Learning and Academic Skills Center offers class, workshop, and individual assistance aimed at helping students achieve academic goals.

Resources for Student Writers

Student Writing Support: 306b Lind Hall and satellite locations varying by semester (612.625.1893) <http://writing.umn.edu>.

A service offering face-to-face tutoring for all University of Minnesota undergraduate and graduate students by appointment in Lind Hall. Two ESL specialists and one IT specialist are on staff. Links to additional writing resources are available on SWS website.

Student Writing Guide: A guidebook providing student writers with detailed, step-by-step guidance through the writing process and lists numerous writers' resources. Available on the web in pdf at:

<http://writing.umn.edu/docs/sws/swgpdf.pdf> or at the Center for Writing, 207a Lind Hall, (612.626.7579), writing@umn.edu.

Online Writing Center: <http://www.owc.umn.edu>

A service offering writing consultations via e-mail and online resources for students' writers and their instructors. Available for graduate and undergraduate students.

General College Writing Center: Academic Resource Center, 11 Appleby Hall

(612.624.0342) <http://www.gen.umn.edu/resources/arc/writing/>

This service offers one-to-one tutoring on a walk-in basis or by appointment. Available to students outside of GC, including graduate students, on a limited basis.

University Libraries: <http://www.lib.umn.edu> The ultimate resource for research, the University library has five major facilities and eleven branch sites with a wealth of reference materials, online resources, books, articles, newspapers, microforms, government documents, maps and more. Librarians are available and happy to help orient students to all aspects of the library system. You can find research assistance at <http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu>. The library tutorial, Quickstudy, is a self-paced tutorial covering the research process at the University of Minnesota Libraries. It starts with selecting a topic for a paper and ends with citing sources for a bibliography. Hands-on research tutorials with a research librarian are also available. Sign up at <http://lib.umn.edu/registration/>. These workshops focus on effectively using MNCAT, the library catalogs, the Expanded Academic Index, and more.

Non-Native Speakers: 337 Nolte Center(612.624.4524)

http://composition.cla.umn.edu/student_web/

Non-Native Speakers (NNS) in need of assistance or guidance with writing concerns can contact

Sheryl Holt, the Coordinator for Non-Native Speakers (holtx001@tc.umn.edu) NNS student might also find answers to their writing-related questions on the Composition Program's NNS link: http://composition.cla.umn.edu/student_web/. Student Writing Support also has NNS specialists to help you with your writing: <http://writing.umn.edu>

Course Work

Credits and Workload Expectations

Students are expected to spend approximately three hours of learning effort per credit hour per week (averaged over a full semester) to achieve an average grade in a course. Thus, students in this class should expect to spend an additional twelve hours a week on coursework outside of lectures and discussion sections.

Format and Citation for Course Papers

- **Paper Format:** All papers should be typed, double-spaced, with a 12 inch font with 1 inch margins. Please help save a person's sight. Double-space. Please put your name on the right hand side of the front page. You do not need a title page for any of the papers.
- **Citation:** I'm not picky about what style you use. I use the American Sociological Associations style. But you can use MLA or some other format. YOU MUST follow one standard format throughout your paper!!! If you are still confused about which format to use, come see me.

Exam:

The exam will be 30 multiple choice questions.

Assignments: There are five assignments to complete this semester. You may complete any or all of the assignments early.

1. Refworks-Due first week. Each student must sign-up for a refworks account. <http://www.lib.umn.edu/site/refworks.phtml>
Students will automatically receive points for this assignment. If it is found that you did not sign up for a refworks account through the library you will lose the 5 points.
2. Critical Analysis of a Research Article – Due July 1st. Assignment available on course Blog.
3. Exercise 5.1- Due July 15th. Assignment available on course Blog.

The next two assignments are more flexible. The can be student designed; which really just means I have to ok your paper topic/method first. You may also work in small groups (no larger than 4). Of course if you work in a group you will be expected to complete a larger project, each person has to contribute to and understand each part of the process and your grade will be based on the paper submitted by the group.

4. Interview/Survey- Due July 21st. You will be asked to write an interview guide/schedule or a survey. You will also be asked to do a small project involving your questionnaire. The assignment will be available on the course blog.

5. Existing Data Analysis –Due Aug. 19th . Here you will need to analyze some pre-existing data source. If you use Secondary data you will need to run the descriptive statistics. If you are using qualitative data you will need to analyze a sample of that data. This assignment will be available on the course blog.

Research Proposal: the research proposal is just a document that states how, where, when and why you will conduct research. The research proposal is composed of four papers you will complete over the semester: Research Question/Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, and Conclusion The goal is to convince readers that you have read the relevant literature, your questions has not been answered by another researcher or you have something to add to someone’s research, and that your question is important. A convincing research proposal turns into a Senior Project or (in my case) a dissertation. To actually do research you must write a paper about doing the research...thus a research proposal. This course is writing intensive so it also requires that we practice the art of revision. After you write a section of the proposal you will be asked to revise the paper and turn it in with the next paper. As the semester goes on you will continue to revise earlier drafts and compose each of the new sections of the proposal. Part of your grade will be on how well you revise each section of the paper. *These papers will not be in the final paper.

***Topic statement paper:** What is it that interests you? What can hold your attention for not only this semester but possibly a second? You will write a short description of the topic/topics that interest you, are feasible (time, money, access to data), and deal with some sociological topic (once again this covers just about everything, in some way). The paragraph will elaborate on your topic, details of what you might study and discusses why you see the topic as important.

Problem Statement paper (or the Introduction to your paper): Here you will be expected to refine your topic to a/couple research question(s). You will also need to introduce your readers to the topic and why it is important to study. Obviously homelessness is an important issue, but why is it important to you and why should we do more research on the topic?

***Annotated bibliography:** This is a list of all the academic resources you have found useful in learning about your topic. You must write a description of what the source is about, how it addresses your specific research question and what it contributes to your overall understanding of the research that has been done on your topic. Here we are looking to see if you have good (peer reviewed) academic research. Because this is a sociology class you will be asked to have a significant number of sociological sources.

Literature Review: The writer critically evaluates existing research on a topic, what is good and bad about the current research and identifies how they will add or build on existing research.

Methods paper: Here you will propose how you will answer your question. What data will you use? Which method is most appropriate and why? How does the method help answer the question?

Full draft of research proposal: The full draft consists of Four parts:

- Problem statement/Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methods
- Conclusion: The conclusion will include where you will go from here, what you would suggest for other researchers looking at this topic, what you would do differently if you had no limitations.

Three of these components will have been reviewed by peers and Your TA or I. You will need to make the necessary corrections based on the comments you receive to finalize the paper. The final paper should have few grammatical/style/content problems. It is expected that the final paper will have been rewritten from the first drafts.

Readings: Students are required to complete the readings before class. Students who do not complete all of the week's readings will find it difficult to keep up in class. I chose this book because I find it much more readable than other texts. I hope that the book will help explain concepts that we will be discussing in class. I expect class participation and that means you will need to keep up on the readings.

Lab Sections: Students are expected to attend all Lab sections. Lab sections will utilize materials covered in the lecture section of class, so students who miss class may have some difficulty in the lab section. We will be using small-group discussions, active learning, peer review and other activities in Lab. These activities will help clarify concepts, terms and ideas and help you to understand and retain the course material. Please come to class ready to share your ideas, opinions and acquired knowledge. Students will be expected to fully participate in order to receive class participation points. I believe that lab sections are an integral part of this course. We will be using labs to work on our research proposal and discussing our research in labs. Verbal communication is an important skill that professionals need. The ability to communicate with people from a variety of backgrounds will be an asset to your professional development.

Peer Review: You will be expected to evaluate your peers work. You will exchange papers with a student in your lab and will be graded on your feedback. You will also be expected to give an oral report of your progress before you exchange papers with your peers. Peer review lets you practice a common requirement of social scientists and that is to evaluate each others work carefully and considerately. Peer Review also allows you to see how and what other students are studying. This allows you a better framework in which to understand your own work. There will be three peer review sessions in Lab.

Student Presentation of Research Proposal: After you have completed your methods paper you will be asked to give a short 5-10 minute presentation about your research proposal. Most researchers are asked to give a brief presentation of their work. It is important that you can summarize your work and discuss it with other people who are not as interested or specialized in your topic. When you present your work to others in a public forum you are forced to look at your work from an outsider's perspective. It also requires you to present your information in a coherent and concise way; which translates to a better written paper.

Grades:

	Points
<u>Research Proposal</u>	
Topic statement paper	5
Problem Statement/Intro paper	10
Annotated bibliography	10
Literature Review	15
Methods paper	15
Full draft of research proposal	20
<u>Peer Review</u>	
Problem Statement	5
Literature review	5
Methods	5
Student presentations in lab	5
<u>Assignments</u>	
Reworks account	5
Critical analysis of a Research Article	10
Exercise 5.1	10
Interview/survey schedule	10
Existing data analysis	20
Midterm	30
Lab	20
Total Points	200

Grading Policy:

According to the college-wide policy determined by the University's Faculty senate

A - achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

B - achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

C - achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.

D - achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

S - achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better (achievement required for an S is at the discretion of the instructor but may be no lower than equivalent to a C-.)

F - (or N) - Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I (see also I).

I - (Incomplete) Assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, a student is prevented from completing the work of the course on time. Requires a written agreement between instructor and student.

Grade Distribution:

95-100 = A

90-94.9= A-

87-89.9= B+

83-86.9= B

80-82.9= B-

77-79.9= C+

73-76.9= C

70-72.9= C-

67-69.9= D+

60-66.9= D

Less than 60=F

Grade Disputes: If you would like to discuss a grade dispute please type an explanation of why you lost points and why you believe you should receive points. We will then set up a time to discuss the grade together.

Important Dates:

June 19th

Individual Refworks accounts

June 26th

Topic Statement paper

July 1st

Critical Analysis of research article paper

July 10th

Problem statement/Introduction

July 17th

Annotated Bibliography

July 24th

Exam

July 15th

Exercise 5.1 assignments due

July 29th

Interview/Survey assignment due

July 31st

Literature Review

Aug 14th

Methods paper due

Aug 19th

existing data assignment due

Aug 12th

Start, in Lab, student presentations of research proposal

Aug 21st

Final draft of research proposal

Aug 21st

Last day of student presentations

Some tips

1. I will not remember that you were absent and will not fill you in on what you missed.
2. I will not answer personal questions during class i.e. Why did I get this marked wrong on my quiz?" "What's my grade for this class?" Please visit office hours for these types of questions.
3. Please do not ask me if "we are doing anything important today?" I love Sociology. To me, every class is important.
4. Telling me, "I don't understand **anything** in the book," will not elicit a helpful response. Please think of specific questions so I can help.
5. I will not repeat a lecture for you privately or make my power-point lectures available to students.
6. I will not automatically bring you handouts for any days you missed. Please e-mail me if you missed a handout. I can usually send most documents electronically, or stop by my office for a hard copy.
7. I do not accept late assignments. Computer meltdowns, act of GodThere are no excuses.
8. I am easily distracted and students coming into class late really disrupt the classroom environment. In addition, I make all important announcements in the beginning of class.
9. If you must leave class early, please let me know in advance.
10. One of my biggest pet peeves is students talking to classmates during a lecture. If you need clarification please ask me. If you have a question it is likely you are not alone.
11. Please do not sleep or do homework during class.
12. Please do not pack up your book, pens, etc. before the end of class.
13. There is no excuse for being unprepared for class. If you are confused about an assignment or a due date for an assignment please ask for clarification.
14. I expect you to read before coming to class. I will not be covering all of the major points during my lecture. I will answer any questions that you may have about the text.
15. I will expect students to participate in discussion during class. Please say your name before you make your comments so we can all get to know one another.
16. I expect reaction papers to be stapled. Papers that have paper clips often get attached to other things and lost. I will not have a stapler in class.
17. Telling me that you 'tried hard' on an assignment will not result in a higher grade. I expect that everyone tries hard.
18. Please be respectful when e-mailing either your TA's or myself.

19. Please turn off cell phones during class.

20. Feel free to eat during class.

Reading Schedule

Week One

June 17th

First Day

- What is a Research Proposal?
- How do I come up with a research topic?
- What is the difference between a research topic and a research question?

June 19th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 15

- Library day!!!
- How do I find research?
- How do I find GOOD research?

Labs- Introductions and choosing a topic and research question.

Week Two

June 24th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 1

June 26th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 3

- Tuskegee Project

Lab: Ethics/theory/Science

Week Three

July 1st

Read: Babbie Chpt. 2

July 3rd

NO CLASS!

No Labs

Week Four

July 8th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 4

July 10th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 5

- Sampling: Or fun with numbers!
- Measurement- what counts as a widget?

Lab: Bring copy of Problem Statement

Week Five

July 15th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 6

July 17th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 7

Week Six

July 22nd

Read: Babbie Chpt. 8

- Experimental design
- What is a Sociological experiment?

July 24th

Midterm

Labs- Experiments and Supersize Me

Week Seven

July 29th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 9

- Surveys
- Structured interviews
- What *does* America think Ted?

July 31st

Read: Babbie Chpt. 10

Lab: field research/ Peer Reviews bring copy of Literature Review

Week Eight

August 5th

Read: Babbie Chpt 11

August 7th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 12

Lab: Evaluation research/ Peer Reviews

Week Nine

August 12th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 13

August 14th

Meet with Maureen, Meg or June during class time

Lab: Bring copy of Methods paper to lab

Labs- What does sexy mean, exactly and how do we measure that?

Week Ten

August 19th

Read: Babbie Chpt. 14

August 21st

Final Class!

Full draft of research proposal