

Sociology 293: Social Research Methods
Spring 2019
Tuesday & Thursday 9:30-10:50AM
Classroom: 106 Clemens Hall

Instructor: Aysegul Balta Ozgen
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Office: 405 Park Hall
Office Hours: Mondays 2:00-3:00 p.m., Tuesdays 11:00-11:50 a.m., or by appointment

Required Reading: Babbie, Earl. 2016. 14th Edition. *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. The book is on reserve in Lockwood Library for two-hour use. Purchase or rent of earlier editions are also acceptable to ensure affordability. Additional readings are provided through the course website on UBlerns.

Course Description: This course is about using scientific rigor to examine the world around us. It requires re-evaluating everyday methods of gathering information and drawing conclusions and using theory, causal modeling, and carefully collected data to arrive at logical, complete, and better-supported explanations of events and social phenomena. Students will learn about and practice doing sociology. The skills developed provide the foundations necessary to conduct professional research and to become better consumers of information.

Course Objectives and Assessment:

By the end of this course, students should be able to ...	Method of assessment ...
Identify the strengths and weaknesses of a research method being employed for a research study	Two exams over entire semester, Assignment 2 and 3, Final Project
Understand ethical issues that may arise in the course of research	Completion of chapter on Ethics and Politics of Social Research and questions on Exam 1
Critically evaluate published social science research, with an emphasis on the methods used to answer research questions	Exam 2
Understand where data come from, how they are analyzed, how we evaluate truth claims, and what constitutes systematic evidence that is valid and reliable	Completion of chapter on Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement, two exams over entire semester, Assignment 1, 2, and 3
Identify a variety of sociological methods and determine which methods might best answer certain research questions	Completion of chapters on Sampling, Survey Research, Qualitative Research, Unobtrusive Research, and Quantitative Data Analysis, Exam 2
Understand the fundamentals on how to design a social research project	Final Project

Course Evaluation

Course Grade: Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

1. **2 Exams (each worth 15% of the final grade - in total 30%):** There will be two non-cumulative exams in this course. The second exam will be given in the final exams week, and it will not be cumulative. The exams will contain multiple choice and short answer questions. These questions will cover material assigned in readings as well as any information covered in lectures, class discussions/activities, and media. I will distribute review sheets and hold review sessions before exams which will help you prepare for the exams.

Do not miss the exams! The exam dates are fixed, and a missed exam will result in a zero. If you know you will not be able to take an exam on the fixed date, please let me know 48 hours before the exam date or sooner. If there is an emergency on the day of the exam, contact me within 24 hours after the exam. I may ask for documentation to prove your claim, so be prepared to provide it. Make-up exams will be given on a case-by-case basis. Again, make-up exams will only be given in emergency situations at my discretion.

2. **3 Written Homework Assignments (each worth 10% of the final grade - in total 30%):** Throughout the semester, you will be required to complete three homework assignments. These assignments allow you to engage with the logic and practice of research. Each homework assignment will be posted on UBlerns. You will submit the **electronic** copy of your typed assignment to UBlerns **and** bring a **hard** copy to class on the due date **by the beginning of the class period**. 25% is deducted for each 24 hour period of late submissions.
3. **1 Final Project (30% of the final grade):** You will be required to complete a qualitative final project in which you will choose a topic, identify a research question, prepare interview questions, interview two individuals, transcribe the interviews, identify at least two scholarly articles addressing your topic, and write an analysis. You will submit your final paper to Digication as part of your ePortfolio. Detailed instructions and a grading rubric for the final project will be posted on UBlerns.
4. **Attendance and Participation (10% of the final grade):** Attendance and participation is both necessary and expected to perform well in this course. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class; therefore, you need to be on time. You can have 3 unexcused absences without penalty. After that, I will take 1 percent off from your grade for each absence. Documented and excused absences for emergencies or illness will not result in a point reduction as long as you provide written appropriate proof. If you were absent, it is your responsibility to obtain the material you missed from your peers. Please do not email me and ask me to review via email what you missed in class.

Receiving Grades: Grades for the exams will be posted on UBlearns. Scores will not be communicated via email or telephone. I will return your graded papers in class with comments. You may find an excel workbook on UBlearns which you can use as a tool to calculate your final grade. I formatted it using a formula to calculate the grade weights described above, therefore please do not change or delete the formula.

Disputing Grades: If you wish to dispute a grade on an exam or paper, please email me to set up an appointment to discuss it. Please be prepared to explain your specific academic reasons for disputing your grade.

Calculating Final Grade: Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage
A	94 - 100 %	C	74 - 76.99
A-	90 - 93.99	C-	70 - 73.99
B+	87 - 89.99	D+	67 - 69.99
B	84 - 86.99	D	60 - 66.99
B-	80 - 83.99	F	0 - 59.99
C+	77 - 79.99		

Course Policies

Syllabus: This syllabus is a contract between you and me. Please read it carefully after our first class. The syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. With the exception of exam dates, the schedule is subject to change to accommodate the possibility that some chapters could require more time, class cancellations due to snow, etc. In case of a change I will notify you by email and upload the revised syllabus to UBlearns. If you have a question about the course first read the syllabus carefully before asking me. It is highly likely that you will find the answers to your questions in the syllabus.

Class Expectations: Students are expected to attend all class sessions, read all assigned readings prior to the class session in which they are discussed, actively participate in class discussions and activities, and complete all required assignments in accordance with established guidelines. For readings, you are expected to take notes on the main ideas, bring questions to class if you do not understand something, and think about how the reading is applicable to your own life, to current events, or to the current political/social context. Reading the syllabus and handouts and keeping track of dates for tests and assignments is your responsibility. **Check your e-mail and UBlearns regularly.**

Contacting the Instructor: You can reach me by email at aysegulb@buffalo.edu. I will check my email regularly and you can expect a response within 24 hours on weekdays. You can also come to my office hours listed at the top of this syllabus or set up an appointment to meet. Remember that email is an official form of university communication. I am much more likely to respond to your email if you offer me the

same kind of respect as you would in person. You are emailing an instructor, not texting a friend. I expect you to use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation in an e-mail.

Electronics: Use of phones, laptops, tablets or similar electronic devices are not allowed in class. Experience shows that electronics become a distraction rather than an aid, therefore I no longer allow them in the classroom. Doing things like checking facebook or shopping online during class is rude and distracting to other people around you and me. You must turn off your cell phones and put them out of sight during class. I will allow use of electronics only for note-taking purposes if you have a disability documented by the Accessibility Resources. International students may use electronic dictionaries with my permission. Otherwise, each time I see you using your electronic devices I will deduct 1 percent of your participation grade.

Lecture Slides: I will put the lecture slides on UBlearns before each class but not in their entirety. Visuals, maps, graphs etc. that you cannot reproduce in your notes will be on UBlearns. However, you will not be able to understand what we discussed in class only by looking at the posted slides in case you miss classes. This is not an online course, so it is still your responsibility to attend class and to take hand-written notes during lectures. Taking pictures of the slides during lectures is not allowed.

Class Participation: I expect you to perform in this class to the best of your ability. This means participating in discussion in ways that reflect that you have done the readings, paid attention to the lectures and discussions, and listened to other students. Please ask clarifying questions if you are confused. Please raise thoughtful questions for conversation. Please stay awake and tuned in.

Reading assignments: Research shows that we learn best when we read actively - holding a pen in our hands, underlining important passages, making comments in the margins, taking notes on notepaper, sketching outlines, etc. Therefore, I strongly recommend that you print out the readings on UBlearns to read closely. As you read, you should take hand-written notes. In your notes, you should try to identify the main argument that runs throughout the reading and some specific examples that support the argument. You also should try to identify and define the key concepts. For a useful study guide, see: www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/howtostudy.html

I also suggest you read this short article on UBlearns to figure out ways of becoming a successful student: Putnam, Adam L., Victor W. Sungkhasettee, and Henry L. Roediger, III. 2016. "Optimizing Learning in College: Tips From Cognitive Psychology." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 11(5): 652-660.

Classroom Etiquette: You are expected to be polite and respectful to your instructor and fellow students at all times. This includes being respectful when someone asks a question or expresses an opinion, even if you disagree with that opinion. This also means arriving to class on time and being attentive during class so you do not distract others. Please do not arrive late, or pack up or leave early. If you get to class late, or

must leave early, please do so very quietly. Please do not eat and drink during class time.

Trigger Statement: “In this class, we will be dealing with controversial issues that might make some students uncomfortable. We will read some texts, complete some assignments, and watch some video clips that may use explicit language and that will definitely explore controversial topics. While I understand that at times you may feel discomfort, I expect that you will keep an open mind and be willing to think critically. **This means that you should appreciate the process of scientific inquiry and understand how this process is distinct from defending or promoting personal beliefs. A climate of respect for all persons and groups is expected in course work and classroom behavior.** If you anticipate being unable having strong political, religious, or other objections that will prohibit you from interacting with course material in an academic manner, you should see me or re-consider your enrollment.”¹

Showing Up Late for Exams: No student will be allowed to take an exam if they show up after a student has already completed the test and left the room. Please come on time!

Academic Integrity Policy: I have no tolerance for cheating and plagiarism. If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing on an exam or an assignment, this will result in a minimum of a zero on the assignment, and I will formally report you to the University. I reserve the right to use plagiarism detection software on all coursework submitted to me.

Please see the university’s policy on academic integrity: “Academic integrity is a fundamental university value. Through the honest completion of academic work, students sustain the integrity of the university while facilitating the university’s imperative for the transmission of knowledge and culture based upon the generation of new and innovative ideas.

When an instance of suspected or alleged academic dishonesty by a student arises, it shall be resolved according to the following procedures. These procedures assume that many questions of academic dishonesty will be resolved through consultation between the student and the instructor (a process known as consultative resolution, as explained below).

It is recommended that the instructor and student each consult with the department chair, school or college dean, or the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Affairs if there are any questions regarding these procedures.” For more information, see: <https://catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/integrity.html>

Accessibility Resources Policy: If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please inform me early in the semester so that we can coordinate the accommodations you may need. If you have

¹ Cited from Dr. Ashley Barr’s SOC362 syllabus

not already done so, please contact the Accessibility Resources office. The office is located at 60 Capen Hall and the telephone number is (716) 645-2608. For more information, see: https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/who-we-are/departments/accessibility.html#title_173379012

Incomplete Policy: A grade of incomplete (“I”) indicates that additional course work is required to fulfill the requirements of a given course. Students may only be given an “I” grade if they have a passing average in coursework that has been completed and have well-defined parameters to complete the course requirements that could result in a grade better than the default grade. An “I” grade may not be assigned to a student who did not attend the course. Prior to the end of the semester, students must initiate the request for an “I” grade and receive the instructor’s approval. Assignment of an “I” grade is at the discretion of the instructor.

Thinking about a Major or Minor in Sociology, Criminology, Social Justice or Society, Medicine and Health? Requirements and descriptions for all of our programs can be found on our website: <http://sociology.buffalo.edu/undergraduate/>

To major in sociology, you must: (a) earn a “C” or better in four required courses: SOC 101 (Introduction to Sociology), SOC 293 (Social Research Methods), SOC 294 (Basic Statistics for Social Sciences), and SOC 349 (Sociological Theory); and (b) complete eight sociology electives, seven of which must be at the 300- or 400-level. To minor in sociology, you must: (a) earn a “C” or better in SOC 101 (Introduction to Sociology); and (b) complete five additional sociology electives, four of which must be at the 300- or 400-level.

We also offer a BA/MA degree in applied social research. See the website for details: <http://sociology.buffalo.edu/undergraduate/bama-in-applied-social-research/>

Course Calendar

WEEK1

Tuesday, January 29 Introduction
Thursday, January 31 Ch.1: Human Inquiry and Science

WEEK2

Tuesday, February 5 Ch.1: Human Inquiry and Science
Thursday, February 7 Ch.17 Reading and Writing Social Research / Quiz 1: Syllabus

WEEK3

Tuesday, February 12 Ch.2: Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research
Thursday, February 14 Ch.2: Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research

WEEK4

Tuesday, February 19 Ch.3: The Ethics and Politics of Social Research
Thursday, February 21 Ch.4: Research Design

WEEK5

Tuesday, February 26
Thursday, February 28

Ch.4: Research Design
Ch.5: Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement

WEEK6

Tuesday, March 5
Thursday, March 7

Ch.5: Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement
Ch.7: The Logic of Sampling
Assignment 1 Due: Causal Diagrams

WEEK7

Tuesday, March 12
Thursday, March 14

Ch.7: The Logic of Sampling & Review and Recap
EXAM 1

WEEK8

Tuesday, March 19
Thursday, March 21

SPRING BREAK
SPRING BREAK

WEEK9

Tuesday, March 26
Thursday, March 28

Ch.10: Qualitative Field Research
Ch.10: Qualitative Field Research
Final Project Step 1 Due: Identify Your Research Question

WEEK10

Tuesday, April 2
Thursday, April 4

Ch.13: Qualitative Data Analysis
Ch.13: Qualitative Data Analysis
Final Project Step 2 Due: Prepare Your Interview Questions

WEEK11

Tuesday, April 9
Thursday, April 11

Ch.11: Unobtrusive Research
Ch.11: Unobtrusive Research

WEEK12

Tuesday, April 16

Ch.8: Experiments
Assignment 2 Due: Making, Recording, and Interpreting Observations

Thursday, April 18

Ch.8: Experiments

WEEK13

Tuesday, April 23
Thursday, April 25

Ch.9: Survey Research
Ch.9: Survey Research

WEEK14
Tuesday, April 30

Ch.14: Quantitative Data Analysis
Assignment 3 Due: Evaluating and Writing Survey Questions

Thursday, May 2

Ch.14: Quantitative Data Analysis
Final Project Step 3 Due: Submit Interview Transcriptions

WEEK15
Tuesday, May 7
Thursday, May 9

Ch.14: Quantitative Data Analysis
Review and Recap - no new readings
Final Paper Due

FINAL EXAM:

Date: 5/16/2019, Thursday
Time: 8:00AM - 11:00AM
Room: Clemens 106

Final Project Instructions

The purpose of the final project is to encourage you to apply social research methods to understand everyday experiences. This assignment will show your understanding of the key course concepts, your willingness to engage with them outside the class, and your ability to use these concepts to analyze and evaluate the world around you. Therefore, it matters very little to me *what* you conclude in your analyses; rather, I care about *how* you make the conclusions you do. What evidence do you draw upon? What concepts do you invoke? Do you consider and address counterpoints or alternative conclusions?

You are going to conduct a qualitative research with help of in-depth interviews for this project. Your first task is to choose a sociological issue that interests you. Be sure it is a topic that you are interested in; nothing will be more boring and difficult for you than to research a topic that you did not take the time to really think about. Then you will identify a research question, prepare interview questions, interview two individuals, transcribe the interviews, identify at least two scholarly articles addressing your topic, and write an analysis.

Due Dates

Thursday, March 28	Step 1: Identify Your Research Question (4% of the final grade)
Thursday, April 4	Step 2: Prepare Your Interview Questions (4% of the final grade)
Thursday, May 2	Step 3: Submit Interview Transcriptions (7% of the final grade)
Thursday, May 9	Step 4: Submit the Final Paper (15% of the final grade)

You will submit your assignments to Ublearns and bring a hard copy to class on the due date at 9:30 am. Do not email me your assignments, submit them to Ublearns. I need **both** the soft and hard copy. Let me explain the reason: I need the soft copy through Ublearns because I use the SafeAssign tool to check for plagiarism. I need the hard copy because I need a pen in my hand while grading; grading on the screen is very distracting for me. You will also submit your final paper to Digication as part of your ePortfolio. 25% is deducted for each 24 hour period of late submissions.

Formatting: Please use 12pt font and single-space your work. The length of your final papers should be 2000-2500 words. Do not exceed 2500 words. Include your name, course number, and date in the header margin at the top of the page. You should have numbered pages, left justified, word count at the end of the essay (do not include titles or references in the word count). Include a meaningful title. Your writing should be in essay format; essays have paragraphs and structure, including introductions, body of the work, and conclusions. Most paragraphs are devoted to the development of a single theme or idea. Do not give away points carelessly! Write your paper, proofread it carefully (or have someone else proofread it for you), then grammar- and spell-check your paper one last time before you submit. Your assignment must be typed in Word (.doc or .docx, no other format is permitted). Name your file with your own name in the filename. That is, do not just name your file "Essay1.doc," name

your file like this: Aysegul_Balta_Essay1.doc. (Put your name, not mine!) Essays should be written in formal academic English, no bullet points.

I have **no tolerance** for plagiarism. If you are caught plagiarizing, this will result in a minimum of a zero on the assignment. Cite everything properly. If you do not know how to cite in ASA style, check the citation guides in the folder titled Academic Socialization on UBlearns.

Essential components:

Step 1: Identify Your Research Question

Select a sociological issue that interests you, and come up with a research question about this issue. Your research question should yield itself to answer with help of in-depth interviews. You will interview only two individuals, that means your sample will be very small. Therefore, do not expect to be able to generalize about the bigger population. Try to gain insight about experiences, processes, mechanisms, or dynamics instead. Typical qualitative research questions include “How do ABC narrate and reflect upon XYZ?” Specify the population you aim to study, and keep it narrow. I will give you feedback on your research question, and then you will revise it in order to continue with the second step.

Step 2: Prepare Your Interview Questions

Before you start interviewing people you need your interview questions. Your interviews should be about 40-50 minutes long. For that you typically need 5-10 interview questions. Your role will be mostly listening. You should ask good questions to encourage people to tell you longer stories. Instead of asking yes/no questions you should ask what, why, and how questions. If your respondents tend to keep their answers short, you could probe with questions such as “Can you give me some examples?”

Step 3: Submit Interview Transcriptions

What people will tell you in the interviews will be your data. In order to be able to analyze the data you must first record the interview and then transcribe the recording in its entirety. Make sure you ask people’s consent first. **Never** record anything without people’s permission! You would want to conduct the interview in a quiet place, so that background noise does not interfere in your audio-recording. You will transcribe everything word by word. This will be a very time-consuming activity, so start planning your schedule as soon as possible. You can also take detailed fieldnotes including your own feelings, and ideas about your positionality within 24 hours before you forget the details. Your observation notes and interview transcriptions are going to be your data for the paper.

Step 4: Submit the Final Paper

(1) Description of the topic and the research question: In the paper, describe the setting adequately and clearly, well enough so that someone unfamiliar with the topic has a clear picture of what you intend to analyze. Tell why you selected that topic,

and how it is relevant for sociology. Keep that short. Have a thesis statement somewhere in the introduction. State your argument explicitly and clearly.

(2) Explanation and application: Identify and explain at least two sociological concepts in relation to the interviews you conducted. At the very least, use sociological perspectives on social locations such as race/ethnicity, class, age and/or gender in your essay.

Find and use at least two recent (2005 or later) articles related to your topic from scholarly sociology journals. You may use the article to explain the concepts or theories better, or to provide more evidence to support your argument. If you do not know how to identify a scholarly source, consult the sociology librarian or the Academic Socialization handouts on UBlearns. Include appropriate citations and references in ASA style. Cite and reference all sources you used.

(3) Evaluation and synthesis: Make a critical argument using the sociological concepts you identified and explained. This argument should illustrate your understanding of the concepts in the context of the interviews that you conducted. In other words, the interviews will be your data and you will make an argument based on the data. You should support your argument with the evidence coming from your data. You may also identify a counterargument or an alternative understanding of the data. Draw upon adequate evidence clearly and convincingly to support your argument.

Grading Rubric of the Final Paper

Format, grammar/spelling:	15 points
Clarity and substance:	35 points
Course concepts/good examples:	35 points
Appropriate citations/references:	15 points