



Essential Research Methods for Social Science

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SHORT COURSE DESCRIPTION

What makes people happy? Why do some people drink too much? What motivates people to buy and students to study? How should our society address poverty? They are just a few of the questions that social science researchers with good knowledge and skills will be more than happy to tackle and answer. This course is designed to provide a foundation of such research skills and methodologies for all major social science fields, such as psychology, sociology, business, economics, anthropology, education, social work, political science, and communication. Students from other science fields, such as natural science, life science, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, and nursing, also will find this course relevant to the basic research knowledge and skills required in their respective field.

The course will address main concepts and methods in social science research, such as research ethics, literature review, various types of research designs (survey, experiment, interview, focus group, observation, etc.), measurement, sampling, and data collection. No prior knowledge of advanced mathematics and statistics are needed. This course will survey many of these areas through fun-filled class activities rather than “boring” lectures.

READING MATERIALS

The textbook for this course is called *Social Science Research*. This book is part of the Open Textbook Library. The textbook is entirely online, completely free to you. The website for the book is here: <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/social-science-research-principles-methods-and-practices>.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Class meetings include discussion of the readings, some brief lectures, workgroups, and student presentations and/or facilitation of discussions and activities. They are interactive, and participation in class is an essential part of the learning process. Active engagement and open communication about ideas are critical for growth and development in this course!

Evaluation

| | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| In-Class Quizzes | 20 points |
| Exam 1 (in-class exam) | 30 points |
| Exam 2 (presentation) | 30 points |
| Class participation | 20 points |

Grading

| | |
|---------------|------|
| 60-100% | Pass |
| Less than 60% | Fail |

- There will be more than 10 quizzes taken in class across the course, each worth 2 points. Ten highest quizzes will be used for the final grade, totaling 20 points.
- Exam 1 will consist of definitions, short answer questions, and research case study. Detailed instructions will be provided in class. It is OPEN-BOOK!
- Each of you will be randomly assigned to a small group. At the end of the final week, each group will discuss/present the key ideas from their group projects. Detailed instructions will be provided in class.

- **Students must attend at least 80% of all classes to pass.** Arriving late or leaving early will be considered missing. Each class missed with non-emergency will result in a two point reduction per each from the final grade. It is expected that students will notify the instructor in advance or after when and why they miss a class. The instructor will decide whether any missing is an emergency.
- **Academic honesty is required at all times.** Plagiarism is unacceptable. Plagiarism is using another person's ideas or creative work without giving credit to that person. It includes 1) paraphrasing information from a source without referencing the source, 2) copying and pasting Internet information, graphics or media into your work without citing the source, 3) using someone else's homework, papers you or someone else has written for another class, or buying papers or research you did not do and turning it in as if you had done the work yourself, and 4) not putting quote marks around parts of sources you copy exactly. If your instructor believes you have committed an act of academic misconduct, s/he may give you a penalty grade, which is defined as any grade based on a charge of academic misconduct. A penalty grade may include, but is not limited to, a failing grade on an assignment or in the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

– WEEK I –

Thursday (27 June)

Course introduction

- Reading: Ch 1 – Science and scientific research

Friday (28 June)

Main concepts of research

- Reading: Ch 2 – Thinking like a researcher

– WEEK II –

Monday (1 July)

Research process

- Reading: Ch 3 – Research process

Tuesday (2 July)

Research design

- Reading: Ch 5 – Research design

Wednesday (3 July)

Measurement

- Reading: Ch 6 – Measurement

Thursday (4 July)

Good research

- Reading: Ch 7 – Scale reliability and validity

– WEEK III –

Monday (8 July)

Sampling

- Reading: Ch 8 – Sampling

Tuesday (9 July)

Mid-term in class exam (open book)

Wednesday (10 July)

Survey research

- Reading: Ch 9 – Survey research

Thursday (11 July)

Experimental research

- Reading: Ch 10 – Experimental research

– WEEK IV –

Monday (15 July)

Interview and observation

- Reading: Ch 12 – Interpretive research

Tuesday (16 July)

Qualitative data analysis

- Reading: Ch 13 – Qualitative analysis

Wednesday (17 July)

Quantitative data analysis

- Reading: Ch 14 & 15 – Quantitative analysis

Thursday (18 July)

Research ethics

- Reading: Ch 16 - Research ethics

Friday (19 July)

Final exam – In class presentations

Course wrap-up; Celebrations of your achievement!!!