Soc 327 (Spring 2016)
Introduction to Social Research (online)

Instructor: Bill Grigsby, Department of Anthropology/Sociology
Contact info/Office hrs: Ackerman 202F; Tu 2:00-3:30; W 2:30-4:00 or by appointment
Prerequisites: Soc 204 and 205.

Catalog description: Survey of basic social research strategies with emphasis on collection and analysis of data, including its effective presentation.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding of the role of research in producing social scientific knowledge and theory
- Familiarity with accepted methods of conducting social research
- Practice in designing an inquiry, collecting and analyzing data
- Experience in proposing a research project, from formulating an answerable question to planning the specific details of tying your proposal to existing research and theory, sampling, choosing a method, analyzing data, and anticipating outcomes, obstacles, and limitations

The subject matter of this course is critical to understanding both why Sociology is a social science, and the ways in which information, knowledge and theory within the discipline are generated. Students will spend some portion of time actually doing research, learning from mistakes, considering alternative methods and approaches, grasping the basic principles of social research, and interpreting and critiquing our work.

Required text

- Amy Blackstone. 2015. Principles of Sociological Inquiry: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. Saylor Foundation (licensed under Creative Commons by 3.0)
- I will assign a few additional readings that will be accessible in Canvas.

Class format

Online discussion and ‘field’ work (outside the ‘classroom’).

Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Dates/detail</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation/analysis assignment</td>
<td>due Apr 10</td>
<td>Write-up of observations and analysis</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey/interview assignment</td>
<td>due Apr 24</td>
<td>Write-up of survey/interview you conducted</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review: annotated bibliography</td>
<td>due May 8</td>
<td>At least 5 peer-reviewed sources</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft proposal</td>
<td>due May 29</td>
<td>Draft of research proposal, submit in Canvas</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review of draft proposal</td>
<td>due June 2</td>
<td>Review a peer’s proposal, submit in Canvas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final research proposal</td>
<td>due June 6</td>
<td>Submitted before midnight in Canvas</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly discussion forums</td>
<td>due Mon.</td>
<td>1-2 threads weekly, each worth 15 pts</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion forums: Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling, grammar, paragraphs, etc. 5 pts/wk</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning assignments in on time</td>
<td></td>
<td>Five assignments, 4 additional pts for each</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course evaluation (mine, extra credit)</td>
<td>due June 9</td>
<td>Points based on percent of class completing eval.</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total | 500
Grading procedures

‘The A students get hired by the B students, who end up working for the C students.’ Al McGuire

I will grade on a straight percentage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>450-500</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89%</td>
<td>400-449</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>350-399</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>300-349</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 60%</td>
<td>&lt; 300</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Minuses will be given for the bottom third (0-3) of each range; pluses for the top third (7-9). I will also use pluses and minuses to help if I feel that one's grade did not reflect his/her effort; I will not use them to reduce a grade. You need at least a C- if you’re taking this as part of your anth/soc degree program.

Assignment descriptions

Observation/Analysis (Due April 10)

You will need to make some observations in one of these locations: family dinner; workplace (provided there are people in it); classroom setting; restaurant/bar; ‘interactions’ driving in the car (with other motorists, traffic); little league sporting event; grocery store outing; church service. Chances are you’ll be writing these up after the observation period (unless you’ve chosen to solely observe rather than be part of the setting). Begin your write-up of 2-3 pages describing in as much detail as possible the setting (location, time, atmosphere, etc.). Then you will need to respond thoughtfully to the following questions:

- **Introduction**: What did you set out to do? What were you looking for (what kinds of observations were you trying to make)? What did you expect to find?
- **Setting**: Describe it in as much detail as is relevant to your observations (i.e., don’t need a description of a dining room table unless it shapes how people interact).
- **Method**: How did you record observations (notes later on, video, audio, etc.—make sure you have consent if your method is not unobstrusive)?
- **Results**: What did you find? Who were the social actors (age, gender, race/ethnicity, familiarity to you, etc.)? What kinds of interactions prevailed between people?
- **Discussion**: What did you find most interesting? What did you learn (about people, people in the setting, etc.)? What might limit your ability to generalize? What problems did you encounter trying to observe/understand the setting?

Worth 50 possible points. I will be looking to see that you followed the assignment, and put intellectual effort into your write-up. Due **Sunday, April 10** in Canvas.

Survey or Interview (Due April 24)

You have two options: either to develop a one-page survey (must fit on one side of one sheet), or conduct a 15-30 minute interview. If you choose the survey you need to give it to at least five respondents. For the survey:

- **Introduction**: What is the social significance of your survey (that pesky so what? question)? Is the survey tied to any theory—do you have any hypothesis you’re testing?
- **Method**: Survey, obviously, but in what form? Print? Online? Telephone (I’d suggest the first or second)? All four survey question types should be represented (attitude, knowledge, behavior, attribute). You need to briefly justify each question’s inclusion, how questions were constructed and ordered, how you will analyze the responses. How would you sample for this survey ideally? How did you sample (discuss sampling issues)? You might consider using Google Forms as a means to construct and administer the survey—a good tool to learn. Make sure on your survey you have a brief consent/confidentiality statement.
- **Results**: Report what you learned from your survey, present it in a coherent way, with tables or whatever helps you make sense of it.
Discussion: What did you learn, about your small sample, about creating a survey, the questions you asked, the questionnaire, etc? What might you have done differently based on what you learned?

For the interview: an expert at something (a 15-30 minute interview)

Introduction: Discuss two things, first what you hope to learn from the interview. Most everyone is an expert at something, and your job is to conduct an interview that draws out a person’s expertise (this could be a child playing video games, someone who juggles, a speed-reader, but someone who’s accomplished at something). Second why you chose the person you chose, and how he/she is an expert (schooling, training, practice, etc.). You should have at least five questions ready at the start of the interview, but be prepared to prompt and follow-up on information that is important to understanding the subject’s expertise. Make sure you have the person’s consent and keep actual identity to yourself (assure confidentiality).

Method: an interview, but lay out the setting in which it occurred, justify the choices you made about that setting down to the seating arrangement, how you recorded it (notes, audio recording, etc.), what you did with the data (did you transcribe it as a text document? Was it already in text form from notes? How did you go about analyzing or making sense of the data?).

Results: Discuss what you learned from the interview as far as the person’s expertise is concerned. If you did your job well, you should have unique insight into how a person becomes an expert in something, as well as the specific area of expertise.

Discussion: How did the interview process go? Take notes after you finish the interview, were there areas you wish you had explored in more depth, any awkward or especially memorable moments, what did you notice about the subject during the interview, and about your own thought processes. What would you have done differently, based on what you learned?

Worth 50 possible points. Again, as with assignment 1, did you put thought and effort into the assignment? Due Sunday, April 24th in Canvas.

Review of literature (annotated bibliography, due May 8)

You need to read at least five peer-reviewed pieces of scholarship, either from a book (usually the first chapter lays out the book’s thesis, you might also look for an academic review of the book), or journal articles. These should be related directly or indirectly to your own research question. So:

- Start with a short paragraph of your research question and your approach to answering it. Then include the five annotated sources.
- Begin each entry with a full citation for each source you’ve included.
- Summarize each source (don’t just copy and paste the abstract, though, your audience is me, not the journal readership), discuss the methods used in doing the research
- Explain how the source relates to your own research question (justify why you chose it), and how it informs your research proposal and chosen method(s).

50 points possible, Due Sunday, May 8th. Each annotation should be at least 200 words in length.

Term project: Research Proposal (draft due May 29, final June 6)

Sections to be covered (by this point in the course the format should look familiar):

- Introduction: Discussion of the problem/issue/phenomenon that your research proposes to address. The Introduction should be leading up to a statement of your research question (and if you’re happy with it from the class discussions, your justification and explanation of it).
- Literature review, applicable theory: You’ve already done this, if you didn’t change your topic without the instructor’s knowledge. May have to add a few things you’ve learned since then, make sure you cite all the sources you ended up using to inform this proposal.
  - Applicable theory—Did you discover any theoretical approaches that seem to apply to your research question/topic? Where would your study add to that body of knowledge? Did you use it to inform your inquiry, methods?
- Methods: You’ll need to describe and justify the research method(s) you proposed, discuss issues related to sampling, discuss in detail methods of data collection and any ethical, logistical or other issues, discuss how
you intend to analyze the data you collect, and tie your method(s) back to your research question (I will definitely be looking for that when I grade these).

- **Discussion**—You’re not actually doing the research, so you will need to discuss what you anticipate in terms of results, problems you encountered or expect to encounter, limitations of the study (i.e., given more time and resources, what would you have done differently or in addition to improve the likelihood of generating valuable knowledge), what you learned in this process, what you might have done differently, etc.

- **Miscellaneous**—I will be evaluating your writing, and your citations need to be complete, APA style.

A draft is due **May 29th**, and the final version **June 6th**. **20 points possible for the draft and 10 for reviewing a peer’s proposal (send me the file with comments).** The draft needs to be complete—that is, all the sections above represented), 100 points possible for the final version. **A note on the due date for the final version:** Yes, it’s in the middle of Memorial Day weekend. Unfortunate timing, but necessary. If it’s going to be a problem for you, plan for it so you can simply submit it two days earlier.

**Policies, expectations**

**Academic integrity**

The university’s official position: Eastern Oregon University places a high value upon the integrity of its student scholars. Any student found guilty of academic misconduct (including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, or theft of an examination or supplies) may be subject to having his or her grade reduced in the course in question, being placed on probation or suspended from the university, or being expelled from the university--or a combination of these. (see section II of the 2002-03 Student Handbook, p. 32ff, and p. 41 ff).

*My interpretation:* Plagiarism is taking credit for work, ideas, papers, that are not yours. Universities make lots of literature available for a nominal fee, the bargain being that if you use the ideas of others, you'll credit them. So it isn't just wholesale theft, but as the above says, deception, misrepresentation, etc. Be sure you're familiar with what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it. The Purdue University Online Writing Lab ([https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/)) includes a wealth of resources on citing sources and avoiding plagiarism. I recommend you look at it before you turn in papers in this class or others. If you're caught plagiarizing, you'll receive an 'F' on the assignment and possibly for the course. So if you're having problems in class, please come see me before you turn to the Web . . .

‘Attendance’

This course is very much a week-to-week experience. There are discussion forums every week, and assignments due during the term that we’ll discuss as students have questions. If you disappear from this process for a week here or there, you’ll have a harder time keeping up.

**Due dates and late assignments**

Assignments are expected in Canvas (submitted according to guidelines) on the day they're due. It’s in your interest to submit them on time—each assignment submitted before the due date/deadline earns you four additional points (up to 20 points for the class). Technically these aren’t attached to the four assignments, but *they are not extra credit points*. I’m assigning points for submitting work on time. Consider it the inverse of assessing a penalty for turning in assignments late—more a reward for being on time (*po-tay-to, po-tah-to, I know*). There will be a submission link in Canvas to use. Don’t use technology as an excuse, and make back-ups copies of important files.
Expectations

I will justify my lecture pages and reading material, assignments, etc., by showing its relevance to the overall course outcomes. I’ll make an effort to provide a civil environment for discussion of ideas, try to engage your intellect, impart personal experiences relevant to course material, and be generally accessible, approachable, and clear and precise about course expectations. With respect to coverage of content, I tend to emphasize depth over breadth—I would rather cover less points thoroughly, at a reasonable and engaging pace, than pledge strict allegiance to a course schedule.

In turn I expect students will do their own work, use or develop critical thinking skills and be able to express them on paper or in class discussion, ask when unclear or in disagreement on a concept, and either exhibit college-level writing skills or seek help to improve them. I’ll look for progress in developing abstract thinking skills and students' abilities to focus on the “big picture”—key concepts delivered in class, their relevance to course material, the real world, etc. Discussion in class will focus on ideas—we can debate people’s ideas in a respectful way, but personal attacks on individuals will not be tolerated. You’re expected to show respect to everyone in the class (goes for them, too, right?). If you have questions about what’s appropriate in class, follow the Golden Rule.

Students with disabilities

Any student requiring assistance or accommodation from me in performing course-related work should make his/her needs known to me in a timely manner. If you have a documented disability or suspect that you have a learning problem, you are entitled to reasonable and appropriate accommodations. But you must work with the Disabilities Services Office (Pat Arnson, Director, parnson@eou.edu, or Tracie Paddock, tpaddock@eou.edu). Find them in Loso Hall 234 (962-3235).

Drop Policy

A student may drop from a course for any reason with no record on the student’s transcript before the end of the 4th week of the term. Thereafter, a student must withdraw from the course (see withdrawal policy). A student may withdraw from the 5th week of the term through the 7th week with a grade of "W" indicated on the transcript.

No withdrawals will be issued after the 7th week of the term. Instructors will issue a letter grade (A-F, or I) for all students enrolled after the 7th week. A student making adequate academic progress during the term and needing to withdraw after the 7th week may request an incomplete from the instructor.
## Tentative Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>wk</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Discussion (20 pts possible/wk)</th>
<th>Assignments (due Sunday evenings)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to social research</td>
<td>Blackstone Chps 1-2; Best 86-99</td>
<td>Readings; Observation assignment</td>
<td>Assignment given: Observation, readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Ragin (2011), Chp 3 (Canvas)</td>
<td>Readings; Peer review of observations (min. 2)</td>
<td>Report on observation 50 pts (Apr 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Formulating your research question</td>
<td>Blackstone Chps 4-5</td>
<td>Research question/human subjects request</td>
<td>Assignment given: 5-question survey or interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Literature: what’s been done</td>
<td>Blackstone, Ch 8.1-4; 10.1-4</td>
<td>Readings;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Literature: annotated bibliography</td>
<td>Best, 17-40; articles/sources for your proposal’s lit review</td>
<td>Peer review of literature reviews (1)</td>
<td>Literature review 50 pts (May 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Research design and sampling</td>
<td>Blackstone, Chp 7</td>
<td>Readings; Research Proposal (final project)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Concepts, measures</td>
<td>Best, 41-63; Blackstone, Chp 6</td>
<td>Readings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Best, B, 64-85; 8.5; 10.5;</td>
<td>Proposals—checking in</td>
<td>Draft proposal 30 pts (May 29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Blackstone, Chp 10</td>
<td>Re-considering first assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal 100 pts (June 6)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>