
SOC 332 – Methods of Social Research

Summer 2019 – Term 1

Instructor: Maria C. Ramos

Class Time: M-F 12:30 a.m. – 13:45 p. m.

Class Location: Room 326 – Allen Building

Instructor Email: mcr34@duke.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

What is this course about?

This course will prepare you to evaluate and design research projects to answer social science questions. Step by step, we will walk through how to find and read research articles efficiently, how to assess existing research, how to formulate your own research questions and hypotheses, and how to design research that answers questions that interest you. Each week, we will discuss short readings about core concepts and methods in social science research. Classes will include lecture and a wide variety of hands-on individual and group activities to help you apply what you learn to real scenarios. By the end of this course, you will be able to formulate your own research question and produce a research proposal to answer it.

What will I learn in this course?

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Use prior theory and literature to formulate empirically testable research questions and hypotheses.
2. Locate, evaluate, and synthesize relevant research from academic sources.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of social science research designs in their ability to answer a given research question.
4. Evaluate social research measurement instruments in their ability to adequately measure social concepts.
5. Design a social science study that: (1) effectively addresses a proposed research question and hypotheses and (2) complies with guidelines for ethical research.

How can I be successful in this course?

Set apart enough time to do the readings closely. Be fully present during class to take advantage of the exercises and activities. Turn in your drafts and proposals on time. Incorporate the feedback you receive in every revised draft of your project.

I am committed to your success on this course. Please, do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any help in your learning journey.

What required texts, materials, and equipment will I need?

There is no textbook you need to purchase for this class. Instead, we will be using the following creative commons licensed textbook:

Blackstone, Amy. 2012. *Principles of sociological inquiry—Qualitative and quantitative methods*. Saylor Foundation. ISBN 13: 9781453328897.

You can find a copy of this textbook on Sakai's Resources Folder. Other assigned readings will either be posted on Sakai or can be accessed through Duke's Library using the link provided in the "Tentative Schedule" table at the end of this syllabus.

How will my grade be calculated?

Memos – They are a "thinking on the page" opportunity to critically engage with the course contents and explore how they relate to your own interests and project. Memos should contain a minimum of 250 words. There are four memos in total. Memos make up 20% of the final grade (5% for each memo turned in on time).

Drafts of Research Proposal – Our best work comes from rethinking and reworking our first version of it. Drafts of different pieces of your research proposal allow you to think about your design early and often so that you can revise it and produce your best work. Throughout the course, you will share with the class a total of four drafts. With the help and feedback from your instructor and peers, you will improve your drafts. Turning in each edited draft on time makes up for 10% of your final grade (40% of the grade for all 4 drafts).

Final Proposal – The final proposal combines drafts 1, 2, 3, and 4 and a Discussion and Conclusion Section into a document of 2500 words or more. Detailed instructions for developing your proposal are available on Sakai. Your proposal will be graded using the rubric posted on Sakai. The final proposal constitutes 20% of your final grade.

In-class Participation –All in-class activities and exercises are designed to help you craft your research proposal. For this reason, regular class attendance and engaged participation are crucial for your success in this course. To receive full participation credit for a session, arrive to class on time and fully engage in all activities and exercises. After every class session, you will receive a score between 0-100 according with your compliance with classroom policies and engaged participation in activities. I will drop your lowest three participation grades. This means that you can miss up to three sessions without penalty. Each absence after the third will result in a 1-point deduction from your final grade. In-class participation constitutes 20% of your final grade.

Grading scale:

Grade	Points	Interpretation	Grade	Points	Interpretation
A+	97-100	Exceptional work	C+	77-79.9	Satisfactory work
A	94-96.9		C	74-76.9	
A-	90-93.9		C-	70-73.9	
B+	87-89.9	Superior work	D	60-69.9	Low passing work
B	84-86.9		F	0-59.9	Failing work
B-	80-83.9				

What are the course policies?

Duke's Community Standard – Duke University is a community dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. We are committed to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and non-academic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity. Violations of Duke Community Standard include but are not limited to cheating and plagiarism (representing the work, words, or ideas of others as one's own). I will report violations of the Duke Community Standard to the Office of Student Conduct.

Use of laptops and electronic devices – We will use laptops on a regular basis. Please use your laptops and other electronic devices during class only for class-related activities.

Late/make-up assignment policy – Late work cannot be accommodated. Note that you can turn in assignments early if you have a conflict.

Disability – Students with disabilities who may need accommodations in the class are encouraged to contact the Student Disabilities Access Office (SDAO) at 919.668.1267 or disabilities@aes.duke.edu. There you can engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations both in the classroom and in clinical settings. Please note that accommodations are not provided retroactively. More information can be found online at <https://access.duke.edu/students>. Students with documented disabilities should contact SDAO as soon as possible to ensure accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Contact – Please contact me via email at mcr34@duke.edu. I will respond within 24 hours, Monday through Friday. For setting up individual appointments, use Sakai's sign-up tool. I include plenty of time slots for your convenience. If none of the time slots work for you, please contact me via email to set up a meeting.

Classroom Policies– Classroom etiquette is one of the ways in which you can show respect and support for your classmates. You and other students will benefit from participating in an active and positive learning community. In order to build such community, students are expected to: (1) come to class on time; (2) wholeheartedly engage in all individual and group activities; (3) avoid interrupting other students or making any negative remarks when they are participating; (4) avoid having private conversations or any other behavior that might distract other students from the subject; (5) raise their hands in order to speak to the class.

What campus resources can help me during this course?

Duke offers several resources and support services you may find useful. Some of these include:

The Thompson Writing Studio offers free, collaborative, non-evaluative writing consultations to all Duke students and all visiting college students at any stage of a writing process—from brainstorming to drafting to revising. This is a valuable resource designed to help you become a better writer. Students may schedule appointments – including same day appointments – by using the online appointment calendar at <https://twp.duke.edu/twp-writing-studio>. Appointments are held in Perkins 112, Monday through Thursday. Both face-to-face appointments and real-time online appointments are available.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers free services to all Duke undergraduate students. Services include learning consultations, peer tutoring, study groups, ADHD/LD coaching, and more. Contact the ARC at theARC@duke.edu or call 919-684-5917.

Other useful resources and services include: Counseling and Psychological Services (<https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/caps>), the Student Health Center (<https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/studenthealth>) the Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity (<https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/csgd>), the Center for Multicultural Affairs (<https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/cma>), and the Women's Center (<https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/wc>).

What is the expected course schedule?

This is a living syllabus. The content of the syllabus and tentative schedule might change according to the circumstances.

Tentative Schedule		
Session	Date	Class Topic, Readings, and Assignments
1	15-May	Introduction to the Course No reading/assignment due
2	16-May	The Logic of Social Research I Due: Read chapter 1 – Ruane, Janet, M. 2016. Introducing Social Research Methods: Essentials for Getting the Edge: Hoboken, NJ: WILEY Blackwell. Available through Duke Libraries https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE008533327
3	17-May	The Logic of Social Research II Due: Memo 1
4	20-May	Research Ethics Due: chapter 3. Blackstone
5	21-May	Theory and Social Research Due: chapter 2. Blackstone
6	22-May	Theory and Social Research Due: Read chapter 3 - Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. The Craft of Research: Chicago: University of Chicago Press Available through Duke Libraries https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE004318560
7	23-May	Developing Research Questions Due: Memo 2
8	24-May	Workshop: Developing Research Questions Due: chapter 5. Blackstone
27-May Memorial Day Holiday. No classes are held.		
9	28-May	Reviewing the Literature I: Finding Relevant Material Due: Draft 1 - Your research question
10	29-May	Reviewing the Literature II: Reading Relevant Material and Organizing Information Due: project specific set of readings
11	30-May	Reviewing the Literature III: Synthesizing Information Due: project specific set of readings
12	31-May	Workshop: Literature Review Due: project specific set of readings

13	3-Jun	Measurement: Conceptualization and Operationalization Due: chapter 6. Blackstone
14	4-Jun	Measurement: Reliability and Validity
15	5-Jun	Sampling Due: chapter 7. Blackstone
16	6-Jun	Survey Design Due: chapter 8. Blackstone Due: Draft 2 - Literature Review
17	7-Jun	Survey Design
18	10-Jun	Interviews Due: chapter 9. Blackstone
19	11-Jun	Experimental Methods Due: chapter 12. Blackstone
20	12-Jun	Field Research Due: chapter 10. Blackstone
21	13-Jun	Workshop: Project Methods Due: Memo 3
22	14-Jun	Secondary Data and Content Analysis Due: chapter 11. Blackstone
23	17-Jun	Historical-Comparative Research Due: Draft 3 - Your Research Methods
24	18-Jun	Survey Construction using Qualtrics Due: TBD
25	19-Jun	Workshop: Research Instruments Due: TBD
26	20-Jun	Big Data Due: Read pages 140-163 of Stephens-Davidowitz, Seth. 2017. Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are: New York, NY : Dey St. Available on Sakai
27	21-Jun	Evaluating Social Research Claims in the News Due: Draft 4 - Research Instruments
28	24-Jun	Workshop: The Complete Research Proposal Due: Memo 4
26-Jun		Post Final Research Proposal Paper to Sakai Dropbox by 5pm