

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: SURVEY OF RESEARCH METHODS
SYA 4300 **3 Credit Hours**

Fall, 2011 Tuesday-Thursday, 3:30-4:50, GCS 107.

Instructor: Dr. Thomas C. Wilson, CU 245, 297-3273
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Sociological research is the systematic observation of social life for the purpose of finding and understanding patterns among what is observed.

People interact with each other and create structures for those interactions. Social scientists seek to discover the nature of human relations, just as biologists seek to understand the functioning of physical organisms or astronomers the motion of heavenly bodies.

Normally, when people observe what's going on around them and seek to understand it, their observations and explanations are often clouded by at least three factors: (1) their opinions about the way things should be; (2) the misconceptions and superstitions they learned growing up; and (3) sloppy and erroneous observation.

In contrast, social science researchers make observation a conscious and deliberate act. They then analyze the results of their observations carefully and objectively to determine what *is*, regardless of their feelings about what *ought* to be.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this course, students should have acquired the following knowledge and understandings.

1. The relationship between human inquiry generally and scientific investigation in particular.
2. The roll of paradigms and theory in social research.
3. Ethical issues and political considerations in social research.
4. Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement.
5. The logic of sampling.
6. The experimental method.
7. Social survey research methodology
8. Qualitative field research

READINGS:

The Practice of Social Research. Earl Babbie. Thirteenth Edition.
Wadsworth. 2011.

Additional materials will be posted on BLACKBOARD
(<http://blackboard.fau.edu>), and will consist of

- a. Lecture/class discussion notes.
- b. Readings, taken from journal articles and essays;

- c. “Breaking News” from print and electronic media, chosen to show the applicability of course subject matter to real-world concerns.

TOPIC OUTLINE:

- Week 1: Human Inquiry and Science. (Babbie, Ch. 1).
- Week 2: What Are Theories For? (Babbie, Ch. 2).
- Week 3: Research Ethics: A Brief History. (Babbie, Ch. 3).
- Week 4: Research Design. (Babbie, Ch. 4).
- Week 5: I Can Measure Anything! (Babbie, Ch. 5).
- Week 6: Indexes, Scales, and Typologies. (Babbie, Ch. 6).
- Week 7: Sampling. (Babbie, Ch. 7).
- Week 8: Experiments in the Lab and in the World. (Babbie, Ch. 8).
- Week 9: Survey Research: How to Ask Questions. (Babbie, Ch. 9).
- Week 10: Getting Your Pants Dirty: Qualitative Field Research. (Babbie, Ch. 10)
- Week 11: Unobtrusive Research Methods. (Babbie, Ch. 11).
- Week 12: Quantitative Data Analysis. (Babbie, Ch. 14).
- Week 13-14: The Elaboration Model. (Babbie, Ch. 15).

COURSE EVALUATION METHOD:

There will be three essay examinations. For Exams 1 and 2, essay questions will be posted on the exam day and will be due one week later. For Exam 3 (the final exam), essays questions will be posted a week in advance and will be due on exam day. The exam dates are: Exam 1, September 22, covering all material to date; Exam 2, October 27, covering all material since exam 1; and Exam 3 (final), December 1, covering all material since exam 2.

Policy and Make-up Exams and Late Work: It is recognized that exam dates sometime prove impossible for students for reasons that are beyond students’ control. (Such reasons do not include matters of mere convenience.) If you need a special arrangement, please discuss your circumstances with me before the exam date.

Final Grades: Final course grades will use the following scale and will NOT use pluses and minuses: A=90-100%; B=80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F < 60% .

Class Attendance Policy: Role will not be taken in this course. However, the quality of your performance on the exams will surely be enhanced by your regular class attendance. And at random times, “bonus points” will be awarded to those in attendance. Students are strongly urged to arrive to class on time, and to remain until class is over. Students who must arrive late or leave early must do so with as little disruption to the class as possible.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: In Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) located in Boca Raton – SU 133 (561-297-3880) and follow all OSD procedures.

Code of Academic Integrity Policy Statement: Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Honor_Code.pdf

Some Rules and Some Advice:

Class demeanor: This class will be tolerant of all opinions. Personal attacks and criticisms will not be tolerated. Any student who is not respectful of their fellow students will be asked to leave.

Laptops and other electronic devices are not to be used during class time.

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to:

- cell phone use or text messaging during class;
- reading materials not related to the course in class;
- conversations with other students in class;
- ostentatious displays of inattention (e.g., napping).

Read assigned material BEFORE coming to class. Class lectures and discussions are likely to make little sense if you haven't.

Frequently check BLACKBOARD for new posts.

Rule of thumb: Up to three hours of preparation, study, and review outside of class may be needed for each hour spent in class. This means 9 hours of outside work per week during the semester. If you need to spend that much time to get the grade you want, then SPEND IT!!!!!!!!!!!!