

Fall 2015

Lecture: Tues/Thurs 3-4:15pm, Robinson Hall B222

Lab: Thurs 4:30-5:45pm, Mason Hall D003

Office Hours: Tues 1-2pm, Wed 1-2pm,

or by appointment.

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### **SOCI 303: Sociological Research Methodology Lecture and Lab Syllabus**

This course introduces you to the basic methods that sociologists use in their research. You will learn to read existing research, practice a wide range of research methods, and conduct your own sociological research project. This course offers introductory training in research design, data collection, and sociological analysis. This course is meant to be great fun, since you will be conducting your own sociological research and learning about lots of fascinating sociological research. You will learn to think and act like a sociological researcher.

Throughout the semester, we will conduct research on George Mason University itself. We will practice a variety of research methods around campus. Then you will choose a topic that most interests you. You will design a project, write a proposal, conduct your research, and write a final paper based on your research. Choose a topic that truly interests you.

This class is a Students as Scholars Scholarly Inquiry Course. This means that you will be directly engaged in the recursive process of scholarly inquiry by preparing a proposal for original sociological research. Throughout this process you'll meet the following learning outcomes:

- Distinguish between personal beliefs and evidence.
- Articulate and refine a sociological research question.
- Conduct a review of the sociological literature based on your research question.
- Understand the research methods used in sociology and the ethical issues related to them.
- Evaluate existing sociological research based upon your knowledge of research methods.
- Determine appropriate research methods to answer your research question.
- Write a research proposal.
- Write a research paper based on your research.

Students as Scholars is Mason's initiative to give students the opportunity to conduct undergraduate research. Check out [OSCAR.gmu.edu](http://OSCAR.gmu.edu) or stop by the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (JC 246) to learn about the many other programs they offer students.

#### **Required Texts:**

For this course, we do not have a textbook, which costs about \$150. Instead, we have daily readings that are much more interesting because they are real sociological research studies. These readings have to be printed from MyMason and brought to class on the assigned day. We will intensively use each article, often in multiple class sessions. In the on-campus computer labs, it costs 8 cents to print a page and \$8 for 100 pages, so you are saving a great deal of money compared with a textbook. I do not allow the use of laptops, e-book readers, i-phones, or other devices in class because I want everyone to be fully present in the classroom. Please give

yourself enough time to print the readings and read them carefully. I will check that students are bringing the printed articles on a regular basis. For info on printing and prices:

[https://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel\\_dataPageID\\_4609=5797](https://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel_dataPageID_4609=5797)

### **Course schedule and readings**

*Tues., Sept. 1:* Introduction

- Lecture: Syllabus, goals of the course, assignments, discussion of ideas for research paper.

*Thurs., Sept. 3:* No Lecture (*I will be at a conference in Budapest.*)

- Yes Lab: Library Project and ASA style. Paper #1 written and submitted in class.

### **I. Thinking Like a Researcher**

*Tues., Sept. 8:* What is sociological research?

- Lecture: Haluza-DeLay, Randolph. 2003. "When the Topic Is Racism: Research and Advocacy with A Community Coalition." *Social Justice* 30(4): 77-90.

*Thurs., Sept. 10:* Units of analysis, variables, research questions, and hypotheses.

- Lecture: Howard, Jay R. 2005. "An Examination of Student Learning in Introductory Sociology at a Commuter Campus." *Teaching Sociology* 33(2): 195-205.
  - Reading questions: What is the general question Howard is trying to answer? What is his answer? How did he answer his question? Which variables does he study? How do the variables relate to each other? Do you agree with his findings?
- Lab: Review

*Tues. Sept. 15:* Hypothesis testing and causality.

- Lecture: Doob, Anthony N. and Alan E. Gross. 1968. "Status of Frustrator as an Inhibitor of Horn-Honking Responses." *Journal of Social Psychology* 76: 213-218.

*Thurs., Sept. 17:* Literature Reviews, Research, and Research Design

- Lecture: Gross, Neil and Solon Simmons. 2009. "The Religiosity of American College and University Professors." *Sociology of Religion* 70(2): 101-129.
- Lab: Review

*Tues., Sept. 22:* Who will you study? Sampling.

- Lecture: Aries, Elizabeth and Maynard Seider. 2005. "The Interactive Relationship Between Class Identity and the College Experience: The Case of Lower Income Students." *Qualitative Sociology* 28(4): 419-443. \*Bring all past readings to class too.\*
- Paper #2 due.

## II. Acting Like a Researcher: Modes of Observation

Thurs., Sept. 24: Ethnography

- Lecture: Salzinger, Leslie. 2003. "Re-forming the 'Traditional Mexican Woman': Making Subjects in a Border Factory." Pp. 46-72 in *Ethnography at the Border*, edited by Pablo Villa. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lab: JC Observation

Tues., Sept. 29: Ethnography

- Lecture: Adler, Patricia A. and Peter Adler. 1983. "Shifts and Oscillations in Deviant Careers: The Case of Upper-Level Drug Dealers and Smugglers." *Social Problems* 31(2): 195-207.
- Paper #3 due.

Thurs., Oct. 1: Ethics

- Lecture: Haney, Craig, Curtis Banks, and Philip Zimbardo. 1973. "Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison." *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* 1: 69-97; "Stanford Prison Experiment" movie website: <http://www.prisonexp.org/>
- Lab: Review

Tues., Oct. 6: Measurement and the Census

- Lecture: Wozniak, Jesse and Bob Groves. 2011. "A National Ceremony," *Contexts* 10: 12-18; King, Colby. 2011. "Behind the Data." *Contexts* 10: 16-17.

Thurs., Oct. 8: Measurement and the General Social Survey

- Lecture: Robinson, John P. and Steven Martin. 2008. "What Do Happy People Do?" *Social Indicators Research* 89(3): 565-571.
- Lab: GSS and Census activity.

\*Tues., Oct. 13: Columbus Day, No Class for Tuesday Classes\*

Thurs., Oct. 15: Survey Research (Constructing Surveys)

- Lecture: Niemi, Richard G. and Michael J. Hanmer. 2010. "Voter Turnout among College Students: New Data and a Rethinking of Traditional Theories." *Social Science Quarterly* 91(2): 301-323.
- Lab: Construct a paper survey and a SurveyMonkey survey.

Tues., Oct. 20: Survey Research (Conducting Surveys and Sampling)

- Lecture: TBA

Thurs., Oct. 22: Survey Research (Coding and Analysis)

- Lecture: TBA
- Lab: Make a database from your survey and analyze the data.
- Paper #4 due.

Tues., Oct. 27: Midterm Test

*Thurs., Oct. 29: Archival Research*

- Lecture: Kuromiya, Hiroaki. 2007. "Stalin and His Era." *The Historical Journal* 50(3): 711-724.
- Lab: \*Meet in Fenwick Library, Special Collections, room C-204.\* We will start exactly at 4:30pm, so arrive early to sign in.

*Tues., Nov. 3: Archival Research*

- Lecture: Theoharis, Athan G. 1984. "Researching the Intelligence Agencies: The Problem of Covert Activities." *The Public Historian* 6(2): 67-76.

*Thurs., Nov. 5: Focus Groups*

- Lecture: Wellings, Kaye, Patrick Branigan and Kirsti Mitchell. 2000. "Discomfort, Discord and Discontinuity as Data: Using Focus Groups to Research Sensitive Topics." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 2(3): 255-267.
- Lab: Focus group.
- Paper #5 due.

*Tues., Nov. 10: Content Analysis*

- Lecture: Turner, Jacob S. 2014. "A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Gender and Ethnicity Portrayals on ESPN's SportsCenter from 1999 to 2009." *Communication & Sport* 2(4): 303-327.
- Research Proposal due.

*Thurs., Nov. 12: Content Analysis*

- Lecture: Emmelman, Debra S. and Michael DeCesare. 2007. "College Students' Perceptions of their 'Best' and 'Worst' Courses and Instructors." *International Review of Modern Sociology* 33(2): 227-244.
- Lab: Review

*Tues., Nov. 17: Experiments*

- Lecture: Lovaglia, Michael J. 2003. "From summer camps to glass ceilings: the power of experiments." *Contexts* 2(4): 42-49. \*Bring reading from 9/15 and 10/1.

*Thurs., Nov. 19: Experiments*

- Lecture: Pager, Devah, Bart Bonikowski, and Bruce Western. 2009. "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment." *American Sociological Review* 74(5): 777-799.
- Lab: Review

*Tues., Nov. 24: Visual Sociology*

- Lecture: Hyde, Katherine. 2010. "photo essay: literacy through photography." *Contexts* 9(2): 56-63.

\*Thurs., Nov. 26: Thanksgiving Break, No Class\*

*Tues., Dec. 1: Visual Sociology*

- Lecture: Bolton, Angela, Christopher Pole, and Phillip Mizen. 2001. "Picture This: Researching Child Workers." *Sociology* 35(2): 501-518.

*Thurs., Dec. 3: Presenting Data (Excel, Powerpoint, Blogging)*

- Lecture: TBA
- Lab: Practice and Review

*Tues., Dec. 8: Evaluation Research*

- Lecture: Hudson, Joe, Richard W. Nutter, and Burt Galaway. 1994. "Treatment foster care programs: A review of evaluation research and suggested directions." *Social Work Research* 18(4): 198-210.

*Thurs., Dec. 10: Students' Choice*

- Lecture: TBA
- Lab: Review
- Paper #6 due: Your research paper in its current state, which you will email to me.

**Thurs, Dec. 17: Final exam; Research paper due, 1:30-4:15pm.**

### **Course Requirements**

- Class Participation: 10%
- Short papers (6): 10%
- Research proposal: 20%
- Research paper: 40%
- Midterm test: 10%
- Final test: 10%
- Extra-credit article check: 1%

*Class participation:* Participation includes attendance, being on time, bringing the printed reading, asking questions, and, especially, participating in discussion. The weekly readings will be used extensively during class discussion.

*Short papers:* The papers are intended to help you write your research paper in stages throughout the semester. These papers are meant to be enjoyable. At the end of the syllabus, you will find "Questions and Rubrics for Weekly Short Papers, Research Proposal, and Research Paper," which provides details about these assignments. In MyMason, I have a document providing updated details about the questions for the papers. **All papers must be turned in during lecture on the day they are due, except #1 and #6; one paper may be turned in late by email.**

### *Research proposal*

Choose a topic that really interests you. In class, you will turn in your research paper proposal (2 to 3 pages), in which you will describe your topic, your research question, your research methods, and provide a separate one-page bibliography. Your research must include at least two different methods. At the end of the syllabus, you will find "Questions and Rubrics for Weekly

Short Papers, Research Proposal, and Research Paper,” which provides details about this assignment. Also, you must meet with me once in office hours to talk about your research project.

### *Research paper*

Choose a topic that really interests you. Your research must include at least two different methods. You will turn in your research paper on the day of our final exam. Your research paper should be 8-10 pages long. Please feel free to talk with me about any aspect of the course throughout the semester. I will be glad to talk with you. At the end of the syllabus, you will find “Questions and Rubrics for Weekly Short Papers, Research Proposal, and Research Paper,” which provides details about this assignment.

### *Midterm and Final tests*

These two tests will be multiple choice and short essay. The midterm and final will be based on the lecture. These tests are intended to evaluate your understanding of the main concepts in the course.

### *Extra-credit article check*

I will check to make certain that students have the required printed articles for the week four times during the semester. Three of these checks will go towards a 1% extra credit.

### *Late Policy*

For each day that any written work is late that grade will be reduced by a step (e.g., an A paper will become an A- paper one day after the due date, a B+ paper two days after the due date, etc.).

### *Grading scale*

A	95	over 93
A-	92	90-92
B+	88	87-89
B	85	83-86
B-	82	80-82
C+	78	77-79
C	75	73-76
C-	72	70-72
D	65	60-69
F	0	0-59

### **Additional Items:**

- **Academic Integrity:** I will not tolerate plagiarism. Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be

conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

- **Mason Email Accounts:** Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.
  - **Office of Disability Services:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 or <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.
  - **Writing Center:** A114 Robinson Hall;(703) 993-1200, <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>
  - **University Libraries** “Ask a Librarian,”  
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>
  - **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** (703) 993-2380,  
<http://caps.gmu.edu>
  - **University Policies:** The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.
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- Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course, No Tuition Penalty): September 8, 2015
  - Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course, No Tuition Penalty): September 8, 2015
  - Selective Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester Course): October 5 – October 30, 2015  
(undergraduates only)

**Questions and Rubrics for  
Weekly Short Papers, Research Proposal, and Research Paper**  
Updated August 21, 2015

The short papers are considered both as a space for you to practice what we have learned in lecture and lab and as the building blocks of your research proposal and paper. All papers, including the research proposal and research paper, must have the following format:

- Your name at the top (flush to the right or the left) and SOCI 303 below it. No need for my name, the day or time of class, etc.
- A centered title without quotation marks, which identifies the specific assignment (such as Paper #1).
- Page numbers centered at the bottom of the page. One-inch margins all around. Double spaced (except single space between your name and SOCI 303).
- The text should not be divided into separate questions, but should rather answer the questions in a continuous flow of sentences.
- References in the text to readings must use ASA style.
- No title pages.
- At the end of the text include a bibliography for any works discussed. Just type Bibliography two lines after the end of your last paragraph and add the sources below it. Use our ASA style guide, which will be distributed in lab, for the citation style.

Paper #1: What do you think you would like your research project to be? Why? What do you know about the topic already? Include a bibliography with one scholarly research article.

Paper #2: Summarize two scholarly research articles on your research topic, include a bibliography for the two items and include answers to the following questions.

- What is the topic of the article/book?
- What is its research question?
- Who is being studied?
- What are the authors arguing?
- Which research method(s) do the authors use?
- What do the authors discover?
- Do the authors agree or disagree with each other? Do they have different findings? Why?

Paper #3: Write a literature review with a bibliography of at least four scholarly sources. A literature review discusses what sociologists have generally said about the topic, their theoretical and methodological debates about the topic, and how your work fits into this literature. By writing a literature review, you can build on the work of other sociologists and thus avoid reinventing the wheel. You can also show the sociological significance of your research. What is missing in the existing literature? What might you study that no one else has studied?

Paper #4: What is your research question? Choose two research methods to answer your research question. Explain how they help you to answer your research question. What are the positives and negatives of using these methods. How might these two methods complement each other?

Paper #5: Turn Paper #3 and #4 into a research proposal.



- Use the phrases: “I propose to conduct research on X topic.” “I will use X method(s).”

This draft proposal requires the following sections:

- Name, SOCI 303, Title (also page numbers)
- Introduction stating your proposed topic, research question, methods.
- Literature Review
- Research Methods (2 research methods are required), include whom you will study and discuss any potential ethical problems regarding your research project.
- Conclusion summarizing your proposed topic, research question, methods.
- Bibliography

The Research Proposal is due: *Tuesday, November 10th* in class. The Research Proposal should have the following items in 2-3 pages:

- Name, SOCI 303, Title (also page numbers)
- Introduction stating your proposed topic, research question, methods.
- Literature Review
- Research Methods (2 research methods are required), include a short discussion of any potential ethical and political problems regarding your research project.
- Conclusion summarizing your proposed topic, research question, methods.
- Bibliography

Paper #6: Your research paper in its current state, which you will email to me (due on Wednesday, April 29, 2015). The purpose of this is to make sure that your format is correct, to see how far along you are, and to get assistance. There should be the following items:

- Name, SOCI 303, Title (also page numbers; no title page)
- Introduction stating topic, research question, the two methods you are using, and your *answer* to your research question. Ideally, the introduction should try to draw the reader into the paper by, for example, starting with a general discussion of the topic, discussing why the topic is significant or stating some commonly held misperceptions about the topic.
- Literature Review, which must discuss the six scholarly sources in the bibliography. It can discuss other sources too, but should generally steer clear of what you found in your research. The citations must be in ASA style or some other kind of style.
- Research Methods (2 research methods are required), include a discussion of the two methods you chose, any drawbacks with the methods you chose, how you chose your sample, any drawbacks with how you obtained your sample, and any ethical issues you may have confronted.
- *Findings* (the findings from the research you conducted, what did you discover through your two research methods?)
- Conclusion to the paper, which summarizes your topic, research question, research answer, and findings.
- Bibliography, which has to be in ASA style and has to have six scholarly sources.

Final Research Paper, due Thurs, Dec. 17 at 4:15pm by email. This paper has the same components as Paper #6, but Final Research Paper is the final product of the course.