

## **SOC 455 Sociological Research Methods**

**Objective:** The purpose of this syllabus is to guide the participant in the requirements, demands, logistics and expectations of this course.

### **Getting Help:**

To receive technical assistance on issues related to WebCT contact:

Academic Instructional Technology Help Desk

ES 102

Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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Welcome from your instructor

Hello!

My name is Grace Young. Since 1997, I have taught sociology at Adams State College. I grew up in a town called Elyria, Ohio, just west of Cleveland. I did my bachelor's work at Kalamazoo College in Michigan, and then did my graduate work at the University of Chicago and at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

I look forward to working with you on your Extended Studies course. I find it best if you e-mail me first to introduce yourself, and then we can begin work. I will try to respond as promptly as possible to your questions and your submissions of assignments. If you do not get a response from me within three days, don't hesitate to give me a helpful reminder e-mail.

Good Luck, Professor Grace E. Young

### **Course Description**

Many sociology students across the U.S. look upon the Methods course with disdain, dread, fear, and/or loathing. You needn't! This is a step-by-step course in which you learn about research methods by actually doing a research proposal. First, students will be instructed in the fundamentals of research design and implementation, including ethical considerations. Students will read and study the research proposals of selected sociologists. Then students will engage in hands-on proposals to practice research

methods. Finally, students will design a research proposal. Components of the proposal include: a) the Worksheet: Designing a Research Question, b) Introduction and Bibliography, c) Literature Review, d) Methods, and e) Findings and Conclusion. During the computer lab segment of the course, students will learn and practice analyzing data from the General Social Survey (GSS) and from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2000 data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). By the end of the class, you will have a clearer understanding of the complexities and joys of doing sociological research.

### **Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes**

The student will

- Explain the fundamentals of the sociological research process.
- Outline the components of ethical research.
- Identify the qualities of a sound research instrument.
- Find patterns in quantitative data and build and/or test theories.
- Critically assess the theoretical assertions and empirical research of others.
- Design and clearly describe in writing a research proposal for sociology.

**Credit hours:** Four semester hours

**Course Prerequisites:** SOC 311 Social Statistics with a minimum grade of C AND Junior status

### **Textbook**

To order textbooks or obtain information about book titles you may go to [www.exstudies.adams.edu](http://www.exstudies.adams.edu) and click on the “ASC Bookstore” icon.

Use **Section Number: 1033** to order books from Bookstore site.

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava and Anna Leon-Guerrero. *Social Statistics for a Diverse Society with SPSS student version 13.0*, fourth edition. Pine Forge Press, 2006. ISBN: 141291793X

Babbie, Earl. *The Basics of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 2002. ISBN: 0-534-51904-0

### **Recommended Textbook**

Johnson, William A., Richard P. Rettig, Gregory M. Scott, and Stephen M. Garrison.. *The Sociology Student Writer's Manual*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004. ISBN: 0-13-111388-7

### **Course Requirements**

There are four sets of requirements for this class. The first set consists of five computer lab, statistical assignments. These assignments review statistics so that you are ready and able to conduct your own research proposal. The second set of assignments involves reading the textbook *The Basics of Social Research*, and answering chapter review questions. Both of these two sets of requirements prepare you to design a research proposal in which you pose a research question that can be answered by manipulating and analyzing the data found in the CD-Rom that accompanies your statistics book. This research proposal is the third component required for the class. Finally, the last component of the course requirements is a final exam.

### **Completion Time**

You should expect to spend as much time on an online course as you do in a face-to-face course. As a rough guide, you should plan to spend six to ten hours per week on this course. The actual amount of time will vary from individual to individual. This estimate includes the time you spend in reading, discussions, and assignments.

You will have access to all course materials from the start of the course to the end. You may look and study ahead, or go back and review, at any time during the course. All assignments, including discussion boards, have set due dates.

You have one year from your date of registration to complete this course. If you are receiving federal or private financial aid, requirements may differ. However, the minimum requirement for course completion, regardless of the number of credit hours, is six weeks. **No student may complete course requirements in less than six weeks.**

It is important to schedule your course study to fit into your academic plan. If you have important deadlines to meet such as graduation, be sure to complete and submit all of your assignments and take the final examination at least five weeks before the credit is needed. It is your responsibility to ensure the credits for this course will apply toward graduation or certification deadlines.

### **Computer Access**

Because the lab problems will require the use of the software SPSS that comes packaged with your textbook, it is imperative that you have access to a computer in which you can install the SPSS Student version.

### **Course Introduction/Instructions**

Follow the syllabus through the course sections. The first two sections include reading and problem assignments. In the third section, you will work through the five components of your research proposal—be sure to follow the required format when specified. Your proctored final exam is the last section to be completed in this course. Completing the final exam before completing all the other assignments will result in a zero for all non-completed prerequisite assignments.

The best way to communicate with me is through e-mail. You will submit your assignments through the Assignment tab and exams through the Assessment tab. I will try to get your assignments graded and back to you within 7 to 10 days. In order for you to be successful, it is best if you pace yourself and set up a schedule that fits your lifestyle, and which keeps you moving forward with the assignments and the research report. Students who are most successful in extended studies courses set time aside each week to accomplish specific reading and project assignments.

Good luck and I look forward to working with you.

## **Examinations**

There is only one final exam in this class. Plan at least 2 hours for this exam. The final exam will not be administered until all of the other assignments have been completed and graded. Completing the final before completing any or all of the other assignments will result in a zero for all non-completed prerequisite assignments. You will be allowed to use your completed assignments from Sections I and II of the class. You will not be allowed to use your textbook or other written materials.

Because the lab problems will require the use of the software SPSS that comes packaged with your textbook, it is imperative that you have access to a computer in which you can install the SPSS Student version.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Module 1: Computer Lab Assignments**

Textbook:

*Social Statistics for a Diverse Society*

Assignment 1:

Reading: Chapter 2 Frequencies

SPSS Problems: pp 54 - 55 Problem Number 2

Assignment 2:

Reading: Chapter 3 Graphing Statistics

SPSS Problems: p 89 Problem Number 1

Assignment 3:

Reading: Chapter 4 Measures of Central Tendency

SPSS Problems: p 127 Problem Number 2

Assignment 4:

Reading: Chapter 6 Cross-tabulations  
SPSS Problems: pp 216 - 217 Problem Numbers 2 and 5

Assignment 5:

Reading: Chapter 7 Measures of Association  
SPSS Problems: pp 251 - 252 Problem Numbers 1 and 4

## **Module 2: Learning about the Basics of Social Research**

Textbook:  
*The Basics of Social Research*

Assignment 1:

Reading: Chapter 1 Human Inquiry and Science  
Review Questions: Numbers 2 and 3

Assignment 2:

Reading: Chapter 2 Paradigms, Theory, and Research  
Review Questions: Numbers 1 and 2

Assignment 3:

Reading: Chapter 3 The Ethics and Politics of Social Research  
Review Questions: Numbers 1a through 1e

Assignment 4:

Reading: Chapter 4 Research Design  
Review Questions: Numbers 1, 2, and 3

Assignment 5:

Reading: Chapter 5 Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement  
Review Questions: Numbers 1 and 3

Assignment 6:

Reading: Chapter 7 The Logic of Sampling  
Review Questions: Numbers 1 and 4

Assignment 7:

Reading: Chapter 9 Survey Research  
Review Questions: Numbers 1, 3, and 4

Assignment 8:

Reading: Chapter 10 Qualitative Field Research

Review Questions: Numbers 1 and 4

Assignment 9:

Reading: Chapter 11 Unobtrusive Research

Review Questions: Numbers 1 and 3

Assignment 10:

Reading: Chapter 14 Quantitative Data Analysis

Review Question: Number 4

### **Module 3: Designing Your Own Research Proposal**

First, read Appendix B, The Research Report, in *The Basics of Social Research*. Now consider the databases (the GSS and ISSP on the CD-Rom with your Statistics book). Identify a research question that you would like to develop from variables in either of these two data bases. This research proposal involves identifying a main research question, with specific hypothesis, that can be tested using the data provided. It also involves getting into the sociological literature to find out what other researchers have said about the particular research question you identify.

First Assignment: Read through the hand-outs that can be found in this booklet. They cover:

- Introduction and Bibliography
- Literature Review
- Methods
- Findings and Conclusion

Next, complete the worksheet, **Designing a Research Question**. Once you have submitted this worksheet, and I have graded it and returned it with comments for you to read, you may begin working on the sections of your proposal. Your chances of completing a successful proposal are greatly enhanced if you submit each section (first the Introduction, then the Literature Review, then the Methods Section, then the Findings Section and finally the Conclusion) for my grade and comments before you submit the next section. The Findings and Conclusion sections cannot be completed until you have submitted and I have graded and returned to you the Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods sections. If you submit the Findings and Conclusion sections before I have graded the prerequisite sections, you will receive a zero for the Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods sections.

### **Module 4: The Final Exam**

There is only one final exam in this class. Plan at least 2 hours for this exam. The final exam will not be administered until all of the other assignments have been completed and

graded. Completing the final before completing any or all of the other assignments will result in a zero for all non-completed prerequisite assignments. You will be allowed to use your completed assignments from Sections I and II of the class. You will not be allowed to use your textbook or other written materials.

Because the lab problems will require the use of the software SPSS that comes packaged with your textbook, it is imperative that you have access to a computer in which you can install the SPSS Student version.

### **Grade Distribution and Scale:**

In alignment with ASC academic policies, no D may apply to a major or minor field.

### **Grade Distribution:**

Computer Lab Assignments 1-5	10 Points Each	50 Points Total
Learning the Basics of Research Assignments 1-10	10 Points Each	100 Points Total
Research Proposal Assignments 1-5		
Worksheet: Designing a Research Question	20 Points Each	100 points Total
Introduction and Bibliography		
Literature Review		
Methods		
Findings and Conclusion		
Final Exam	100 Points	100 Points Total
<b>TOTAL COURSE POINTS</b>		<b>350 Total Points</b>

### **Scale:**

315-350	A
280-314	B
245-279	C
210-244	D
209 and below	F