

Sociology 251
Measurement and Data Collection
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Fall 2006

Professor Kenneth Andrews
Office: 209 Hamilton
Office Hours: Thursday 2:00-3:30
Office Phone: 843-5104
Email: kta@unc.edu

Classroom: Gardner 309
Class Meeting: MWF 11:00

Teaching Assistants:

Arseniy Gutnik (Hamilton 218, Arseniy.Gutnik@unc.edu)
Anne Hunter (Hamilton 230, akhunter@email.unc.edu)
Christopher Riddick (Hamilton 230, criddick@email.unc.edu)

OVERVIEW

Measurement and Data Collection is an introduction to the logic and methods of sociological research – why and how sociologists conduct research. This course will enable you to critically evaluate the research of others and carry out your own research in the social sciences. Major topics include the relationship between theory and research, variables and measurement, causality, the political and ethical dimensions of research, and the major modes of sociological research – including experiments, qualitative fieldwork and interviews, surveys, content analysis, and historical methods.

This course has several major goals that build on each other.

- (1) You will learn how to design and carry out basic sociological research using the major research methods of sociology. This will provide an important foundation for Data Analysis (Sociology 252) and independent research projects that you could conduct through an Independent Study or an Honors Thesis.
- (2) You will learn how to critically evaluate sociological research assessing the strengths and weaknesses of research that you read in later courses, the mass media, or in your future work.
- (3) You will develop critical thinking skills to better evaluate your own assumptions and ideas and those you encounter about how society works in all domains such as education, politics, culture, religion, health care, criminal justice, or the economy.

READING

Our main text is Earl Babbie's *The Basics of Social Research*, Third Edition, (Wadsworth, 2005). We will also read some additional articles and selections from studies to illustrate concepts and

research strategies. These supplementary readings are listed on the syllabus and will be available through the course webpage at blackboard.unc.edu. All readings on the syllabus are required and should be completed before the designated class meeting.

REQUIREMENTS

Short Papers (30%): You will write two short papers of 3-5 pages each during the semester. The first paper will ask you to critically evaluate a research article focusing on its research design. The second paper will require that you use one of the modes of data collection covered in this course to carry out and write up your own research. Details about each assignment will be provided during the semester. The first paper will be due October 18, and the second paper will be due December 4.

Mid-Term Exam (15%) and Final Exam (20%): Exams will combine short answer and short essay questions covering material from all course readings, class presentations, and section meetings. Lectures and section meetings will go beyond material covered in the text and supplementary readings.

Homework Assignments (25%): You will complete five homework assignments during the semester. These assignments will help you learn major concepts and techniques in greater detail. Assignments will be due on September 20, September 27, November 8, November 15, and November 29.

Section Attendance and Participation (10%): You will have weekly section meetings every Friday. Your attendance and participation is required. To receive credit for section participation, you must arrive on time, come prepared, and participate in discussion and activities.

POLICIES

Homework and papers turned in after the deadline will be penalized by deducting a half letter grade for each day it is late. For example, an A- paper becomes a B+ if turned in one day late, a B if two days late, a B- if three days late, and so on.

If you have some extraordinary set of circumstances that make it impossible for you to meet a deadline, you must see me prior to the deadline. Extraordinary circumstances might include a serious illness or death in your family, but it would not include personal travel, extracurricular activities, or fulfilling the requirements of other courses. If you must travel or have an especially busy week during the semester that coincides with a due date for this course, you will need to plan ahead to have your work completed on time.

Blackboard will be used for announcements and to make copies of the syllabus, handouts, and assignments available to you. You should check blackboard regularly (a couple times a week) for announcements related to course assignments and schedule.

GRADES

The grading scale for this course is: A=100-94; A-=93-91; B+=90-88; B=87-84; B-=83-81; C+=80-78; C=77-74; C-=73--71; D+=70-68; D=67--61; F=60 and below.

HONOR CODE

Your participation in this course is covered by the UNC Honor Code (<http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html>). If you have any questions regarding plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty please see me, and I will be happy to clarify.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

- August 23 (W) Introduction to Course
- August 25 (F) Research as a Strategy for Answering Questions
Jay Gabler and Jason Kaufman “Chess, Cheerleading, and Chopin: What Gets You Into College?” from *Contexts*, Spring 2006.

Week 2

- August 28 (M) Basic Elements of Sociological Research
Babbie, Ch. 1
- August 30 (W) Basic Elements Continued
Babbie, Ch. 2, (pp. 42-56 only)
- September 1 (F) First Section Meeting

Week 3

- September 4 (M) Labor Day – No Class
- September 6 (W) Research Design
Babbie, Ch. 4 (skip pp. 92-95)
- September 8 (F) Section Meeting

Week 4

- September 11 (M) Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches
Mary Waters “Flux and Choice in American Ethnicity,” Pp. 16-51 from
Ethnic Options, University of California Press, 1990.
- September 13 (W) Variables and Causality
Babbie, pp. 92-95

September 15 (F) Section Meeting: Research Design and Causality

Week 5

September 18 (M) Causality Continued
Doug McAdam “The Biographical Roots of Activism” Pp. 35-65 in
Freedom Summer, Oxford University Press, 1988.

September 20 (W) Variables: Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement
Babbie, Ch. 5

September 22 (F) Section Meeting: Measuring Race

Week 6

September 25 (M) Variables Continued

September 27 (W) Politics and Ethics of Research
Babbie, Ch. 3

September 30 (F) Summary and Review Session

Week 7

October 2 (M) **MIDTERM EXAM**

October 4 (W) Introduction to Major Research Strategies

October 6 (F) Section Meeting: Obedience Film

Week 8

October 9 (M) Experiments
Michael Lovaglia “From Summer Camps to Glass Ceilings: The Power of
Experiments” from *Contexts*

October 11 (W) Experiments Continued
Babbie, Ch. 8

October 13 (F) Section Meeting: Experiments

Week 9

October 16 (M) Field Work Guest Lecture:
Lisa Pearce, Studying Families in Nepal. Department of Sociology, UNC

October 18 (W) Field Work Overview
Babbie, Ch. 10
Annette Lareau, pp 1-11 from *Unequal Childhoods*, University of California Press, 2003.

October 20 (F) ****FALL BREAK****

Week 10

October 23 (M) Qualitative Data Analysis
Babbie, Ch. 13

October 25 (W) Qualitative Data Analysis Continued

October 27 (F) Section Meetings: Qualitative Data Analysis

Week 11

October 30 (M) Survey Research
Babbie, Ch. 9

November 1 (W) Guest Lecture: Larry Griffin, Using Surveys to Study Southern Identity,
Department of Sociology, UNC

November 3 (F) Section Meeting: Survey Design

Week 12

November 6 (M) Sampling
Babbie, Ch. 7

November 8 (W) Sampling Continued

November 10 (F) Section Meeting: Sampling

Week 13

November 13 (M) Unobtrusive Research: Content and Historical Analysis
Babbie, Ch. 11

November 15 (W) Unobtrusive Research Continued
Michael Messner, Margaret Duncan, Nicole Willms, "This Revolution is Not Being Televised" from *Contexts*, Summer 2006.

November 17 (F) Section Meeting: Using the General Social Survey

Week 14

November 20 (M) Quantitative Data Analysis
Babbie, Ch. 13

November 23 (W) *****Thanksgiving Break*****
& November 25 (F)

Week 15

November 27 (M) Quantitative Data Analysis Continued
Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro "Wealth and Inequality in America," pp. 67-90 in *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, Routledge, 1997.

November 29 (W) Quantitative Data Analysis Continued

December 1 (F) Section Meeting: Interpreting Tables

Week 16

December 4 (M) Writing and Evaluating Sociological Research
Babbie, Ch. 15

December 6 (W) Synthesis and Conclusion

December 11 (M) **FINAL EXAM @ Noon**