



SOC 3111

Research Methods Fall 2018

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course Summary

This course is an introduction to the theory and practice of social science research. Objectives include:

- 1) Familiarize students with the **different types of methods** that are used to accumulate evidence in the social sciences. Examples include survey research, intensive interviewing, participant-observation, focus group.
- 2) Expose students to the logic of **data collection and analysis**, and
- 3) Give students an opportunity to **conduct their own research** and to **critique** existing social science research.

We learn how to do research, by doing it.

Group discussions in class and online, in-class activities, and traditional lectures will be used to achieve these learning objectives. The course will culminate in a student-organized research forum in which students will present and discuss the results of their research project.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- 1) Name the basic principles of research ethics
- 2) Compare the advantages and disadvantages of common research methodologies, including experimental, survey and qualitative research
- 3) Identify, read, summarize, and critically evaluate various sources of research
- 4) Write about social science research and research methodology

General Education

The successful completion of SOC 3111 with a grade of C- or better will satisfy the Upper Division Writing Intensive general education requirement (**CW**) for a bachelors degree at the University of Utah.

As an approved CW course at the University of Utah, SOC 3111 will provide direct instruction in how to write a research report/proposal, how to read and critique existing research, and how to present research findings to different audiences (i.e., poster or oral presentation). These skills are critical for social science researchers, and are also foundational topics related to helping students learn, practice, and develop their own effective communication practices in general. Frequent written assignments, building to a larger written research project at the end of the term, will allow students to develop, get feedback, and then revise/refine their research ideas throughout the semester. Students will also develop an oral presentation, where they have to articulate and discuss their research question and proposed research methodology. Students will use the feedback provided on these assignments to revise/refine their ideas for a final written research report at the end of the semester. Given the nature of these assignments plus the requirement of a final research report, a majority of the final course grade will be based on the students' ability to write and communicate.

Specific Learning Outcomes & Assessments for **Intellectual and Practical Skills**

1. *Inquiry & Analysis* – Inherent in “research methods” is learning how to ask research questions (inquiry) and how to answer that question with data or evidence (analysis). The course schedule has dedicated learning units focused on both question formulation and data analysis. Assessment will be done with a review of an assignment on developing research topics/questions, an assignment related to data analysis (quantitative or qualitative), and a final research project.
2. *Information Literacy* – A major objective of the course is to teach students to become both a critical consumer and producer of research. To do so, students will learn how to ask questions about how the evidence was collected, whether it is representative of a larger phenomenon or population, how it was analyzed, and whether it is presented in an unbiased way. These are all examples of information literacy. To achieve this outcome, the course schedule includes dedicated learning units on how to evaluate the validity (i.e., accuracy and truthfulness) of material and information that is presented to us, as well as units on how to do both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Assessment will be done with a literature review assignment where students identify and evaluate others' published research, assignment related to presenting/analyzing data, final research project.

Specific Learning Outcomes & Outcome Assessments for **Personal & Social Responsibility**

1. *Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning* – A course in “research methods” emphasizes the need to match data/evidence with our theories/ideas. While this course provides a solid foundation for those who want to pursue a career in research, it also teaches students to be more critically aware of the sources and validity of information that we see everyday (i.e., in the media) – an important skill for lifelong learning and success for everyone. The course's focus on developing and refining one's communication skills (orally and in writing) is another important outcome of this course. Assessment: quality of writing, presentation, and discussion, especially those assignments where students critique their own or other's research.
2. *Ethical Reasoning* – Researchers are obligated to conduct ethical research, especially when dealing with human subjects. This course has a dedicated learning module related to the basic principles and practice of ethical research. Assessment: Students will complete a standardized and rigorous training course related to “research ethics” where they will receive a certificate allowing them to work on research projects at the University or other research entities (CITI training).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Canvas

All course materials, including lecture notes, assignments and quizzes, will be posted on Canvas. Students are expected to check the course Canvas page frequently.

Readings

Readings will primarily be from Russel K. Schutt's *Investigating the Social World*, and should be completed before coming to class. Students are encouraged to read the next week's reading by Sunday night. Booth et al.'s *Craft of Research* is recommended but not required. These books are available at the University of Utah bookstore and on reserve at the Marriott Library. Additional optional readings will be made available on Canvas.

Quizzes

Starting from the second week, there will be weekly quizzes posted and taken on Canvas. They are due at Sunday midnight in that corresponding week. The quizzes are primarily based on the Schutt's text. Your two lowest quiz scores will be dropped from the final grading to accommodate any contingencies.

Attendance & Participation

Given the "hands-on" nature of this course, regular attendance and active participation is expected. Active participation consists of asking and answering questions, participating in in-class activities, and coming to class prepared. In-class activities (announced and un-announced) will be used to provide an objective assessment of attendance and participation. Your participation grade will be based on class attendance (25%), peer review in class (25%), online discussion (25%), and in-class participation (25%).

Assignments

There will be a series of assignments throughout the term. The assignments are intended to 1) provide an opportunity for students to "practice" a part of the research process and/or 2) to serve as a building block or initial *draft* of the final research project. These frequent and regular assignments provide both peer and TA/instructor feedback, so students can develop and revise their ideas and writing throughout the semester.

Final Research Project/Proposal

The final project will require students to make decisions regarding a research topic they want to study, identify and review existing research literature that is related to the chosen topic, and choose and justify an appropriate research design (i.e., data collection and analysis strategy) that could answer a specific research question within their topic area. The culmination of this project will include both a written paper and oral presentation. Projects are done in groups.

Due Dates:

The written report is due by 12pm (noon) on **Monday Dec 17th** to the Sociology main office (BEHS 301) or uploaded to Canvas. Late papers will be accepted until 5pm on Thursday Dec 20th, minus a 10-point penalty for each day it is late. The presentations will occur during the last week of the semester.

Group Work:

Students are expected to work in groups throughout the semester to complete this project:

- Ideal group size is 4 to 6 students.
- Groups will choose a single topic and method for the research project.
- Assignments related to the final project will be done individually. Oral presentations will be done in groups. Final written reports will be written as a "team" paper. All group members will receive the same grade on the written paper.
- Each student will have the opportunity to evaluate the effort of his/her groupmembers.
- The grade on the final research project will be weighted by 80% of this group paper grade and 20% of the

contribution grade as assessed by the peers in the group. This measure is to prevent against the free rider problem.

Length of Report:

The final written report will be about 10 pages in length (assuming double-spaced, 12-pt font, one-inch margin). It is unlikely that you will be able to do the project in less than 8 pages or that it would exceed 15 pages.

Format of Report:

The final report will follow the standard format of a published research articles. It must include an abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and references section. *Use these subheadings when writing your final report. Refer to the content guidelines below on what should be included in each section.*

Content Guidelines for Final Report

Executive Summary (Abstract)

Summarize entire project: from theory to method to results to implications. (<1 page)

Intro

In this section, you should explicitly tell the reader what your research questions and hypotheses are. You should also describe any previous research that has been done on the topic. Think about how your project is new or different than previous research. Discuss why your chosen method is an appropriate way to try to answer the question.

Methods

In this section, you will tell the reader how you collected your data, how you drew your sample, how you measured the concepts of interest, and (if applicable) how you analyzed your data. You must be detailed enough so that someone could replicate your study, if they needed to. In terms of how much data you should collect, follow the guidelines below:

Survey Research	20 surveys per group member
In-Depth Interviewing	120 minutes of interviewing per group member
Focus Groups	one group/session per group member; about 8 participants per session
Other Methods	ask instructor

Results

Summarize all the data you collected. Highlight the trends, patterns, tendencies, and/or themes found within your collected data. As the analysts, you need to think about how to most accurately and succinctly “tell the story” that is found in your data. Although it is not required, you are encouraged to analyze your data using software programs such as SPSS or Excel (both available on campus). If you use statistical analyses, I do not expect you to do more than descriptive analyses (e.g., means, medians, crosstabs, etc) although more advanced statistical analysis is appreciated. If you do qualitative or archival research, you should use original quotations to support your findings. Be creative and use whatever analytic skills you and your group members have.

Discussion

This is the section where you will discuss the results of your project. Did the data support hypotheses – why or why not? What are the strengths and limitations of your project? How could future research address those limitations? What are the implications/importance/relevance of your research findings?

References

This final section of the paper lists the sources you consulted while writing this report. You must include at least 5 *academic* sources, which must also be appropriately cited/referenced in the text. Use a *formal*

bibliographic style to write this section. Software tool like Endnote is helpful for managing bibliographies, citations and references (<https://www.endnote.com/>).

NOTE: If you are unfamiliar with writing a formal reference list, please ask the instructor or TA during office hours or consult one of the many available handbooks such as the APA Publications Manual, the MLA handbook, or the Chicago Style Book.

NOTE: Internet sites are NOT considered “academic” sources. While encyclopedias may have been fine for high school research papers, they are NOT acceptable forms of research for this project. Do not use popular magazines (e.g., Time or Newsweek). Newspapers should also be avoided. Focus your literature review on academic journals, such as the American Journal of Sociology or the American Sociological Review. Books can be acceptable sources, though **journal articles** should predominate your reference list.

GRADING

Course grades will be calculated as a weighted average of quizzes (10%), assignments (35%), final research project (40%), and attendance/participation (15%).

A (100-93 points)	A - (90-92 points)	B + (89-87 points)
B (86-83 points)	B - (80-82 points)	C + (79-77 points)
C (76-73 points)	C - (70-72 points)	D + (69-67 points)
D (66-63 points)	D - (60-62 points)	E (< 60 points)

The instructor is committed to providing the most fair and transparent grading procedures and outcomes as possible. To this end,

- Instructor will provide detailed grading rubrics and expectations at least 7 days prior to an assignment due date.
- Instructor and TA will grade assignments and provide feedback within 7 days of submission.
- It is the student’s responsibility to report and discuss grade discrepancies with instructor.
- Instructor will entertain grade change requests, but such discussions should occur outside of class time and at least 24 hours after a grade is assigned (i.e., take a day to reflect on the comments provided and review the material prior to requesting grade change)
- No late assignments or quizzes or make-ups for in-class activities will be accepted, without approved documentation.
- No extra credit available

THE FINE PRINT OF A SYLLABUS

Student Behavior & Expectations

- Attendance and Participation: Regular attendance and participation at all class meetings are expected. In the event of absence, students should consult with peers and online class resources to fill in any material and notes they have missed. Except in the rare cases of sudden illness or emergency (excused with documentation), students are expected to arrange with the instructors to submit assignments in advance of a planned absence.
- Electronic Devices in Class: Texting, using social media, and internet surfing are inappropriate during class. Use of laptop computers or other electronic devices is allowed for activities relevant to the course material.
- Canvas and U-Mail: All course materials and announcements will be posted on the course website (Canvas). Students are responsible for regularly checking Canvas. Technical support is provided via classhelp@utah.edu or 801-581-6112 (Marriott Library, Suite 1705).
- Assignment Submissions: Students are responsible for submitting assignments on-time. Please read assignment sheets carefully.
- Be Respectful: Participation in the University of Utah community obligates each member to follow a code of civilized behavior in and out of the classroom. In order to maintain a positive, civil environment for learning, students are expected to meet the goals described in the University of Utah’s Student Code, which states “*the mission of the University of Utah is to educate the individual and to discover, refine and disseminate knowledge. The University supports the intellectual, personal, social and ethical development of members of the University community. These goals can best be achieved in an open and supportive environment that encourages reasoned discourse, honesty, and respect for the rights of all individuals. Students at the University*

of Utah are encouraged to exercise personal responsibility and self-discipline and engage in the rigors of discovery and scholarship.”

- **Keep an Open Mind.** Some of the readings, lectures, video clips, or presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking.
- **Don't Cheat:** It is assumed that all work submitted to instructor is your own work. When you have used ideas of others, you must properly indicate that you have done so. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, and/or failure in the course. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code, “includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct.” For detailed definitions and possible sanctions please see: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>.

Support and Resources for Student Success

- **Wellness Statement:** Your personal health and wellness are essential to your success as a student. Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive in this course and at the University of Utah. Please speak with the instructor or TA before issues become problems. And, for helpful resources, contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act.** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.
- **Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX, a federal civil rights law in the U.S, makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).
- **LGBT Resource Center:** The U of Utah has an LGBT Resource Center on campus. They are located in Room 409 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. You can visit their website to find more information about the support they can offer, a list of events through the center and links to additional resources: <http://lgbt.utah.edu/>. Please also let the instructor or TA know if there is any additional support you need in this class.
- **Learners of English as an Additional/Second Language.** If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language and writing development. These resources include: the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>); the Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu/>); the English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli/>). Please let us know if there is any additional support you would like to discuss for this class.

As the only institution in the state classified in the highest research category (R1), at the University of Utah you will have access to state-of-the-art research facilities and be able to be part of the knowledge creation process. You will have the opportunity to do research of your own with faculty who are leading experts in their field, engaging in programs that match your research interests. Further, you will interact with and often take classes with graduate students that provide an advanced understanding of the knowledge in your field.

SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Monday	Wednesday
1	Aug 20, 22	<u>Course Intro</u> Syllabus, Academic Standards	<u>What is "Science"?</u> Schutt Chpt 1 Online Discussion 1 on Canvas
2	Aug 27, 29	The Research Process & Ethics Schutt Chpt 3	<u>The Research Process & Ethics</u> Schutt Chpt 3 Research Ethics Online Training (CITD); 9/2
3	Sep 3, 5	<u>NO CLASS</u> Labor Day	<u>Questions, Theories, Hypotheses</u> Schutt Chpt 2 Topic Approval (writing) Assignment; 9/9
4	Sep 10, Sep 12	Literature Review Schutt Appendix A-D	<u>Guest Speaker, Dale Larsen from library</u> <u>(bring your laptop)</u> Lit Review & Annotated Bibliography (writing) Assignment; 9/16
5	Sep 17, 19	<u>Measurement</u> Schutt Chpt 4	<u>Measurement</u> Schutt Chpt 4
6	Sep 24, 26	<u>Causality & Research Design</u> Schutt Chpt 6, 7	<u>Causality & Research Design</u> Schutt Chpt 6, 7
7	Oct 1, 3	<u>Sampling</u> Schutt Chpt 5	<u>Peer Review</u> Draft of Intro (writing) Assignment due in class (hard copy); 10/3
8	Oct 8, 10	<u>NO CLASS</u> Fall Break	<u>NO CLASS</u> Fall Break
9	Oct 15, 17	<u>Quantitative Data Collection</u> Schutt Chpt 8, 13	<u>Quantitative Data Collection</u> Schutt Chpt 8, 13 Survey Research Assignment; 10/21
10	Oct 22, 24	<u>Qualitative Data Collection</u> Schutt Chpt 9	<u>Qualitative Data Collection</u> Schutt Chpt 9 Qualitative Data Collection Assignment; 10/28
11	Oct 29, 31	<u>Other Research Designs & Methods</u> Schutt Chpt 11, 12	<u>Peer Review</u> Draft of Method (writing) Assignment due in class (hard copy); 10/31 Online Discussion 2 on Canvas
12	Nov 5, 7	<u>Data Analysis</u> Schutt Chpt 10, 14	<u>Data Analysis</u> Schutt Chpt 10, 14
13	Nov 12, 14	<u>How to Write a Research Report</u> Schutt Chpt 15	**Group Work Day** (in class)
14	Nov 19, 21	<u>Review</u> <u>Guest Speaker, Anne McMurtrey from the Writing Center</u>	**Group Work Day** (in class)
15	Nov 26, 28	<u>Research Presentation</u> Instructor & TA	<u>Student Research Forum</u>
16	Dec 3, 5	<u>Student Research Forum</u>	<u>Student Research Forum</u> Online Discussion 3 on Canvas

ASSIGNMENTS

Students are required to complete a series of written assignments, in which they will receive feedback from peers and TA/instructor. Assignments will be directly relevant to the development of the final research report and, in most cases, be drafts that can be revised and included in the final research project.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due</u>	<u>Submission</u>	<u>Effort</u>
1. Research Ethics Certification	Sep 2	Canvas (midnight)	Individual
2. Topic Approval	Sep 9	Canvas (midnight)	Group
3. Literature Review	Sep 16	Canvas (midnight)	Individual
4. Draft of “Intro”	Oct 3	Hard Copy to Class	Individual
5. Survey Research	Oct 21	Canvas (midnight)	Individual
6. Qualitative Data	Oct 28	Canvas (midnight)	Individual
7. Draft of “Methods”	Oct 31	Hard Copy to Class	Group

Grading Rubric for Assignments

All assignment will be graded on a ten-point scale. Unless specified on the individual assignment sheet, the following guidelines will be used to assign a point value:

- 10** EXCELLENT: The student exhibits a critical understanding of the concepts, can articulate concepts in his/her own words, and shows an active mastery over the concepts. The work shows creativity and innovative thinking. Written work is complete, on-time, and is free from errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The assignment adheres to all instructions. The assignment is perfect or near perfect.
- 9** VERY GOOD: The student’s work shows a good mastery of the subject. Some innovation, creativity, and critical thought, but may show some very minor lapses in reasoning or understanding. Written work is complete, on-time, and is free from errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The assignment adheres to all instructions.
- 7-8** GOOD: The student’s work shows a basic mastery of the subject. The work is solid, but is not necessarily innovative or creative. Otherwise ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ work is marred by sloppy editing or poor presentation.
- 5-6** LESS THAN SATISFACTORY: The work shows incomplete mastery of the subject. The work exhibits major spelling and grammar errors or is very sloppy. The assignment is incomplete or fails to follow the instructions. The assignment is turned in outside of class-time.
- 1-4** POOR: The student’s work shows fatal gaps in understanding, is very sloppy, or is incomplete.
- 0** NOT ACCEPTABLE: The student’s work does not satisfy the learning requirements of this exercise. The student failed to turn in an assignment altogether.

Discussions

Discussion comments will be posted on Canvas. The available time periods for the three discussion sessions will be shown on Canvas.