

Introduction to Research Methods

Tell me and I forget; teach me and I remember; involve me and I learn
Benjamin Franklin

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ONLINE

SOC 3111
Spring 2019—Sec 090

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COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

Research Methods is an introduction to the theory and practice of social science research. The primary objectives of the course are:

- ◆ familiarize students with the different types of methods that are used to accumulate evidence in the social sciences;
- ◆ expose students to the logic of data analysis;
- ◆ give students an opportunity to conduct their own research and to critique existing social science research;
- ◆ aid students in developing their skills in formal, scientific writing and critical thinking;
- ◆ offer students experience in written presentation of original work.

COURSE OVERVIEW & PROJECTED OUTCOMES

Individual readings, analysis exercises, sociological research and individual essays will be used to achieve learning objectives. The course will culminate as each student will present the results of his/her own research project in essay format.

Assignments

Five Chapter Summaries (Ruane text)	30%
Book Analysis (<i>Asking the Right Questions</i>)	10%
Project Preliminaries	30%
Research Project Essay	30%

NOTE: STUDENTS SHOULD NOT WAIT TILL THE END OF TERM TO SUBMIT WORK, BUT SHOULD KEEP ABREAST OF DUE DATES THROUGH CANVAS FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS TO RECEIVE FULL CREDIT.

Required Texts

Ruane, Janet M. 2016. *Introducing Social Research Methods: Essentials for Getting the Edge*. Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN: 978-1118874240.

Wang, Gabe T & Keumjee Park. 2016. *Student Research & Report Writing: From Topic Selection to the Complete Paper*. Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN: 978-1118963913.

Browne, M Neil & Stuart M Keeley. 2009. *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking* (11th Ed). Prentice-Hall. ISBN: 978-0205506682 (any edition of this volume is fine).

NOTE: The University Bookstore may offer new editions of the required texts, but students should check online booksellers for used copies that may be available for reduced prices.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES (30% of course grade)

During the semester students will read and summarize the material from the main text: *Introducing Social Research Methods: Essentials for Getting the Edge* by Janet Ruane. Periodically (see due dates in *Canvas*) students will submit their summaries on the chapters in this sequence: **1—3, 4 & 5, 6 & 7, 8—11, and 12 & 13**, for a total of **5 summaries** which count **6 points each** toward the course grade. Reports will be a **minimum of 300 words for each chapter**, double spaced, with 10 point font, and submitted through the *Canvas* system by the due date. Please note the total number of words in the report **for each chapter essay** at the conclusion of each chapter summary.

BOOK ANALYSIS (10% of course grade)

Students will read the volume *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking* by Browne & Keeley and write a brief essay (**500 word minimum**) **analyzing** the information. Please note the essay is NOT a regurgitation exercise, but rather an opportunity for the student to comment on the topics of interest to them contained in the book. First person, non-academic language may be utilized, and student opinion is welcome. Please use an appropriate title, 10 point font, and English/Grammar skills befitting a 3000-level course. Also, be sure to note total number of words at the end of the essay.

RESEARCH PROJECT PRELIMINARIES (30% of course grade)

The **research project** is an *exercise* that will acquaint students with many elements involved in conducting social science research from beginning to completion. As you develop the project you will go through several steps that are building blocks toward a completed essay. Each step involves a cumulative piece of the project, beginning with elementary problem identification and moving to the written report. The *style guide* of the *American Psychological Association (APA)* will be the format for this project. **NOTE:** You will find help on the project from the Wang & Park text, *Student Research & Report Writing: From Topic Selection to the Complete Paper*, required for this course.

1) Topic approval (2 points)—Submit a one paragraph statement presenting a topic of interest from the **United States Census** (any year or more than one, as a comparative project) as the subject of your **non-reactive data** research, explaining what the topic is and why it is important enough to be investigated. The topic may be approved or modified as the semester progresses.

2) Working literature review/bibliography (5 points)—Researchers always begin a study by looking at what else has been done on that subject. So, once the topic has been approved, immediately begin work finding at least **six peer-reviewed social science journal articles** on that subject. The list should be in a standard format for bibliographic references according to the *APA Style Guide*.

(3) Annotated bibliography (8 points)—After researchers find reputable references to their research, they read this information in order to learn what else is known about the subject. The **annotated bibliography** consists of short summaries of each of the references appearing on your *working bibliography*. The short summaries should not quote or paraphrase the published abstract for the article, but should include:

- ◆ short descriptions of the author's objectives (major question(s) the author was seeking to illuminate),
- ◆ a description of the *nature of the data* on which the conclusions were based (survey data, qualitative data, case studies, comparative historical studies, experiments, etc.);
- ◆ a description of *how the data were gathered* (face-to-face interviews, participant observation, quantitative analysis, etc.) and the nature of the cases studied, or the sample;
- ◆ a short summary of what the author(s) concluded.

(4) Mini-proposal Outline (15 points)—Once researchers learn what is already known about their subject and create a bibliography, they write a **research proposal in outline format**. Proposals are used to gain clearance to proceed with research. Authorization typically issues from funding agencies, committees that safeguard human subjects, and others, such as faculty advisors. You will write a very brief version, or **mini-proposal outline**, and it will contain the following elements in this order:

- (1) statement of the subject of the proposal, including why it is important;
- (2) overview of what is known about the subject, including the literature review—based on the references;
- (3) working hypotheses (both null and working) which would facilitate the investigation of this topic;
- (4) listing and defining the key concepts, constructs and variables;
- (5) identifying possible *non-reactive data* to be collected and why;
- (6) likely operationalization (or measurement) of the key concepts;
- (7) probable population, sample size and description;
- (8) probable methods of data collection;
- (9) possible ethical considerations (if any);
- (10) desired results.

FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT ESSAY (30% of course grade)

Once you have determined a suitable project using census data, collected scholarly journal articles and other sources, completed an *annotated bibliography & mini-proposal outline*, you are ready to complete the course with the final essay in the same format as a professional journal article. Final project essays will include:

- (1) descriptive title;
- (2) abstract/overview of project;
- (3) statement on how you propose to study the subject;
- (4) hypotheses (both null and working);
- (5) listing and defining the key concepts;
- (6) identification of data to be collected;
- (7) proposed operationalization (or measurement) of the key concepts;
- (8) population to be studied;
- (9) proposed sample size and description;
- (10) proposed methods of data collection;
- (11) ethical considerations (if any);
- (12) possible results;
- (13) limitations of study;
- (14) future work to be done.

NOTE: Please remember that you will **NOT** be conducting any statistical analysis, in-person interviews or surveys, or other face-to-face research. You will be working with *non-reactive United States Census* data to **propose** a meaningful project on a topic of interest. In other words, you are constructing a kind of **blueprint** for a research project that would employ statistics or other forms of research if brought to its logical conclusion. Your job in this course is to learn *how* to conduct sociological research, and become knowledgeable in the skills and techniques necessary to finalize and present such research.

OVERVIEW OF GRADING PHILOSOPHY

In order to help students better understand how and why marks are distributed, an *overview of grading philosophy* is included, along with a *checklist* which delineates the individual aspects of consideration in all essays/projects.

- A** An *excellent* work in all or nearly all aspects of the assignment. The student exemplifies originality of ideas, superior depth of thought, and extensive grasp of topics as well as technical superiority.
- B** A competent work with a lapse here or there. Ideas are clear and properly expressed; the writing is technically solid. The assignment is effective in meeting all criteria but does not rise to sustained distinction.
- C** An adequate work, but not good. Student ideas tend to be oversimplified, reductionistic, and lack sufficient explanation or exploration. Problems may also exist with grammar, logic, or ability to express thoughts in a manner reflective of a junior level class.
- D** A minimal effort by the student—the work is marred by problems with almost all aspects of the assignment. This is not considered a competent performance.
- E** A failing mark, generally reserved for assignments which are not submitted or miss the target on virtually every criteria of the project.
- +/-** Plus or minus may be given in addition to each of the grade levels when deemed appropriate.

Grade Ranges:

A 96% and above; **A-** 90—95.99%; **B+** 85—89.99%; **B** 80—84.99%;
B- 75—79.99%; **C+** 70—74.99%; **C** 65—69.99%; **C-** 60—64.99%;
D+ 55—59.99%; **D** 50—54.99%; **D-** 45—49.99%; **E** Below 45%.

GRADING CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Students should use the following criteria when proofreading and finalizing all essays:

- _____ Abstract problems (format, length)
- _____ Lack of/improper Title
- _____ Weak introduction
- _____ Weak conclusion
- _____ Poor organization
- _____ Weak levels of analysis (lower-level Bloom's)
- _____ Failure to communicate ideas clearly
- _____ Superficial/Little creativity
- _____ Weak English skills
- _____ Poor sentence structure
- _____ Poor paragraph structure/weak Links
- _____ Anticipatory IT; Contractions; Rhetorical questions
- _____ Non-Academic Voice/Language
- _____ *Excessive* 1st person references
- _____ Opinion/Bias rather than facts
- _____ Errors in logic
- _____ Sweeping generalizations (No/few Qualifiers)
- _____ Poor use of italics
- _____ Direct quotes instead of paraphrasing
- _____ Unnecessary Subheadings
- _____ inadequate length (meeting word minimum)
- _____ Weak proofing/inattention to detail
- _____ *APA* problems (citations/references page/primary sources)
- _____ Incorrect format (10 point font/double spaced lines)
- _____ Late paper submittal
- _____ Failure to note total number of words

Essay Rubric

Criterion	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Content and Focus	<p>Exceptionally clear, focused, interesting thesis.</p> <p>Strong, rich supporting details and examples that prove thesis.</p> <p>A meaningful conclusion explaining the importance of the research and how it can be used.</p>	<p>Clear thesis which maintains a consistent focus from beginning to end.</p> <p>Specific supporting details are present.</p> <p>A clear conclusion as to why the research is important.</p>	<p>Contains thesis but with inconsistent focus.</p> <p>Generalized supporting details that prove thesis.</p> <p>Conclusion tends to summarize research.</p>	<p>Thesis statement lacks clarity and focus.</p> <p>Inadequate or missing supporting details.</p> <p>Missing conclusion.</p>
Organization	<p>Strong introduction and conclusion.</p> <p>Consistent and coherent logical progression.</p> <p>Uses clear and skillful transitions.</p>	<p>Clear introduction and conclusion.</p> <p>Illustrates some consistency and shows some logical progression.</p> <p>Uses clear transitions.</p>	<p>Introduction and conclusion is present but not clear</p> <p>Shows some attempt of consistency and order.</p> <p>Essay shows attempt to create transitions between paragraphs.</p>	<p>Unable to clearly identify introduction and conclusion.</p> <p>Lack of consistency and order.</p> <p>Shows little or no attempt of transitions between paragraphs.</p>
Voice and paraphrasing	<p>Written in academic voice (no slang/contractions).</p> <p>Elaborate and colorful language.</p> <p>Consistently strong and varied sentence structure.</p> <p>No direct quotes (paraphrasing sound).</p>	<p>Majority written in formal language.</p> <p>Language appropriate to topic.</p> <p>Words convey intended message.</p> <p>Direct quotes support ideas.</p> <p>Majority written in own words.</p>	<p>Informal language is dominant.</p> <p>Most language is appropriate to topic.</p> <p>Able to get vague idea of message.</p> <p>Some parts of written in student's own words.</p>	<p>Paper frequently uses informal language.</p> <p>Language is not appropriate to topic.</p> <p>Message is unclear.</p> <p>Majority of essay is plagiarized.</p>
Sources/Format (For Research Essays Only) APA Style	<p>Follows APA guidelines well.</p> <p>Uses 5 or more cited academic sources.</p> <p>All documentation is APA correct.</p> <p>Works Cited page is APA correct.</p> <p>All research is documented.</p>	<p>Follows APA most of essay.</p> <p>3-4 cited sources used. Sources meet the guidelines for types of sources.</p> <p>Few errors noted in documentation</p> <p>Majority of Works Cited is APA correct.</p> <p>Most research documented.</p>	<p>Sometimes follows APA.</p> <p>Less than 3 cited sources used.</p> <p>Majority of sources done incorrectly.</p> <p>Random APA usage.</p> <p>Rarely documents sources.</p>	<p>Rarely follow APA.</p> <p>Less than 2 cited sources with little or no documentation.</p> <p>Works Cited page partial or missing.</p>
Conventions	<p>Superior editing meeting majority of aspects correctly in <i>Checklist</i>.</p> <p>Rarely makes errors in grammar or English.</p>	<p>Careful editing, meeting most <i>Checklist</i> items correctly</p> <p>Makes few errors in grammar or English.</p>	<p>Some evidence of editing, meeting some <i>Checklist</i> items.</p> <p>Extensive English and grammatical errors.</p>	<p>Poor overall editing, English and grammar skills. Meets few aspects of <i>Checklist</i> correctly.</p>

Course Policies

Canvas

Canvas is the student's main tool for online classes. Please be familiar with its abilities and constraints before beginning an upper-division course. Look for vital information such as the course syllabus, assignments (and their value), announcements, sample essays (in the FILES category) as well as the portal for submitting completed work. Additionally, an online communication route is available to contact the professor.

Announcements

Please check regularly for all announcements posted on Canvas, as they contain valuable and often critical information.

Communication

Students may easily communicate with the professor either via the Canvas contact portal, U of U email (marcie.goodman@soc.utah.edu), or by phone during business hours Monday through Friday (801-521-6588).

Late Assignments/Excused Situations/Canvas Comments

All assignments will have specific due dates which are clearly noted in Canvas. If students are not able to submit work on time, they should discern whether such lateness may be excused. Excused reasons would include *illness* of self or others (such as children or spouse); *work demands*; *school/team travel/activities demands*; *other emergencies which may develop*. Students must be the judge of whether they think their individual situation would merit being excused. Students should utilize the Canvas Comments section available on each assignment to note if their reason for late submittal should be excused. The professor will respond to the petition in Comments by either waving late charges (which vary according to degree of lateness), minimizing late charges, or rejecting petition (the professor will advise student on their actions in these situations). If an assignment is submitted late with no Canvas Comment as explanation, the professor will assume the student does not deem the reason excusable.

Institutional Policies & Procedures

1. **The 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 & Access](#), 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDA 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 & Access.

Accommodation Policy (see Section Q): <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>

2. **Addressing Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX 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](#), 328 SSB, 801-581-7779 or email at advocate@sa.utah.edu. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

- 3. Drop/Withdrawal.** Students may drop a course within the first two weeks of a given semester without any penalties. Students may officially withdraw (W) from a class or all classes after the drop deadline through the midpoint of a course. A “W” grade is recorded on the transcript and appropriate tuition/fees are assessed. The grade “W” is not used in calculating the student’s GPA. See the [Academic Calendar](#) for the last day to withdraw from term, first and second session classes.

Deadlines for courses with irregular start and end dates policy.

<https://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/miscellaneous.php>

- 4. Plagiarism/Cheating.** It is assumed that all work submitted to your 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 the **Student Code** below. <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>
- 5. 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.
- 6. Veterans Support Center.** The Veterans Support Center is a “one stop shop” for student veterans to find services, support, advocacy, and camaraderie. They are located in the Park Building Room 201. You can visit their website for more information about their services and support at <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu>.
- 7. LGBT Resource Center.** The University of Utah has an LGBT Resource Center on campus. They are located in Room 409 of 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>.
- 8. 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>).
- 9.** Please alert the professor if there is any additional support needed for this course.

University of Utah Research Facilities

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.

CSBS Emergency Action Plan



BUILDING EVACUATION

EAP (Emergency Assembly Point) – When you receive a notification to evacuate the building either by campus text alert system or by building fire alarm, please follow your instructor in an orderly fashion to the EAP marked on the map below. Once everyone is at the EAP, you will receive further instructions from Emergency Management personnel. You can also look up the EAP for any building you may be in on campus at <http://emergencymanagement.utah.edu/eap>



CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Heads Up App: There's an app for that. Download the app on your smartphone at <http://alert.utah.edu/headsup> to access the following resources:

- **Emergency Response Guide:** Provides instructions on how to handle any type of emergency, such as earthquake, utility failure, fire, active shooter, etc. Flip charts with this information are also available around campus.
- **See Something, Say Something:** Report unsafe or hazardous conditions on campus if you see a life threatening or emergency situation, please call 911!
- **Safety Escorts:** For students who are on campus at night or passed business hours and would like an escort to your care, please call 801-585-2677. You can call 24/7 and a security officer will be sent to walk with you or give you a ride to your desired on-campus location.