

SOCIOLOGY 357: METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY

University of Wisconsin-Madison Summer 2024

Virtual- Synchronous

MTWTh 9:20am-10:35am

Instructor: Dan Seel

Office Hours: Tues 12-2pm PM or by appt.

Email: dseel@wisc.edu

Zoom: <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/my/danielseel>

The course provides a rigorous overview of the ways that social scientists collect and evaluate information about social phenomena. Our course meetings will be used to clarify and strengthen our understanding of the process of sociological inquiry. This will be a collaborative exercise: as sociologists we know that knowledge production is a social, not an individual, undertaking. We will be working with, supporting, and learning from each other over the course of the semester. We will have a mix of small group work, large group discussions, and various other exercises. One of the primary purposes of our sections is to develop research projects throughout the semester, in both qualitative and quantitative domains. As your instructor I am here to support you throughout the semester and help you apply the material covered in the lectures and readings.

Learning Goals

- Plan, conduct, and analyze both Qualitative and Quantitative research projects
- Critically evaluate and apply methods from existing research literature
- Communicate fluently about research design
- Improve both project management and collaboration skills
- Apply the sociological perspective to practical questions

Discussion & Inclusion Policy

Our classroom is a learning community in which all perspectives are valuable. It is necessary for us to respect each other's growth trajectory and always remember to discuss and critique *ideas* and never *people* themselves. We are here to learn from and with each other and thus this class must be a brave space in which we share and engage with one another:

- Intentionality is important – what do you mean to convey?
- Never assume what other individuals are thinking or what groups they represent; *you don't know*
- Animosity or disrespect towards any student or teacher is not welcome
- Step up, Step back: I encourage students to “step up” and “step back” to give everyone a chance to participate.
- Build on and engage with other people's ideas (“Yes and...”)

Accommodations & Accessibility

As an educator, I aim to make Sociology accessible to all students, regardless of ability or previous experiences. Students with accommodations must present their UW McBurney Visa within two weeks of the first day of our section meeting. This helps me to provide you with the best possible learning environment and make all necessary accommodations. I encourage all students to let me

know about any personal situations or emergencies during the semester that may affect performance in the course.

Office Hours

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about course material or the section, please see me during office hours. You should also email me **with “Soc 357” in the subject line** about accommodations or absences, to schedule an appointment outside of my regular office hours slot, or with questions to address in section.

Required readings

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, the readings are a mix of other textbooks, my detailed lecture notes, and various handouts I’ve produced. You should read these documents carefully; I evaluate and grade you on the quality of your discussion board posts, which will serve as limbering-up exercises for our full-class discussions.

Communication

Please contact me via email. Please do not send me a message on canvas, use my email. I can’t promise a prompt response to a canvas message. I will respond to emails within 48 hours during the work week. If I do not get back to you in that timeframe, please send me a follow-up email. If you have a logistical question, please first consult the syllabus. Please familiarize yourself with the requirements of the course well in advance of due dates, I can’t promise quick answers to late, outside working hours questions about projects.

Evaluation/Assignments

Data Collection and Analysis Projects (50%):

You will conduct two research projects, one quantitative and one qualitative. The quantitative project will be conducted in teams (which will be randomly selected before the project) and the qualitative project will be conducted individually. Each project is worth 25% of your final grade:

Survey project (25%).

Your team will formulate a research question and hypothesis, develop an online survey questionnaire, distribute it electronically, analyze the data, and present your findings in class. You will also write a short report summarizing the research process and findings. All but the final step (i.e., writing the report) will be done as a team.

- Research proposal and revision (2.5 percent): As a team you will write a research proposal in which you a) formulate a sociological research question, b) explain why you think this question is worth studying, c) identify your key variables, d) specify which population you want to study (ideally), e) explain to whom and how you will distribute your survey, and f) state what you expect to find (your hypothesis) and why. Word count: 300-500.
 - **Due date: Tuesday, 6/25. Revisions by: Thursday, 6/27**
- Survey questionnaire and revision (2.5 percent): As a team you will develop a short survey questionnaire to measure the key concepts and other variables you may need for your analyses. At least one of your key concepts should be a complex/multi-dimensional one that is measured using multiple questions (more about this later in class). You will use Qualtrics or Google Forms to create and distribute your survey. While there is no fixed

number of respondents you need, I recommend that you sample at least 10 respondents per team member. You will analyze the survey responses using whatever software you like.

- **Due date: Sunday, 6/30. Revisions by: Friday, 7/5**
- Team presentation (5 percent): You and your partners will present your findings in class and respond to questions and comments from your classmates.
 - **Presentations on Wednesday, 7/15**
- Written report and peer evaluation (15 percent): You will write a short report (no more than 1200 words) which analyzes your findings. Each team member will write this report individually. For the steps listed above, your team members will also evaluate your contributions to the project. This is to ensure that no one free-rides.
 - **Due date: Friday, 7/19**

Qualitative research evaluation project (25%).

This is an individual assignment. Conducting qualitative research collaboratively can be challenging even without the added question of remote cooperation. In this project, you will conduct in-depth, qualitative interviews. You will design an interview guide, conduct an interview, code and analyze qualitative data, and produce a report.

- **In-depth interview guide and revision (10%):** Your interview guide will include the following: a) your research question; b) introductory remarks about your research and interview; c) at least five open-ended interview questions together with some potential follow-up questions; and d) concluding remarks.
 - **Due Friday 7/26, revision by Tuesday 7/30**
- **Coded transcript (5%):** You will conduct at least two interviews (lasting no less than 25-30 minutes each), select a ten-minute segment from each interview, and transcribe it. This segment will then be coded using a method taught in class.
 - **Due Wednesday 8/7**
- **Presentation (5%):** You will present your findings in class and respond to questions and comments from your classmates.
 - **Presentation on Wednesday 8/7**
- **Written report (5%):** You will write a short report (no more than 1200 words) that summarizes and discusses your findings.
 - **Due Friday 8/9**

Weekly quizzes (15%)

At the end of each week, you will complete one or more quizzes based on the assigned readings and lectures of that week. The quizzes are administered through Canvas and consist of 10 questions each. Quizzes are open note!

- You have 20 minutes to complete each quiz. If you have done the readings and attended the lectures, the quizzes should take around 5 minutes to complete. You have two attempts on each quiz, and Canvas will retain the higher of the two scores. If you do not submit your quiz within 20 minutes of starting it, you will receive a zero for that attempt.
- The quizzes will be opened no later than Thursday afternoon. You will have until Sunday midnight (11:59pm) to complete the quizzes. It is your responsibility to submit them during the open window. If you forget to complete a quiz, it will not be re-opened for you after the deadline. We can, however, negotiate the deadline if you contact me earlier. Reasons that I am generally sympathetic to include university-related travel, religious observations, illnesses, and rescheduled work shifts.
- Your lowest quiz score will be dropped from the final quiz grade.

- Note that these are pretty low stakes. The point is just to give you *some* incentive to keep up with the readings in a way that is stricter than the discussion posts.

Discussion board posts (15%)

Each week, you must respond to *all* of the handful of prompts I post to our discussion board on Canvas. I generally expect later-repliers to make more of an effort to engage the comments which are already written by your colleagues.

I am a fanatical proponent of quality over quantity in these matters. Posts should not exceed 500 words, but they must also be incisive and rigorous. I will provide credit for pure effort the first week of discussion board posts, but beyond that, you are responsible for leaving it all on the field with these posts: do your best for full credit.

I understand that many class discussion boards are frustrating to engage with because there is often a lack of structure, or perhaps on occasion, other members of class do not bring the same effort which you bring, etc. Rest assured, I will ask clear, stimulating questions to the class which have something like a “right answer”: you can say whatever you like while engaging my question, but you must engage that question, about which our course materials will provide ample food for thought.

Online ethics certification (5%)

You need to complete an online ethics certification before the last day of class. More information will be available in the Assignments section of Canvas.

Attendance and participation (15%)

Attendance and participation are graded on a three-point scale: 0 for absences, cameras off, or lack of commentary; 1 for camera on and mediocre participation; two for camera on and good participation. *You need to demonstrate active involvement throughout the semester to get full credit for participation.*

Meaningful contributions include but are not limited to:

- Offering ideas or asking questions about the course material in a way that demonstrates good preparation
- Questioning other students’ points in a constructive manner
- Suggesting alternative ways of approaching the course material
- Asking for clarification, questioning material which is unclear or confusing
- Attending virtual office hours
- You can make contributions either verbally or through the chat box in Zoom.

Two no-questions-asked absences are allowed all semester; to activate these, please just write to me to tell me that you want to take them. Please generally do **not** tell me why you are missing lecture. I believe we all need a bit of lenience and indulgence, to a point. If you may need more absences than this, please contact me and we will discuss.

Notice: using generative AI for assignments

In the event that you utilize generative AI (such as ChatGPT) for any aspect of the assignments in this course, it is imperative to provide an explanation within your written submission, detailing the extent and manner in which you employed it. Failure to declare its usage will be deemed as an instance of academic misconduct.

Grading & Late Policy

Due dates are not suggestions – they are deadlines. These dates make the course manageable for you, for your groupmates, and for your instructor. If you have an emergency that requires an extension, you or your group must consult with me *before* the due date. You must wait 24 hours after notification of a grade you earned before contacting me about the assignment/assessment and your concerns.

As a summer session course have a very short window of time for completing assignments. Please do your best to be prompt, especially as we get to the end of the semester. I will do my best to have your final grades back to you shortly after our final session meeting.

Grading scale	
A	93-100
AB	86-92
B	80-85
BC	74-79
C	66-73
D	56-65
F	<55

Weekly Schedule (subject to change)			
Week	Date	Topic & Section Content	Project Due Dates/ Reminders
1	Monday, June 17th	Introduction, syllabus, motivation	Groups assigned for project #1
	Tuesday, June 18th	Sociological research as a scientific enterprise	Start to think about your survey research project, contact group members
	Wednesday, June 19th	Objectivity and values in social science research	
	Thursday, June 20th	Introduction to the first data collection project; developing research questions & hypotheses	
2	Monday, June 24th	Survey research	Initial research proposal due 6/25
	Tuesday, June 25th	Measurement and measurement exercise	

	Wednesday, June 26th	Writing survey questions	Revise and resubmit proposal Due 6/27
	Thursday, June 27th	Sampling and asking survey questions	Survey questionnaire draft due 6/30
3	Monday, July 1st	Sampling	
	Tuesday, July 2nd	Research ethics	
	Wednesday, July 3rd	Review of questionnaires	Questionnaire revision due 7/5
			Distribute questionnaires with permission by 7/7
	Thursday, July 4th	No class- holiday	
4	Monday, July 8th	<i>Quant intro</i>	
	Tuesday, July 9th	STATA Tutorial & practice	
	Wednesday, July 10th	STATA Tutorial & practice	
	Thursday, July 11th	Survey and STATA workshop	Prepare for presentations on 7/15
5	Monday, July 15th	Project 1 presentations	
	Tuesday, July 16th	Qualitative research introduction	
	Wednesday, July 17th	Quantitative vs qualitative design and thinking	
	Thursday, July 18th	Qualitative literacy	Project 1 report due 7/19
6	Monday, July 22nd	Interview research	
	Tuesday, July 23rd	Constructing interview questions	
	Wednesday, July 24th	Analyzing qualitative data: interpretation	
	Thursday, July 25th	Ethnography	Interview guide due 7/26
7	Monday, July 29th	Analyzing qualitative data: coding	
	Tuesday, July 30th	Practice of interviews, practicing interviews	Interview guide revision due 7/30
	Wednesday, July 31st	Historical sociology	
	Thursday, August 1st	Theory and qualitative research	
8	Monday, August 5th	Qualitative analysis workshop	
	Tuesday, August 6th	Mixed methods research	Prepare for presentations on 8/7, coded transcript due 8/7
	Wednesday, August 7th	Student presentations	
	Thursday, August 8th	Wrap up and final notes	Project 2 report due 8/9

Academic Integrity

As with all courses at the University of Wisconsin, you are expected to follow the University's rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. The standards are outlined by the [Office of the Dean of Students](http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/) at <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>

According to UWS 14, academic misconduct is defined as:

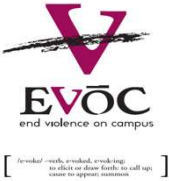
- seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance;
- assists other students in any of these acts.

For a complete description of behaviors that violate the University's standards as well the disciplinary penalties and procedures, please see the Dean of Students [website](#). If you have questions about the rules for any of the assignments or exams, please ask your instructor.

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights

The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science (Email: egrodsky@ssc.wisc.edu).

University of Wisconsin – Madison
Campus Resources

	UW-Madison Writing Center: For course papers and general writing guidance, students may wish to visit the campus writing center, located at 6171 Helen C. White Hall, (608) 263-1992. Webpage: www.writing.wisc.edu. Excellent writing instructors on staff offer group classes and one-on-one meetings to help with all aspects of the writing process, from brainstorming to polishing a final draft. Even the best writers have room for improvement!
	Tom Durkin, Social Science Librarian: Tom is a truly wonderful resource when it comes time to find sources for social science research. He can help you navigate the library's online databases to find relevant, peer-reviewed sources. His office is in the Social Science Reference Library on the (rear) 8th floor of the Sewell Social Science Building. You can email him at ssrlib@library.wisc.edu. Visit his website for more information.
	Student Technology Training: Free technology training for all students. Call (608) 265-6624 or e-mail sts@doit.wisc.edu. Webpage: www.doit.wisc.edu/training/student.
	McBurney Disability Resource Center: Students with disabilities, visible and invisible, should contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center located at 702 W Johnson St #2104, (608) 263-2741. Webpage: www.mcburney.wisc.edu.
	The primary mission of the Multicultural Student Center is to collaboratively strengthen and sustain an inclusive campus where all students, particularly students of color and other historically underserved students, can realize an authentic Wisconsin Experience. https://msc.wisc.edu/about-the-msc/
	University Counseling and Consultation Services (C&CS): School (and life) can be stressful! To obtain assistance for personal, social, career, and/or study skills problems, please contact the counseling center at University Health Services: 333 East Campus Mall, 7th Floor. (608) 265-5600 (option 2). www.uhs.wisc.edu/services/counseling.
	End Violence on Campus (EVOC): EVOC exists to prevent violence as well as to support survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. Please contact EVOC to learn more about their services or to make an appointment at the 8th Floor of 333 East Campus Mall. (608) 265-1483. evoc@uhs.wisc.edu.
	Greater University Tutoring Services (GUTS): volunteer tutors at GUTS provide assistance with academic courses, study skills, conversational English, and intercultural exchange. They provide free tutoring and mentoring to hundreds of students and university affiliates each semester. 333 East Campus Mall, 4th floor, Office # 4413. 608-263-5666. http://www.guts.wisc.edu.