

SOC 357/C&E SOC 357: Methods of Sociological Inquiry

Summer 2022

MTuWTh 10:20-11:35 AM

Zoom link:

<https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/92039636163?pwd=MytNaFlXaVEyV05lcmpEbZl1bDlTdZ09>

(Meeting ID: 920 3963 6163; passcode: 864320)

Instructor

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Office hours: Friday 11am - 1pm or by appointment

In person (Sewell Social Sciences 3475) or virtual:

<https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/94360950866?pwd=SzVYU51SjlXdXRSblJsODRmVjlhZz09>

Meeting ID: 943 6095 0866

Passcode: 700982

Overview

Our collective enterprise in this course is directed at two aims:

- 1) learn to conduct social science research;
- 2) learn to evaluate the research of others.

The course provides a general overview of the ways sociologists collect information about social phenomena, with a special emphasis on what can be done to yield information that is trustworthy and useful for our theoretical understanding of social life. Throughout the semester, you will learn to identify and evaluate a range of research methods used in social research. You also have the opportunity to design and carry out your own research projects.

The course assumes no background in research methods or statistics. Over the course of the semester, you will be introduced to basic statistical concepts and techniques of data analysis.

Learning Objectives

This course is designed to achieve the following instructional objectives designated priorities by the Department of Sociology:

- *Conducting Research and Analyzing Data.* You will have the opportunity to design your own research projects and learn how to collect and analyze data.
- *Critically Evaluating Published Research.* You will read peer-reviewed journal articles that use the methods covered in this class. Together, we will think about why social scientists use different methods to answer different questions, while also examining the strengths and weaknesses of those methods. Thus, you will gain a research vocabulary that will help you think, write, and speak more critically about social science research.
- *Communicating Skillfully.* All course assignments are designed to improve your oral and written communication skills. Most importantly, you will have the chance to present your research findings in class and respond to audience questions and comments.
- *Working Effectively in Groups.* The in-class exercises as well as the data collection and analysis projects are intended to develop your teamwork skills. A portion of your grade for these projects will be based on how your teammates evaluate your contributions.

Required Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. The lectures will be based on material compiled from myriad sources. The lecture slides, which will be available on **Canvas**, constitute our “textbook.”

In addition to the lecture slides, there are assigned readings for each week. The digital copies of these readings will be posted on **Perusall**, a free collaborative e-book reader integrated with Canvas (more on that below).

Technology in This Course

Zoom

We will use Zoom to conduct our regular lecture meetings. Office hours will be held via Zoom as well. The links and dial-in numbers are provided on the first page. Please make sure to have the latest version installed on your computer.

Canvas

Canvas is the learning management system (LMS) for this course. We’ll use Canvas to access course materials and submit your assignments.

Perusall

We’ll use Perusall to read and comment on the assigned readings. No specific enrollment is needed. Perusall can be accessed via the Perusall link in the navigation menu on our course’s Canvas page. For instructions on how to use Perusall, click on this [link](#).

Note: Perusall is a somewhat-experimental, AI software. I have good reason to believe that it will work, but in the event that it becomes excessively unwieldy, you can simply read the texts and I will redistribute the (small) share of your grade that comes from reading notes to other assignments.

Stata

We will use the Stata, a powerful and popular statistical software, to conduct basic statistical analyses. Some of you may already have Stata installed on your computers, but if not, the “standard edition” (SE) can be downloaded for free from the [Campus Software Library](#).

We’ll gradually learn to use Stata through a variety of methods: course handouts, tutorials, and instruction in lectures. Stata has a large, active user-base, and many questions can easily be answered by searching the internet (e.g., “How do you re-code a variable in Stata?”).

Qualtrics

Qualtrics is an online tool that you will use to create and distribute a survey questionnaire. It is free for UW-Madison students. Visit www.survey.wisc.edu and login with your Net ID.

Google Docs

We will occasionally use [Google Docs](#) to facilitate group-based learning activities. Google Docs is free with a Google account. You also have access to it via your UW Google account. If you sign in to [UW–Madison G Suite](#) with your university email (e.g., bbadger@wisc.edu), then your activities will be privacy-protected.

General Technology Requirements

Web browser

[Chrome](#) is the recommended web browser for Canvas. We recommend that you have the latest version installed in order to avoid technical problems.

Regardless of the web browser you use, make sure to:

- o Enable JavaScript: in [multiple web browsers](#).
- o Enable cookies: in [Firefox](#), [Chrome](#), and [Safari](#).

Adobe Reader

Download the [latest version of Adobe Reader](#) to view PDF files. Note: Do not select the optional offer for McAfee Security Scan Plus.

Microsoft Office

Microsoft Office is free for UW–Madison students through the [Office 365](#) portal.

Need help with technology?

- Contact the [DoIT Help Desk](#) via chat, email, phone, or in person
- Search the [UW KnowledgeBase](#) for technical information and help documents
- Check DoIT’s log of reported [outages](#) on campus
- Get help with [bandwidth and internet connections](#)
- Check out [laptops and other equipment](#)
- Download [software available to UW-Madison affiliates](#)

- See tips for [working remotely](#)

Course Requirements

- ***Data Collection and Analysis Projects (60 percent)***: You will work in teams to conduct two data collection and analysis projects. The teams will be created through random selection before each project.

1. Survey project (30 percent)

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 its revision (five 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: 200-400 words.
- Survey questionnaire and its revision (five 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 to create and distribute your survey. While there is no fixed number of respondents you need, I recommend that you sample at least 15 respondents per team member. You will analyze the survey responses using Stata.
- Team presentation (five percent): You and your partners will present your findings in class and respond to questions and comments from your classmates.
- Peer evaluation (five percent): For the steps listed above, your team members will evaluate your contributions to the project. This is to ensure that no one free-rides. The evaluations will be anonymous.
- Written report (10 percent): You will write a short report (no more than 1,200 words) which analyzes your findings. **Each team member will write this report individually.**

2. Qualitative interview project (30 percent).

You and your colleagues will conduct qualitative in-depth interviews. This project also requires several steps, each of which will be graded separately. The team will work and be graded together for some steps and individually for others, including the project report.

- Research proposal and its revision (four 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) discuss why qualitative interviewing is appropriate for addressing the question, d) specify which population you want to study (ideally), e) discuss whom you will interview, and f) state whether you have any hunches about what you may find. Word count: 200-400 words.
- In-depth interview guide and its revision (five percent): 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.
- Coded transcript (four percent): Each team member will conduct at least one interview (lasting no less than 25-30 minutes), select a ten-minute segment from the interview, and transcribe it. This segment will then be coded. Each team member will submit their coded transcript separately.
- Team presentation (four percent): You and your partners will present your findings in class and respond to questions and comments from your classmates.
- Peer evaluation (five percent): For the steps listed above (except the coding part), your team members will evaluate your contributions to the project. The evaluations will be anonymous.
- Written report (eight percent): You will write a short report (no more than 1,000 words) that summarizes and discusses your findings. Each team member will write this report individually.

- *Weekly Quizzes (20 percent)*

- 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.
- **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 chances to take each quiz, and Canvas will record only the highest score.~~ If you do not submit your quiz within 20 minutes of starting it, you will get 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.
- ***Perusall Participation (10 percent)***
 - You are required to post comments/questions on course readings and interact with your classmates in Perusall, a collaborative e-book reader and annotation tool developed by researchers at Harvard.
 - **To get full credit, you need to post at least 3 thoughtful comments or questions on every reading assignment before the deadline for that assignment.** Each comment or question in Perusall is automatically scored by the system and rated as “below expectations,” “meets expectations,” or “exceeds expectations.” If you make more than 3 annotations on an assignment, Perusall will take into account only the 3 top-scoring annotations. For examples of how Perusall measures annotation quality, click [here](#).
 - **You may get partial credit for annotations made after the deadline based on when the comment was made.** No credit will be given for annotations made after the late annotation period, which is 3 days.
 - There are multiple ways of increasing your grade in a Perusall assignment. One way is to **make sure you open every page in the reading and spend some time actively working on the assignment** (Note: this does not include the time when Perusall is open, but you are not actively interacting with the browser).
 - **There is a small penalty for failing to distribute your annotations fairly evenly across the reading.** So do not make all of your annotations on the same page. ▀ You can also increase your grade by **opening the assignment more than once** to check other students’ comments and questions.
 - **You will earn extra credit when your annotations receive upvotes/replies from your classmates or when you upvote/reply to their annotations.**
 - The final score for each reading assignment will be between 0 and 3.
 - Your Perusall scores for the first week’s assignments will not be included in your final grade. They will be a trial run for you to understand how Perusall works.

- ***Online Ethics Certification (five percent)***
 - You need to complete an online ethics certification before the last day of class. More information is available in the Assignments section of Canvas.
- ***Lecture Participation (5 percent)***
 - You will get a “+” each time you make a **meaningful contribution** during the lectures. Your lecture participation grade will be a function of the total number of “+”s you have at the end of the semester.
 - 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
 - Providing feedback on how the lectures can be improved
 - Attending virtual office hours
 - You can make contributions either verbally or through the chat box in Zoom.
 - You need to demonstrate active involvement throughout the semester to get full credit for participation.

Please note that all assignments other than the reading assignments in Perusall should be submitted via Canvas.

All submissions to Canvas are time-stamped and must be submitted before the deadline to receive full credit. I subtract five percent per day for late work, and this is amortized to the hour (so, for example, submitting 45 minutes late results in a $0.05/24 \approx 0.0021$, or 0.21 percent, penalty); there is also a floor of 50 percent, meaning that you cannot lose more than 50 percent for late work. This late penalty is mild, and I hope that, in most cases, it suffices to cover minor misfortunes (feeling unmotivated one day, would rather hang out with friends another).

My philosophy with late policies is informed by my past experience of being too lenient: I have found that, while the cushions provided can help highly-motivated, highly-busy students succeed, it allows students who are struggling and would likely be best served by a drop to slip through the cracks. The consequences for failing a course are considerably larger than for dropping one, and hard deadlines provide me and you some preliminary data to determine whether you are likely able to succeed in the course. Please contact me if you encounter extenuating circumstances — I am far from insensitive to such situations — but if you find yourself unable to meet deadlines routinely, we should talk.

Grades

Summary of components of your grade:

- Data collection and analysis projects (30 percent + 30 percent = 60 percent)
- Weekly quizzes (20 percent)
- Perusall participation (10 percent)
- Online ethics certification (5 percent)
- Lecture participation (5 percent)

Numeric grades are converted into alphabetic grades as follows (if your grade falls into a gap, I round to the nearest integer):

- 93-100 → A
- 86-92 → AB
- 80-85 → B
- 74 - 79 → BC
- 66-74 → C
- 55-65 → D
- grade ≤ 54 → F

Course Expectations

- Keep up with the weekly readings and assignments.
- Communicate clearly and considerately, whether in a private venue (e.g., the Canvas Inbox) or a public one (e.g., Zoom).
- If your circumstances allow, keep your camera on during the online lectures.
- Mute yourself when not speaking.
- If using video or audio chat, please do so in a reasonably quiet and private environment. While we welcome your family, pets, or roommates, following these tips may minimize distractions for others.
- Respect the ideas, feelings, and experiences of your classmates.
- Learn the preferred names (and pronunciations) of your colleagues.
- Proceed with humility when providing feedback and considering others' feedback.

Accessibility & Accommodations

Your success in this course is important to me. Please contact me if there is a way in which I can help improve your ability to access course content or assignment materials.

The [McBurney Center](#) is a resource that can help students navigate formal, disability-related accommodations. If you utilize McBurney services, please notify me as soon as possible so that we can discuss how to tailor this course to best support your learning.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for **religious observances** or **athletic events**, send me an email **by the end of the first week of class**, stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation.

Diversity & Inclusion

Creating an **inclusive** classroom environment is a responsibility that **we all** share. An inclusive classroom is one where all participants are welcome and encouraged to participate. I thus ask that you respect and consider your peers' experiences. As our campus diversity statement says, "Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community."

Mental Health

These are hard times for many people. Dealing with the anxieties associated with the massive social disruption of the past several years while also balancing our roles as students, workers, teachers, friends, and family members can be challenging.

[University Health Services](#) continue to support the mental health needs of our students, with some minor changes to services. The most up to date information about accessing mental health services on campus is available [here](#). Most mental health services are now available remotely—over the phone or video—with some additional services available in person with appointments.

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.

For a complete description of behaviors that violate the University's standards, as well the disciplinary penalties and procedures for academic misconduct, please see the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards [website](#).

Academic & Non-Academic Support

Tutoring

There are a wide variety of tutoring and other course-specific programs for undergraduate students across campus. To learn more about the options available, go to UW-Madison's [Academic Support](#) page.

International Student Services

The global pandemic has made international travel and study, as well as immigration, more complicated. [International Student Services](#) is the best source of information for students on F and J visas.

DACA & Undocumented Student Support

Please review information from the [Multicultural Student Center](#).

Weekly Schedule

NOTE: I am keeping this as a live link because **the schedule may change**. I will notify you if something does change; all announcements regarding schedule changes will be emailed to you, posted on Canvas, and/or announced in lecture. You are responsible for keeping up-to-date on these changes.

[2022 SOC357 reading/lecture schedule](#)