

Abilene Christian University
SOCI 415-01
“Social Research”
Spring 2014
TR 9:30 – 10:50 am

Instructor: Dr. Suzie Macaluso, PhD

Office Hours: MW 11:30-2:30, T 11:30-1:00 or by appointment

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Mission of Abilene Christian University

The mission of Abilene Christian University is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. The mission of the College of Arts and Sciences is to educate students for worldwide Christian service and leadership through programs of study and other learning experiences that blend a Liberal Arts education with professional and career education. The Department of Sociology and Family Studies builds upon the university goals of strengthening Christian character and education for service while addressing contemporary social issues and providing a foundation for future personal and professional growth. The focus of Family Studies is an integrative approach to the relationships among families and communities and the environments in which they function. Courses are designed to provide the knowledge and skills needed for employment in family service careers, the establishment of Christian homes, and for graduate study.

Catalog Description

This course examines the application of the scientific method to the study of social phenomena and the basic methods of data gathering, analysis and reporting, including basic statistics. Students experience organizing, conducting, and evaluating research.

Course Rationale

The mission of Abilene Christian University is to prepare students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. Through a working knowledge of Christian service and leadership individuals carry out Jesus' ministry by focusing on issues pertaining to human relationships and functioning in a social context, by addressing issues of human suffering and social justice, and by identifying means for promoting human wellness in a diverse social environment.

Practice in the helping professions is founded on principles and methods of social scientific research. Knowledge building from a Christian worldview assumes these principles and methods; ethical standards demand that practice activities grow out of research that has been empirically tested within a faith-linked paradigm.

SOCI 415: Social Research is designed for undergraduate students majoring in Sociology, Sociology with Emphasis in Criminal Justice, and students planning to attend graduate school in the social sciences for the following purposes:

1. To familiarize the student with scientific methods of building knowledge for practice, and of evaluating service delivery in practice;
2. To help make the student an informed, critical consumer of research;
3. To reinforce techniques of style and form in order to insure that the student communicates acceptably in written form, at the academic level expected of students in ACU undergraduate programs.

Prerequisites:

Introduction to Sociology.

Course Goals and Expected Student Competencies

Competency	Measurement Instrument	
Explain the scientific analytical approach to human inquiry as employed in the social sciences	1. Assignments 2. Class discussion	1. Minimum score of 80% 2. Correctly use sociological terminology
Design research to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data	1. Assignments 2. Final Project	1. Minimum score of 80% 2. Minimum score of 80%
Construct and/or use instruments with which to measure attitudes, behaviors, etc.	1. Assignments 2. Final Project	1. Minimum score of 80% 2. Minimum score of 80%
Identify the strengths and weaknesses of various research designs	1. Assignments 2. Final Project 3. Presentation	1. Minimum score of 80% 2. Minimum score of 80% 3. Minimum score of 80%
Identify and utilize adequate sampling techniques (both random and non-random)	1. Assignments 2. Final Project	1. Minimum score of 80% 2. Minimum score of 80%
Analyze data in a clearly understood statistical and/or qualitative language	1. Assignments 2. Final Project	1. Minimum score of 80% 2. Minimum score of 80%
Critically assess strengths and weaknesses of research performed by others	1. Assignments 2. Final Project	1. Minimum score of 80% 2. Minimum score of 80%
Produce, in acceptable style and form, a written report which will exhibit, 1. mastery of the required skills expected in academic research at the graduate level, and 2. self-evaluate one's own research and/or contribution of knowledge for professional practice	1. Final Project	1. Minimum score of 80%
Apply ethical principles of scientific inquiry to issues associated with research within the student's major field of study.	1. Assignments 2. Final Project	1. Minimum score of 80% 2. Minimum score of 80%

Course Texts



Orcher, Lawrence T. 2014. *Conducting Research: Social and Behavioral Science Methods*, 2nd edition, Pryczek Publishing. ISBN 9678-1-936523-19-1

Format of the Course

The course will be conducted in a lecture/discussion format.

Course Requirements

Course requirements consist of weekly readings, attendance and participation, quizzes, a research proposal and presentation. Please read the descriptions below.

I. Weekly Reading

The course schedule at the end of the syllabus provides an overview of the required reading for this course. It is very important that you read the chapter prior to class. By reading the book, hearing the course material during lecture and taking notes you will set yourself up for success in this course.

II. Class Participation

Class participation is comprised of two components: attendance and discussion. It is imperative that you arrive to class on time each day prepared to work and discuss. Read the course material prior to coming to class so that you can participate fully in discussions. To encourage your participation in class activities 50 points will be available for attendance and participation. You will receive three excused absences for the semester. For each absence over your three excused 5 points will be deducted from your participation grade. If you have perfect attendance for the entire semester you will be rewarded with a 5 point bonus on your participation grade. Full participation points are dependent on participating in discussions and in class activities. Some in class activities may require you to turn in an assignment or to finish an assignment started in class at home and return it during the next class meeting. On occasion participation points will be given for discussion questions posted on OpenClass. Please see “General Classroom Policies” for my policy on missing class.

PowerPoint slides will be posted on the course website prior to the start of each class. While having the slides is not a substitute for taking notes or attending class they will help you focus on what I say in class rather than worrying about copying down the notes on the screen.

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor, are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person.

III. Homework

You will have several homework assignments due throughout the semester. The homework assignments will come from the textbook and will address the mechanics of writing for the social sciences. The specific homework assignments are posted on OpenClass and the due dates are listed at the end of the syllabus in the course schedule. Your homework is to be typed and submitted in class. Homework that is not typed or stapled will not receive full credit. Please see the section on late work at the end of the syllabus.

IV. Research Proposal and Presentation

The major project for this course is composed of three components:

- a. You will submit the components of a research proposal throughout the semester that will include: an initial research question, review of academic literature, theoretical framework, and a methodology for collecting data in a feasible way. Each of these pieces will be subject to in-class peer review. Specific instructions for each part of the proposal are posted on OpenClass.
- b. At the end of the semester you will take the feedback from your peers and revise all of the parts of the proposal into one paper with a minimum length of 2000 words (approximately 7 pages). This paper provides an opportunity for a summative assessment of your information literacy skills. Your paper must include a minimum of 8 academic sources from peer-reviewed sociological journals. You must use proper citations as discussed in class.
- c. The final component of the proposal will be a presentation of the proposed research. The presentation will be done in class and will be in the same format as a presentation at a professional conference. Specific instructions will be posted on the course website.

V. Writing Intensive Prompt

As this class is designated as a writing intensive course you will write a 750-1000 word essay ethics in social research, particularly how being an ethical researcher may be informed by your faith. This essay will be submitted to the University in order to evaluate writing at ACU. You will find more instructions on OpenClass.

VI. Curriculum Vita

One of the purposes of this course is to prepare you for a career in the social sciences. Therefore, you will create a curriculum vita (an academic resume) that reflects your scholarship, accomplishments, service, leadership, knowledge, etc.

General Classroom Policies and Guidelines

Course Management Software

For this course we will be using OpenClass

Grading

The grading breakdown is as follows:

Participation: 50 points

Homework: 7 x 10 points each = 70 points

Preliminary Topic and Research Question or Hypothesis: 15 points

Introduction and Literature Review: 35 points

Theory Section: 25 points

Methods Section: Sampling, Instrumentation, Ethics Section and IRB: 40 points

Presentation: 30 points

Final Proposal & Binder: 80 points

Writing Intensive Prompt: 30 points

Curriculum Vitae: 25 points

Total: 400 points

90.00% and higher = 360 to 400 points = A
80.00 - 89.99% = 320 to 359 points = B
70 - 79.99% = 280 to 319 points = C
60 - 69.99% = 240 to 279 points = D
0 - 59.99% = 0 to 239 points = F

What Grades Mean

The Grade of A: A grade of A indicates exceptional scholastic performance. The essence of A-level work is overall excellence with no major weaknesses. It meets the stated requirements but goes beyond them in terms of thoroughness and creativity. A-level work represents real achievement in grasping the nature of social scientific thinking and ability. In such work, terms and distinctions are used effectively, accurately, and precisely; skills are displayed masterfully. The A-level student consistently analyzes issues clearly and precisely, formulates information clearly, distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, recognizes key questionable assumptions, clarifies key concepts effectively, uses language in keeping with educated usage, identifies relevant competing points of view, and shows noticeable sensitivity to important implications, and consequences. Overall, A-level work demonstrates creativity, imagination, sound judgment, and intellectual curiosity in relating the course materials to other areas of intellectual investigation. An A student's work is consistently at a high level of intellectual excellence.

The Grade of B: A grade of B indicates good scholastic performance. The essence of B-level work is that it demonstrates more strengths than weaknesses and is more consistent in high level performance than C-level work. It meets the stated requirements and occasionally goes beyond them in terms of thoroughness and creativity. It has some distinctive weaknesses though no major ones. B-level work represents demonstrable achievement in grasping the nature of social scientific thinking and skills. On the whole, terms and distinctions are used effectively and accurately and research skills are competently demonstrated. The B-level student often analyzes issues clearly and precisely, often formulates information clearly, usually distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, often recognizes key questionable assumptions, usually clarifies key concepts effectively, typically uses language in keeping with educated usage, frequently identifies relevant competing points of view, and shows noticeable sensitivity to important implications and consequences. Overall, B-level work represents sustained interest in the coursework and the ability to communicate the thinking and concepts and to demonstrate the skills of social science research.

The Grade of C: A grade of C indicates average scholastic performance. The essence of C-level work is that it demonstrates more than a minimal level of skill, but it is also highly inconsistent, with as many weaknesses as strengths. It meets the stated requirements but rarely goes beyond them in terms of thoroughness and creativity. C-level work represents inconsistent achievement in grasping the nature of the thinking and skills of a social scientist. Though some assignments are reasonably well done, others are poorly done or at best are mediocre. The work sometimes represents the ability to use concepts and research skills effectively; sometimes the use is ineffective. The C-level student only occasionally analyzes issues clearly and precisely, formulates information clearly, distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, recognizes key

questionable assumptions, clarifies key concepts effectively, uses language in keeping with educated usage, identifies relevant competing points of view, or recognizes important implications and consequences. Sometimes the C-level student seems to be simply going through the motions of the assignment, carrying out the form without getting into the spirit of it. The C student exhibits interest in the coursework and the capacity to understand the thinking and concepts of social science research.

The Grade of D: A grade of D indicates poor scholastic performance. The essence of D-level work is that it demonstrates only a minimal level of understanding social scientific thinking along with the development of some, but very few research skills or abilities. It meets the stated requirements for the course, but most assignments and other tasks are poorly done. Often the student seems to be merely going through the motions of the assignment, carrying out the form without getting into the spirit of it. In D-level work, the student rarely analyzes issues clearly and precisely, almost never formulates information clearly, rarely distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant, rarely recognizes key questionable assumptions, almost never clarifies key concepts effectively, frequently fails to use language in keeping with educated usage, only rarely identifies relevant competing points of view, and almost never recognizes important implications and consequences. The D student exhibits minimal interest in social research but comprehends the essential concepts of the discipline.

The Grade of F: A grade of F indicates unacceptable scholastic performance. F-level work neglects the standards and requirements of the assignment or the course. The student does not understand the basic nature of social scientific thinking and cannot effectively use research skills or abilities. F-level work is vague, imprecise, and shows little evidence that the student is genuinely engaged in the course material. Many assignments appear to have been done pro forma without significant effort or are missing. Consequently, the student is not analyzing issues clearly, not formulating information clearly, not accurately distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, not identifying key questionable assumptions, not clarifying key concepts, not identifying relevant competing points of view, and not tracing implications and consequences. The F student exhibits no interest in social research and the inability to understand the essential concepts of the discipline.

Late Work

Work will be considered late if it is not received by the instructor by 9:45 am on the day that it is due. All work received after 9:45 am will be worth half credit. Any work not received two business days after the due date by 5 pm will not be graded and will receive a grade of 0.

Examples

- Paper due Tuesday, if I don't have it by 5 pm on Thursday it is worth no credit.

Absences for In-Class assignments

If you are a student athlete or have an official, University related absence you must notify the instructor prior to missing class with written documentation signed by your coach/instructor/advisor. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements for making up missed assignments.

If you do not have an official University excused absence then there is no make-up allowed for in-class assignments. If your dog dies, your alarm doesn't go off, your car breaks

down, you are sick, etc. Please feel free to come by during my office hours to discuss the class material that you missed and to clarify any material from the reading that you did not understand.

Grade Challenges

There are two types of grade challenges, “administrative” and “substantive.” Administrative grade challenges occur when there is a discrepancy between the grade written on the assignment and the grade posted on Blackboard. Administrative grade challenges will be handled by the instructor immediately. It is important for the student to bring grade discrepancies to the instructor’s attention as soon as possible.

Substantive grade challenges are those in which the student does not agree with the grade received on an assignment. If you are unhappy with a grade that you received and you feel that it is unfair then you may submit a grade challenge to the instructor. All grade challenges must be submitted by the class session after receiving the graded assignment. Grade challenges must be typed and must state specifically how the student believes the submitted work meets the requirements of the assignment. The student must specify where in the work the requirement was met. The original work must be turned in with the grade challenge. No other form of grade challenge will be accepted.

Academic Integrity

Violations of academic integrity and other forms of cheating, as defined in ACU's Academic Integrity Policy, involve the intention to deceive or mislead or misrepresent, and therefore are a form of lying and represent actions contrary to the behavioral norms that flow from the nature of God. Violations will be addressed as described in the policy. While the university enforces the policy, the most powerful motive for integrity and truthfulness comes from one's desire to imitate God's nature in our lives. Every member of the faculty, staff and student body is responsible for protecting the integrity of learning, scholarship and research. The full policy is available for review at the Provost's Office web site (<http://www.acu.edu/campusoffices/provost>) and the following offices: provost, college deans, dean of student life, director of student judicial affairs, director of residential life education and academic departments.

Therefore, cheating, plagiarism (copying someone else’s work or using quotes or major ideas without acknowledgment), and other forms of academic dishonesty WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. Students who violate standards of academic integrity will be given a failing grade (F), withdrawn from the course, and referred to the appropriate Student Life Office for possible additional sanctions.

Special Accommodations

Abilene Christian University and the Department of Sociology and Family Studies comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodation for qualified students with a disability. If you have an established disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act and would like to request accommodation, please see me as soon as possible. You may also contact ACU’s Alpha Academic Services concerning disability accommodations at: (325) 674-2667.

Classroom Environment

Many view a college education as a solid investment in their future. Here are some suggestions and ground rules for making this class a wise investment:

1. Come to class on time. If you are late to class, please quietly take a seat near the door.
2. Turn off cell phones; even vibrating phones create a distraction. Also, please refrain from making or taking calls during this time.
 - a. Exceptions may be made if we are using the iphone/ipods for an in-class activity
 - b. If you are caught using your mobile device unauthorized I will confiscate it until the end of the class period.
3. Come to class prepared. Read the assigned material prior to the start of class.
4. If you have a question, raise your hand and wait until you are called on.
5. Class Climate and Conduct: One of the hallmarks of good sociology is the ability to embrace and even welcome different points of view. Rather than immediately voicing objections, ridiculing, or making jokes with your neighbor about viewpoints that differ from yours, respect that all your classmates bring their particular social histories to class. Carefully listening to and seeking out multiple perspectives on an issue allows us to engage in critical thinking. Many of the issues we talk about in class are controversial and may spark intense emotional reactions from some people. As such, we need to create and maintain a safe, open, and respectful environment for the sharing of divergent viewpoints. **By enrolling and staying in this class, you are acknowledging the importance of and agreeing to work within this respectful class climate and class conduct rule.**
6. Please refrain from talking during lectures.
7. Please refrain from reading the newspaper or doing work for another class during our class time.
8. Laptops/ipads may be used for note taking purposes only, if you are found to be using your laptop or ipad for a purpose not related to course work you will lose your privileges to use it in class for the rest of the semester.

Schedule

The following is a tentative schedule of the topics that will be covered this semester. This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be communicated orally in class and in writing on OpenClass.

Dates:	Day:	Topic to be Covered	Reading	Assignment Due
Jan 14	T	Introductions	-	Post an Introduction
16	R	Doing Social Research	-	on Open Class
21	T	Choosing a Topic	Ch 1	-
23	R	Choosing a Topic	Ch 1	HW 1 Due
28	T	Theory Testing Research - Quantitative		-
30	R	Theory Building Research - Qualitative		HW 2 Due
Feb 4	T	Searching for Literature – Meet in Library	Ch 2	Research Question
6	R	Reviewing the Literature	Ch 3	-
11	T	Technicalities in Writing Social Research	Ch 4	-
13	R	Writing Hypotheses	Ch 5	-
18	T	Selecting a Research Approach	Ch 6	-

20	R	Selecting a Research Approach	Ch 6	Intro & Lit Review
25	T	Sampling: Participant Selection	Ch 7	-
27	R	Participant Selection: Quantitative Research	Ch 12	HW 3 Due
Mar 4	T	Measurement	Ch 8	-
6	R	Measurement in Quantitative Research	Ch 14	HW 4 Due
11	T	Spring Break!!		-
13	R	Spring Break!!		-
18	T	Surveys	Ch 21-23	-
20	R	Surveys		Theory Section
25	T	Secondary Data Analysis	-	-
27	R	Experimental Research	Ch 24-26	HW 5 Due
April 1	T	Participant Selection in Qualitative Research	Ch 13	-
3	R	Measurement in Qualitative Research	Ch 16	HW 6 Due
8	T	Content Analysis		-
10	R	Field Research		Essay Due
15	T	Interviews		HW 7 Due
17	R	Focus Groups		-
22	T	Analysis of Data		Methods Section
24	R	Analysis of Data		-
29	T	Presentations		CV Due
May 1	R	Presentations		-
May 9	F	10:00 to 11:45: Presentations		Binder Due