

Sociology 46A: Introduction to Social Research
Summer Session I - 2016
Syllabus

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Office Hours: Mondays and Tuesdays, 12-1pm

Course website: https://smartsite.ucdavis.edu/portal/site/soc46a_2016ss1

Lecture Time: M/Tu/W/Th 10:00-11:40am

Location: Olson 207

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course aims to provide students with a fundamental understanding of how social science research is designed and conducted. Students will be exposed to a variety of research methods, including experimental design, survey research, qualitative field research, and unobtrusive research. By the end of the course, students will understand the logics of social inquiry and the benefits and challenges of different research methods.

This course also aims to put social research in context. Together, we will explore what makes science different from other ways of learning things about the world around us. We will examine the features that make science well suited for the production of knowledge, and we will also learn its limitations. We will even examine the political and ethical implications of social science research.

This course is designed for students with multiple career goals. Even if students don't plan to pursue careers in research, they will still *consume* a great deal of research over their lifetimes. This course will help students become critical consumers of research studies in popular media, future courses, and the academic literature. Course activities will help students develop widely applicable skills in critical thinking, project design, and writing.

TEXTBOOK:

Earl Babbie. 2012. *The Practice of Social Research* (Cengage Learning, 13th Edition). (Available for about \$16 on [Amazon](#).)

Additional readings will be posted to SmartSite.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Midterm Exam: July 11

Assignment 1: Due July 18 at 10am on SmartSite

Assignment 2: Due July 25 at 10am on SmartSite

Final Exam: July 28

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Participation	10
Reading quizzes	10
Assignment 1	15
Assignment 2	20
Midterm Exam	20
Final Exam	25

Active participation in class is expected of all students and is worth 10% of the total course grade. I will provide many types of opportunities for student participation, including structured discussions in pairs and small groups, in-class exercises, and the occasional take-home exercise. These activities are designed to help you understand and engage with the course material more deeply. Because you cannot participate in class without actually being there, regular attendance will factor into your participation grade. Missing class, arriving late, and leaving early is disrespectful to your fellow students and will negatively affect your participation grade.

Reading quizzes will be given *before* the class meeting every day that readings are assigned (i.e., almost every class meeting). These quizzes will consist of 8-10 multiple-choice questions that cover the reading's main topics. They are not designed to be especially difficult, so anyone who reads the material thoroughly should expect to perform well. I have chosen to give reading quizzes for three reasons: (1) Quizzes incentivize students to do the readings on time, which dramatically improves the quality of in-class discussions. (2) Regular quizzes help students monitor their own learning and identify gaps in their knowledge long before exams, giving them ample time to seek help. (3) Similarly, regular quizzes help me identify common student misunderstandings and adjust my lectures accordingly. Thus, these quizzes are designed with your learning in mind.

Reading quizzes will be administered on SmartSite. They are timed, 30-minute quizzes that will be available to you from 12pm on the day before the reading is due until 2 hours before lecture (8am). Your scores and the correct answers will be released at 8:05am. Make-up quizzes will *not* be available, although the lowest quiz score of the quarter will be dropped. Reading quizzes will begin on the second day of the course.

Assignments 1 and 2 will ask students to synthesize course material and apply it to hypothetical and real research studies. See the course website on SmartSite for detailed instructions and grading rubrics for each assignment. All assignments will be submitted electronically via SmartSite.

The **midterm** and **final exam** will include multiple-choice, true/false, and short answer questions. Students must bring a UCD Scantron Form 2000 to each exam (available at the

Campus Bookstore and the vending machine in Olson Hall). Paper will be provided for the short answer responses. We will have a review session in class on the day before each exam.

There will no opportunities for extra credit in this course. No exceptions.

Student performance will be measured using this grade system:

- A Excellent. Student displays mastery of course material and uses strong analytic skills to apply, synthesize, and evaluate it creatively. An “A” grade denotes **superior** work.
- B Very good. Student displays a solid grasp of the material with good (but not excellent) analytic skills. Fulfills all course requirements with high quality work.
- C Average. Student displays some mastery of the material. Fulfills all course requirements to a satisfactory degree.
- D Barely passing. Student does not submit satisfactory work or fails to complete some course requirements as stipulated in the syllabus.
- F Not passing. Student fails to meet minimum course requirements, and work must be repeated to receive recognition.

EMERGENCIES:

If you experience a personal emergency that compromises your ability to complete course requirements, please contact me as soon as possible. The earlier I hear from you, the easier it will be for us to make alternative arrangements.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

In fairness to the students who submit their work on time, late assignments will suffer a grade penalty. The only exceptions are for students who have a serious emergency (see above) or when students contact me at least a week in advance to get pre-approval for a valid reason (e.g., school-related travel). Late assignments will be docked **one-third** of a letter grade for each day they are late, including weekends. In other words, an assignment that would earn an “A” if submitted on time will only earn an “A-” if submitted one day late. Assignments submitted more than 5 days late will not be accepted and will be entered as a 0 in the gradebook.

EMAIL POLICY:

I try to respond to student emails within 48 hours. This means that I may not be able to answer last-minute questions about exams or assignments, so I encourage you to plan accordingly. Email is best reserved for short questions that can be answered in only a few sentences. If you have a question about course material that requires a more detailed response, I will ask you to come to my office hours or talk to me after class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students with documented disabilities should see me during the first week of class to discuss accommodations. Students requesting exam accommodations must provide me with a letter from the Student Disability Center as soon as possible, and no later than two weeks before the first exam. See the UC Davis exam policy for more information:

<http://catalog.ucdavis.edu/academicinfo/exams.html>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & PLAGIARISM:

I take violations of academic integrity (i.e., cheating and plagiarism) very seriously. According to the UC Davis [Code of Academic Conduct](#), it is the student's responsibility to know what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and how to avoid it. Students who are confused about what counts as academic misconduct should consult the resources available from [Student Judicial Affairs](#), including [this pamphlet](#) about plagiarism.

Academic misconduct has many damaging consequences. It gives you an unfair advantage over students who submit original work. It also hampers my ability to give you honest feedback about your work and help you improve in the course. Finally, it prevents you from knowing what you're really capable of – and from pushing yourself to expand your capabilities. Students who are found cheating on exams or plagiarizing written assignments will be assigned a 0 on the exam/assignment and reported to Student Judicial Affairs.

BASIC NEEDS:

Students who have difficulty accessing or affording sufficient food, safe housing, and/or other basic needs that may impact their academic performance are encouraged to contact the Aggie Compass Basic Needs Center for support (<https://aggiecompass.ucdavis.edu>). Also, please contact me directly if you feel comfortable sharing these concerns. I will do my best to connect you to relevant resources and support you in meeting your goals for the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

May be adjusted as needed. Changes to this schedule will be posted on SmartSite.

Part 1: An Introduction to Inquiry

- June 20 Course Introduction
- June 21 Human Inquiry and Science
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 1: Human Inquiry and Science
- June 22 Paradigms, Theory and Research
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 2: Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research
- June 23 The Ethics and Politics of Social Research
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 3: The Ethics and Politics of Social Research
Also: Skim the ASA Code of Ethics (Available here:
<http://www.asanet.org/images/asa/docs/pdf/CodeofEthics.pdf>, p. 1-24)
- June 27 The Ethics and Politics of Social Research (cont.)
Reading quiz on Becker, Howard S. 1967. "Whose Side Are We On?" Social Problems 14(3): 239-247. (Available on SmartSite.)

Part 2: The Structure of Inquiry

- June 28 Research Design
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 4: Research Design
- June 29 Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 5: Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement
- June 30 Indexes, Scales, and Typologies
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 6: Indexes, Scales, and Typologies
- July 4 **No class – Holiday**
- July 5 Logic of Sampling
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 7: The Logic of Sampling
- July 6 Reading & writing social research
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 17: Reading and Writing Social Research
- July 7 Classroom activities & review for midterm
- July 11 **Midterm Exam**

Part 3: Modes of Observation

- July 12 Survey Research
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 9: Survey Research
- July 13 Survey Research (cont.) – Guest Speaker
*Reading quiz on Singer et al. 2010. “The Effect of Question Framing and Response Options on the Relationship Between Racial Attitudes and Beliefs About Genes as Causes of Behavior.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74(3): 460-476. (Available on SmartSite.)*
- July 14 Workshop on Assignment 1
- July 18 Experiments
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 8: Experiments
Also: Listen to Planet Money Episode #379 (Available on SmartSite) – not on reading quiz, but a topic for discussion in class
Assignment 1 Due on SmartSite
- July 19 Qualitative Field Research
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 10: Qualitative Field Research
- July 20 Qualitative Field Research (cont.) – Guest Speaker
Reading quiz on Hart (2016). Available on SmartSite.
- July 21 Unobtrusive Research
Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 11: Unobtrusive Research
- July 25 Unobtrusive Research (cont.) – Guest Speaker
Reading quiz on Baker (2016). Available on SmartSite.
Assignment 2 Due on SmartSite

Part 4: The Broader Context of Social Research

- July 26 Evaluating social research in popular media
No reading quiz
- July 27 Classroom activities & review for final exam
- July 28 **Final Exam**