

AECO 4230.001
Introduction to Social Science Research
Fall 2009

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Meeting Time: See class calendar for assignment due dates

Classroom: Online, Internet-based.

Course Goal

Provide students with an introduction to the methods of conducting social science research.

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, students should have moderate skills in critically evaluating research reports for appropriate research design. Specifically, students should be able to perform the following:

1. Identify the type of methodology employed in a research report.
2. Understand issues of data validity and reliability.
3. Identify the type of data collected and its appropriateness for the analytical measures used in the research.
4. Identify and understand the limitations and appropriateness of sampling used in the research and its implications for research conclusions.
5. Have introductory abilities to identify if a research methodology is appropriate for a given research question.
6. Understand the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the research methods reviewed in the course.
7. Understand ethical issues in the conduct of research.
8. Be able to perform basic data analyses using a spreadsheet software package.

Textbooks

Both textbooks assigned for this class are **REQUIRED**. You cannot pass this course without using both textbooks. The two textbooks that we will be using this semester are newer editions than were used for the previous semester. Therefore, if you choose to buy the textbooks outside of the UNT bookstores, please make sure that you have purchased the correct edition. The Lomand textbook, for example, changes the journal articles in each edition. Therefore, if you use an older version of the Lomand textbook, you will be answering the wrong questions to the wrong article. I would also discourage you from sharing a textbook with a fellow student. You should have both textbooks in hand by the second week of the class, if you do not, contact me immediately. The two textbooks that will be used for this class are:

Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation (3rd ed.). 2009.
Daniel F. Chambliss and Russell K. Schutt. Pine Forge Press: Los Angeles, CA.
(ISBN 978-1-4129-6939-0)

Social Science Research (6th ed.). 2009.
Turner C. Lomand. Pyrczak Publishing: Glendale, CA.
(ISBN 1-884585-87-6)

The books listed below are optional readings, which mean you are not expected to acquire them. However, if you have an interest in social science research or need additional references, you might consider looking at these books:

Optional Sources:

Social Science Research Methods (3rd ed.). 2008.
Alan Bryman. Oxford University Press: New York.
(ISBN 978-0-19-920295-9)

Quasi-Experimentation: Design & Analysis Issues for Field Settings. 1979.
Thomas D. Cook and Donald T. Campbell. Houghton Mifflin Company: Dallas.
(ISBN 0-395-30790-2)

Introductory Statistics for Business and Economics (4th Edition). 1990.
Thomas H. Wannacott and Ronald J. Wannacott. John Wiley & Sons: New York.
(ISBN 0-471-61517-X)

Occasionally, during the course of the semester, I may suggest other optional readings to the class for those students who might have an interest in a particular topic.

Schedule of Topics

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings*</i>
8/31	Lesson 00: Introduction	-----
9/07	Lesson 01: Social Research Lesson 02: Philosophy of Science	CS-1
9/14	Lesson 03: Research Process, Lit Review, Ethics	CS-2 and CS-3
9/21	Lesson 04: Operationalization and Measurement	CS-4
9/28	Lesson 05: Sampling	CS-5
10/5	Lesson 06: Research Design	CS-6 pgs. 130-135
10/12	Lesson 07: Experiments	CS-6 pgs. 135-157
10/19	Lesson 08: Survey Research	CS-7
10/26	Lesson 09: Descriptive Statistics	CS-8 pgs. 191-209
11/2	Lesson 10: Correlation Statistics	CS-8 pgs. 209-217
11/9	Lesson 11: Qualitative Methods	CS-9
11/16	Lesson 12: Qualitative Data Analysis	CS-10
11/23	Lesson 13: Evaluation Research	CS-11
11/30	Lesson 14: Historical Research & Secondary Data	CS-Appendix B
12/7	Lesson 15: Reporting Research	CS-12
12/14	Finals Week	

*The weekly readings noted above are from the required textbook by Chambliss & Schutt (abbreviated at "CS"). Unless specific page numbers are indicated, your reading assignment is the entire chapter.

Time Commitment

This course is time-intensive. On average, you should plan to spend at least 4 to 10 hours a week, between the lecture notes, readings, quizzes, homework assignments, postings to the bulletin board, etc. You are strongly encouraged to consider the entirety of your commitments to school, work, family, and community, as well as any existing, personal circumstances, and plan accordingly.

Assignments

The exercises assigned for each lesson will be posted on the class calendar. Some exercises will be from the Chambliss and Schutt textbook and others will be from the Lomand textbook.

Additionally, there will be assignments that will require you to participate in a bulletin board discussion. You are expected to make meaningful contributions in these discussions. You will note that throughout the lessons, I refer to these discussions as "posting to the bulletin board" or similar phrasing. You access the bulletin board through the "Discussion" link in Blackboard.

Each exercise will have instructions. **To receive full credit for your response, you will be expected to fully answer the question and demonstrate an understanding of the concept being covered.** All assignments must be submitted in writing that is grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. Avoid casual or informal writing styles. Poorly or carelessly written assignments will have points deducted.

The course quizzes will cover the reading materials for the specified lesson. The quizzes are my measure that you have read and understand the material. They are open book and you are encouraged to leave yourself enough time to answer the questions without feeling rushed.

Finally, there will be article review exercises, which are based upon assignments in the Lomand textbook. These exercises count for a substantial part your grade. A portion of the assignment will require short answers, but there are usually one or two questions that require a longer discussion.

All assignments for the course should be submitted online using the Blackboard Vista (Blackboard) software. Please submit your assignments through the course software and do not e-mail your assignments to me, unless there is a problem. Additionally, while the Blackboard software provides you with the option of attaching your assignment as a Word document or in some other file format, I need you to write or paste your answers within the submission box, unless I tell you to do otherwise. This significantly reduces my grading time and allows me to get the assignments back to you quicker. If you want to retain a copy of your answer, write it first in a word processing software, save it as a file, and then paste the text into the submission box. Finally, if you must attach a document to an e-mail, put your name and the assignment number in the name of the attached file and in the heading of your document. You will be asked to resubmit the assignment if you do not.

Final

The course final will consist of one article critique. I will email the article for you to review approximately two weeks before the semester ends. Your job will be to write a 3-5 page critique of this article that illustrates an understanding one or more of the methods we will study during semester. Your critique is expected to be thoughtful, comprehensive, and well written. Directions for the final paper will be due as posted on the class calendar during finals week.

Late Submission of Assignments

All course assignments are due on the posted due date. I understand that sometimes unexpected circumstances arise that prevent you from completing an assignment on time. Quizzes will not

be accepted after the posted due date and time. You will, however, be permitted to submit other assignments up to seven (7) days past their due date. During this seven-day period, 20 points will be deducted from the final grade for tardiness. After an assignment is seven days late, it will no longer be accepted and a permanent grade of 0 will be assigned. If a serious illness or injury or a serious personal or family emergency prevents you from submitting an assignment on time, then you must notify me as soon as possible. At my discretion, I may require documentation before accepting any past due assignments.

Grading

It is imperative that you complete all your quizzes and homework assignments, as well as the final exam, in a timely manner. If you do not consistently submit your assignments on-time, you will find the penalties for late and missing work will have a serious, detrimental effect on your final grade. Please note that the class is not “graded on a curve” and missing grades cannot be made up once they are more than seven days late. The grades for the course will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	0-59

The grades for the course will be calculated using the following allocation:

Quizzes (points as marked on each quiz)	20%
Textbook and Discussion Board Exercises	35%
Article Review Exercises (Lomand)	30%
Final	15%

Communicating

My preferred method of communicating with the class is through the Blackboard e-mail. Under normal conditions, I will respond to your e-mail within 48 hours, although I usually will respond sooner. There may be instances during the semester when I will be traveling for work and will have limited or no Internet access during that period. If this happens, I will notify the class prior to my departure, unless circumstances prevent me from doing so.

Make a habit of checking your class e-mail each time you login. If I post an important e-mail, I may also set up an announcement to direct you to it. If you have questions or difficulties with the course material or need to discuss an administrative issue, please contact me using the class e-mail. Please note that the Blackboard e-mail does not allow me to send or receive messages with other accounts like your UNT e-mail. If we are unable to resolve the issue by e-mail, then

we can arrange for another type of communication. If you have difficulty contacting me through the Blackboard e-mail, then use my UNT e-mail address, which is Michael.Bomba@unt.edu.

ADA Accommodation

If you require accommodation for a special need, you must notify me prior to the 12th class day as specified in the academic calendar. If you have questions about an accommodation, please see the ADA advisor for the Institute of Applied Economics.

Religious Holidays

Since this course does not require you to be present on a specific day within each week's assignments, you should accomplish each assignment around any religious holidays you choose to observe. If there is a conflict, you must notify me, the instructor, in writing by the date noted in the academic calendar.

Statement on Academic Dishonesty

If you have difficulty completing an assignment, I encourage you to work with your classmates on exercises and article review exercises. However, you are expected to do your own work. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and could lead to very serious disciplinary action (see the UNT Undergraduate Catalog or the UNT Student Handbook). This includes copying assignments from your classmates or from work submitted during a previous semester. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please contact the instructor.