

AECO 4230.002
Introduction to Social Science Research
Fall 2009

Instructor: Sara Rutledge

Office hours: By appointment

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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.

Coarse 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 below are required. The two textbooks we are 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. You should have both textbooks in hand by the second week of the class, if you do not, contact me immediately.

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. Pycszak 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. Cambell. 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)

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

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings*</i>
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 8 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 must 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.

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, injury, or other emergency prevents you from submitting an assignment on time, then notify me as soon as possible.

Grading: 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. 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. 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 questions or difficulties with the course material, you may contact me directly through the class e-mail as well. I have also established a topic on the Discussion Board labeled, General Course Questions, that can be used to direct questions to me and your fellow classmates.

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.