

**The Logic and Practice of Sociological Research
Sociology 3600 Spring 2009**

See the course website on WebCT for a pdf copy of the syllabus.
Tuesday and Thursday
3:30-4:45 Baldwin 114A

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This course is about examining the world around us with scientific rigor. It is a call to re-evaluate our everyday methods of gathering information and drawing conclusions. It is also an invitation to begin using theory, causal modeling, and carefully collected information to arrive at more complete and better supported explanations of events. Throughout the semester, we will examine the logic of causality, measurement, and sampling, and talk about research ethics. We will also discuss different ways of collecting data (experiments, surveys, and observation) and spend a good deal of time in the computer lab learning how to analyze survey data using SPSS software. By the end of the semester, you should have a new perspective on what people "know," many new intellectual tools for assessing information about the world, and a basic understanding of SPSS.

Policies

Things to Do in the First Week of Classes

Know Your Responsibilities

The best way to learn about research methods is to use them, so we will spend as much time as possible applying what we read. Therefore, your primary responsibility in this course is to read carefully and come to class ready to use what you have learned from the readings. If you do not understand the reading, then you should come to class with questions.

Get the Readings

The only required book for this class is:
Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research*. 11th ed. Wadsworth. 2004. ISBN: 0495093254
(Used copies are available at bookstores in Athens and on the web at sites such as Amazon.com, Half.com, and Abebooks.com.) Also, there is a paperback, international version of this textbook with the same content that might be cheaper than the hardcover U.S. version. Note: Some additional required readings will be available through the course website.

Explore the Course Website on WebCT

The course website on WebCT will serve as the definitive source of information about the course. Please refer to its pages for the most up-to-date information, links to assignments, supplementary material, and much more.

Write the Exam Dates on Your Calendar

We will have three exams this semester. They will require you to recall, understand, and apply material that we have covered. Since the material we cover in each class builds upon previous material, the exams are cumulative. The exam dates will not be changed, so make sure you will be in class on the scheduled dates.

Other Information

Written Assignments

Written assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. They should all be typed, double-spaced, and stapled. (Drawings and diagrams may be done by hand.)

Quizzes

Over the course of the semester, we will have seven pop quizzes. If you want to do well on the quizzes, make sure to do the reading when it is assigned and come to class every day. All quizzes will take place during the first ten minutes of class. If you arrive after the quiz is over, you will not be given the opportunity to take the quiz. There will be no make-ups for quizzes, but I will automatically drop your two lowest quiz grades to allow for unforeseen emergencies.

Lab Sessions

We will spend six class periods in the Sociology Undergraduate Computer Lab (Baldwin 219). Your grade for each session will depend on the satisfactory completion of an in-class assignment. There is no way to make up missed lab sessions, but I will automatically drop your lowest lab grade to allow for unforeseen emergencies. You will need a USB drive to save your work and a Bulldog Bucks card for printing.

Grading

Grades for the course will be based on the following items:

5 (of 7) Quizzes	5%
4 Written assignments	20%
5 (of 6) lab sessions	20%
Exam I	15%
Exam II	15%
Final Exam	25%
Total	100%

Final grades for the course are based on the following scale:

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	93 to 100
A-	90 to 92
B+	88 to 89
B	83 to 87
B-	80 to 82
C+	78 to 79
C	73 to 77
C-	70 to 72
D+	68 to 69
D	63 to 67
D-	60 to 62
F	59 and below

**Note: Sociology majors need a C or better in this course to graduate.
(A grade of C- is not high enough.)**

For more information about the plus/minus grading system, see the page below.
<http://bulletin.uga.edu/bulletin/PlusMinusGradingFAQ.html>

Disabilities

If you have a disability and would like to request classroom or other accommodations, please contact me. You may also want to check out the services available on campus. (For more information, see: <http://www.dissvcs.uga.edu/>)

Academic Honesty

All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty" (see especially section 7). Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. (For more information, see: <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/index.html>)

Withdrawing from the Course

If you plan to withdraw from this course, you should be aware of the University regulations regarding withdrawals. (For more information, see: <http://www.franklin.uga.edu/students/withdraw.htm>) Also, if you are receiving H.O.P.E. scholarship funds, make sure to check with the Office of Student Financial Aid before withdrawing from the course. Withdrawal may affect your scholarship. (For more information, see: <http://www.uga.edu/osfa/contact.html>)

Rescheduling Final Exams

You may reschedule the final exam if you meet the appropriate university requirements. (For more information, see: <http://www.curriculumsystems.uga.edu/FinalExamConflicts/FinalExamConflicts.html>)

Human Rights/Grievances

Any student who feels that he or she has not been treated in a fair or professional manner should follow

the Department of Sociology's Human Rights Statement. (For more information, see: http://uga.edu/soc/undergraduate/pdf/Human_Rights_Statement.pdf)

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Any student who feels that he or she has been discriminated against or sexually harassed in any class should contact the UGA Equal Opportunity Office. (For more information, see: <http://www.uga.edu/eoo/>)

Course Outline

Thursday January 8 **Welcome to Sociology 3600**

First day of class: Get a copy of the syllabus and learn about the course.

Tuesday January 13 **In Search of Truth in Everyday Life**

[Babbie Chapter 1](#)

"[Health Statistics May be Bad for Our Mental Health](#)" by John Allen Paulos

Question of the day:

Why do people often come to believe things that are not accurate?

Thursday January 15 **Paradigms, Theories, Hypotheses, and Reasoning**

[Babbie Chapter 2](#)

Question of the day:

What is a theory? Give an example of something that is not a theory.

Say cheese! (Today we will take pictures to help me learn your names more quickly.)

Tuesday January 20 **Ethics**

[Babbie Chapter 3](#)

In-class video: A Class Divided

Thursday January 22 **Causation and Modes of Explanation**

Babbie Chapter 4 Pages 87-94

Question of the day:

- What is the difference between a deterministic and a probabilistic explanation?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of idiographic and nomothetic explanations?
- Why is a wet street not proof that it has rained?

For reflection after class:

- Why is drawing a causal diagram of an argument helpful?
- Why is it important to interpret causal diagrams in words?

Tuesday January 27 **Research Design**

Babbie Chapter 4 Pages 94-114

and "[Units of Analysis](#)" pages 69-72 in *Approaches to Social Research* by Singleton, Straits, and Straits. [See the course website for more comments about units of analysis.](#)

Question of the day:

- What kind of question would require a panel study to answer?
- What could you learn by using football teams rather than football players as a unit of analysis?

Assignment 1 due: causal diagrams and written descriptions

([See the course website for details.](#))

Thursday January 29 **Conceptualization & Measurement**

Babbie Chapter 5

"[Four Million Adolescents Smoke: Or Do They?](#)" by Kovar

Question of the day:

- What is the difference between reliability and validity?
- Does the article by Kovar raise questions about reliability or validity?

Tuesday February 3 **Exam I**

This exam covers material from Chapters 1-5 [See the course website for a study guide.](#)

Thursday, February 5 **Indexes and Scales**

Babbie Chapter 6

Question of the day:

- How can you tell if an index is any good?
- When is it appropriate to use a scale rather than an index?

Tuesday, February 10 **Creating Indexes and Scales**

Lab 1 (Please bring a USB drive to save your work.)

Using GSS variables to make indexes, scales, and typologies.

New!

[More practice in calculating scale weights.](#)

[Answer Key](#)

Thursday, February 12 **The Logic of Sampling I**

Babbie Chapter 7 (179-201)

Also, in preparation for today's class, please gather and evaluate data about fashion at UGA.

[See the course website for details.](#)

Question of the day:

- How is sampling bias related to sampling frames?
- If people draw conclusions based on personal experience, why is their sample biased?

Tuesday, February 17 **The Logic of Sampling II**

Babbie Chapter 7 (202-215)

[See the course website for supplementary information about sampling](#)

Question of the day:

Why do researchers sometimes use stratified samples?

Thursday, February 19 **Experiments**

Babbie Chapter 8

Question of the day:

- What are internal and external validity?
- How can the type of experiment (laboratory or natural) affect internal and external validity?

Tuesday, February 24 **Survey Research**

Babbie Chapter 9

Question of the day:

What does it mean to have answers that are mutually exclusive and exhaustive?

Thursday, February 26 **Qualitative Field Research**

Babbie Chapter 10

"[Ethical Concerns in Qualitative Field Research](#)" (approx. 4 pages)

Assignment 2 due: evaluating and writing survey questions

([See the course website for details.](#))

Question of the day:

When is qualitative analysis more appropriate than quantitative analysis?
Why are ethical issues harder to avoid in field research than in survey research?

Tuesday, March 3 **Unobtrusive Research**

Babbie Chapter 11

Question of the day:

Why would anyone choose to do unobtrusive research when they could observe or interview real live people?

([See the course website for more information.](#))

Thursday, March 5 **Exam II**

Exam II is cumulative, but it focuses on material from Chapters 6-11.

[See the course website for a study guide.](#)

Tuesday, March 10 **No Class:** spring break

Thursday, March 12 **No Class:** spring break

Tuesday, March 17 **Evaluation Research**

Babbie Chapter 12

Question of the day:

Why are ethics and politics especially important in evaluation research?

Assignment 3 due: making, recording, and interpreting observations

([See the course website for details.](#))

Thursday, March 19 **Quantifying Data**

Babbie Chapter 14 Pages 405-409

Lab 2

Introduction to SPSS

Tuesday, March 24 **Getting Data Ready for Analysis**

Lab 3

Entering and cleaning data in SPSS

Thursday, March 26 **Univariate Analyses**

Babbie Chapter 14 Pages 409-419

Question of the day:

If the mean, median, and modal age for a group of people are all identical, does this mean that all the people are the same age?

Tuesday, March 31 **Univariate Analysis with SPSS**

Lab 4

Generate univariate statistics and re-code variables using SPSS

Thursday, April 2 **Bivariate Analysis**

Babbie Chapter 14 Pages 419-427

Question of the day:

What is the purpose of bivariate analysis?

Tuesday, April 7 **Measures of Association**

Babbie Chapter 16 Pages 450-470

Question of the day:

- How do you know what measure of association to use?
- What are tests of statistical significance designed to do?
- What does it mean if a bivariate table (heart disease by male) produces a Chi-square of 12.7 and a p-value of .001?

Thursday, April 9 **Bivariate Analysis with SPSS**

Lab 5

Generate crosstabs and measures of association using SPSS

Tuesday, April 14 **The Elaboration Model**

Babbie Chapter 15

Question of the day:

What is the basic purpose of the elaboration model?

Thursday, April 16 **Practice with the Elaboration Model**

Use the elaboration model to examine real data.

Tuesday, April 21 **The Elaboration Model with SPSS**

Lab 6

Use the elaboration model with SPSS to interpret crosstabs after controlling for a third variable.

Assignment 4 Due: interpreting two-way and three-way tables with the elaboration model

([See the course website for details.](#))

Thursday, April 23 **Use Your Skills to Evaluate a Sales Pitch**

In-class exercise: Evaluate a sales pitch aimed at prospective college students.

Tuesday, April 28 **Use Your Skills While Listening to Friends and Family**

In-class exercise: Examine Table 1 from "Poverty in America" and explain how you could test the accuracy of people's beliefs about poverty.

Final exam

Thursday, May 7 from 3:30 - 6:30

The final exam is cumulative, but it will emphasize material from Chapters 12-16.

[See the course website for a study guide.](#)