

**SOCIOLOGY 320: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL RESEARCH****SECTION: 01, SPRING 2017  
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Instructor:** Katie Bittinger, M.A.  
**Office:** 151 Wilson-Short Hall  
**Office Hours:** Tues Noon-2pm  
**E-mail:** [kbittinger@wsu.edu](mailto:kbittinger@wsu.edu)

**Class Information**  
**Credits:** 3  
**Days:** Mon/Wed/Fri  
**Time:** 11:10a – Noon  
**Location:** Todd 334

*COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE*

Of all the subjects available for thought and study, few are more interesting than the examination of society. By systematically studying society and its component parts, we have the opportunity to understand structures and processes that are instrumental in shaping who we are and what we experience in life. This course will introduce you to the basic research methods commonly employed by sociologists in order to study society scientifically.

Why study society scientifically? The main reason is to get a more “objective” view of society, one that can be “verified” by careful observation. We all have biases, vested interests, and deeply rooted values. While our unique, individual perspectives are important, these predispositions can also make it difficult for us to see clearly the world around us. A scientific approach is worth implementing because we can learn about features of social life that we did not see before. Hopefully, you will finish this course not only with new insights about the social world you inhabit, but with new skills that help you discern structures and processes that influence your life every day. This knowledge can, in turn, help you influence the world around you.

The primary goal of this course is to introduce you to an array of concepts and procedures that social scientists employ in conducting their research. Upon completion of the course, you should have a basic understanding of these concepts and procedures. It is a challenging course and much of the knowledge you will acquire in this course is cumulative. In order to facilitate your understanding of the research process, you will be designing a research proposal to answer a social research question that is of interest to you. You should not expect to be able to undertake independent social research without further study. However, this course will provide you with the skills to assess the adequacy of a social research project and the validity of its results. This course will also provide you with the basic skills required to learn more about a specific methodological topic, should you desire to pursue further studies.

**COURSE MATERIAL**

Required readings will be posted to Blackboard.

Recommend text: Schutt, Russell. 2015. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

**STUDENT EXPECTATIONS (WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM ME?)**

- **Prompt feedback on assignments:** I will provide you with prompt feedback on graded assignments.
- **Prompt response to student inquiries:** I check my email between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday thru Friday. If you email me during those times, I will respond within 24 hours. Outside of those hours, I will try to respond within 48 hours. I check my email sporadically on the weekend, and it will take me longer to respond if you contact me during that time.
- **Availability during office hours:** I will be available during my scheduled office hours, barring any unforeseen circumstances. If I need to adjust my office hours, I will let the class know as far in advance as possible.

**INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS (WHAT DO I EXPECT FROM YOU?)**

- **Respect for others.** During this course we will be discussing a variety of concepts which course members will undoubtedly have different experiences with or opinions on. Everyone in the course is expected to respect each other's thoughts in class by not cutting anyone off and not belittling *anyone* for a comment. (Please see the "Respect for Others" section below for more information).
- **Regular class attendance and participation in class.** This means that you have prepared for class by gaining an understanding of the key concepts for that day, are actively engaged in class, and complete the participation assignment. Simply showing up will not earn you full points.
- **No electronic devices:** Students must turn off or silence all cell phones. In addition, no laptops/tablets will be allowed in class on lecture days.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

The course will combine a variety of assignments to meet the expected learning outcomes for the class. Please see the Assignment Guidelines for a more in-depth description and instructions specific to each assignment.

**In-Class Participation:** Classes will clarify and apply course concepts through a combination of lecture, discussion, guest lectures, audio/video examples, and the course case study. Students are expected to have an understanding of the key concepts for each class meeting prior to class, attend class regularly, and participate in class discussions and exercises. Attendance and participation in class will be tracked through a variety of methods. This may include asking questions, engaging in discussion with peers, or other exercises. There will be 27 participation exercises throughout the semester. Your lowest two scores will be dropped at the end of the semester for a total of 25 participation exercises. Each exercise will be worth 5 points. *A maximum of 125 points are possible for participation and is worth 25% of the course grade.*

**Research Proposal and Associated Assignments:** Every student is expected to develop a research proposal throughout the semester with a final cumulative research proposal due at the end of the semester. The final proposal will require you to use your developing sociological research skills to analyze a social research question of your choosing. You will be utilizing peer-reviewed research articles and course material to discuss the selected social research question. There are several assignments throughout the semester that will build on one another to help promote a coherent final proposal. Each of these assignments is more thoroughly discussed in the *Assignment Guidelines* handout. Please note that you will not actually be conducting any research. However, by the end of the semester, you will have a document similar to a research proposal for a grant application.

During the first half of the semester you will have several small assignments that will help you create your preliminary research proposal. The assignment topics include: (1) Designing a Social Research Question; (2) Literature Review and Hypothesis; (3) Identifying Variables; and (4) Selecting a Sampling Method. Each of these small assignments is worth up to 25 points (for a total of 100 points possible). The Preliminary Research Proposal, due at the mid-point of the semester will be worth up to 65 points.

During the second half of the semester, we will have three in-class assignments that will help you develop your final research proposal. Each of these will be worth up to 15 points (for a total of 45 points possible). The final research proposal itself will be a cumulative assignment, combining elements of the Preliminary Research Proposal and the in-class methods assignments to create a Final Research Proposal worth up to 100 points. You will also be presenting your final research proposal during the last week of class. This presentation will be informal, with most of your points coming from attending the other two days of presentations. The presentation is worth up to 25 points.

***The term paper and associated assignments have a maximum of 320 points and is worth 64% of the course grade.***

**Other Assignments:** To help gain perspective on the social research project we will be examining as a whole class (separate from the research proposal discussed above), you will complete a service learning project related to our course project topic. The accompanying write-up will be worth up to 20 points. In addition, the class will also complete a field-site exercise to help illustrate qualitative research methods. Completion of the field-site exercise and the accompanying field notes will be worth up to 35 points. ***Other course assignments have a maximum of 55 points and is worth 11% of the course grade.***

### Summary of Grade Percentage for Class Assignments

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points Possible</i>	<i>Percent of Grade</i>
In-Class Participation	125	25
Service Learning Exp. (Course Project) Write-Up	20	4
Field-Site Experience and Write-Up	35	7
<b>Sum of non-term paper assignments</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>36</b>
Designing a Social Research Question	10	2
Literature Review and Hypotheses	25	5
Identifying Variables	25	5
Sampling Methods	25	5
Preliminary Research Proposal	65	13
Methods In-Class Assignments (x3)	45	9
Research Proposal Presentation	25	5
Final Research Proposal	100	20
<b>Sum of term paper assignments</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Sum of all assignments</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>

#### GENERAL GRADING CRITERIA

**Timely Submission of Assignments:** Specific due dates for each assignment are noted on the course calendar. *No late work will be accepted.* All assignments are due at the beginning of class on their respective due dates.

**Feedback on Graded Assignments:** The type and timing of feedback on assignments will vary depending on the assignment. In-class participation exercises will be graded and returned within two days. Research proposal support assignments will be returned within a week. Given the nature of the course schedule, research proposals will not be returned in class. If you would like yours returned to you, please email me to set up a time for you to pick up your proposal.

**Grade Questions:** Students can direct any questions they have about a grade to the instructor. However, students must allow 24 hours to pass before they ask their question(s). Once these 24 hours have passed, students must provide the instructor with a written response to the grade, documenting where the student feels inaccurately graded on the course assignment. Students should be advised, however, that reconsideration of an assignment grade may result in more points being taken off of the assignment if additional flaws are found in the assignment that might have been missed the first time it was graded. *It is your responsibility to keep track of your grade and graded assignments.*

**University Grades and Grade Points:** Students' final grades will be a percentage (0 to 100%) of the total 500 points possible on the course assignments. I will use the following grading scale to convert the percentage of points earned to a final letter grade:

Letter Grade	Percent	Points	Letter Grade	Percent	Points
A	93-100	465 – 500	C	73-76	365 – 384
A-	90-92	450 – 464	C-	70-72	350 – 364
B+	87-89	435 – 449	D+	67-69	335 – 349
B	83-86	415 – 434	D	60-66	300 – 334
B-	80-82	400 – 414	F	0-59	0 – 299
C+	77-79	385 – 399			

Please note that an “I” or “incomplete grade” will only be given for students who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to complete their course work in a timely manner. Additional information on the incomplete grade and the procedures the professor will follow for processing such grade can be found at <http://www.registrar.wsu.edu/Registrar/Apps/Acadregs.ASPX/#90>. Students who anticipate that they will not complete the course assignments in a timely manner for reasons beyond their control are advised to convey that to the professor, their academic advisor, and any other pertinent university personnel immediately to determine the best course of action for the student.

#### **ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES**

**Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If a student has a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, the student should either visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the Access Center. For more information, students should contact a Disability Specialist at the **Pullman** campus at 509-335-3417; <http://accesscenter.wsu.edu>; [Access.Center@wsu.edu](mailto:Access.Center@wsu.edu).

**Academic Integrity:** Each student must turn in original work. No copying will be accepted. Students who violate WSU's Standards of Conduct for Students will receive an F as a final grade in this course, will not have the option to withdraw from the course and will be reported to the Office Student Standards and Accountability. Cheating is defined in the Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3). It is strongly suggested that students read and understand these definitions.

**Safety and Emergency Notification:** Washington State University is committed to enhancing the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It is highly recommended that students review the Campus Safety Plan (<http://safetyplan.wsu.edu/>) and visit the Office of Emergency Management web site (<http://oem.wsu.edu/>) for a comprehensive listing of university policies, procedures, statistics, and information related to campus safety, emergency management, and the health and welfare of the campus community.

**Adding or Dropping the Class:** Students are encouraged to contact the Registrar's office for guidance on adding or dropping the class this semester. The Registrar can be contacted at 509-335-5346 or [registrar@wsu.edu](mailto:registrar@wsu.edu).

**Respect for Others:** This course is supposed to spark lively conversation on a diverse set of viewpoints and practices. Everyone in the course is expected to respect each other's thoughts in class by not cutting anyone off and not belittling *anyone* for a comment. If a hurtful or inappropriate comment is made, *the instructor will handle it according to class, departmental, and university policy*. Also, students cannot begin packing up while someone is talking or finishing a point before the end of class, as doing so is extremely disrespectful, annoying, and disruptive to the class. Likewise, students must turn off or silence all modes of electronic communication—for example, cell phones, pagers, and e-mail—prior to coming to class. If one of these or another mode of electronic communication in possession of a student rings or otherwise disrupts class, then that student may be asked to leave the class session immediately and not to return until the next class session.

**Attendance Policy:** Students who have not attended class meetings during the first week of the semester may be dropped from the course by the Sociology Department; students should not assume that they have been dropped without verification from the Sociology Department or Registrar's office. Absences after the first week of class are those where students showed up to class more than 20 minutes late or left the class more than 20 minutes early. Students who need to leave class early or who will arrive late should sit closest to the class entrance/exit as possible to not disrupt class. Students must submit an assignment prior to missing class. A student should not e-mail the instructor to ask if the student has missed something important from class during an absence, as everything covered in class will be important. If a student is absent, it is incumbent upon the student to find out from a classmate what he or she may have missed in class.

**Center for Civic Engagement Information:** The Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) offers WSU students, faculty, campus departments, and community partners opportunities to share knowledge, skills, and resources for the benefit of student learning and the well-being of our communities. The CCE facilitates service learning experiences as part of academic curricula and will be working with this class to provide appropriate community-based and/or civic leadership experiences for students. You will manage your service learning experience on CougSync. The system tracks your activities and can provide you with a record of involvement to show all of the activities you have participated in at WSU. This will be a great resource when applying for jobs and/or graduate school! You should receive an email inviting you to your course portal on CougSync. Log on to CougSync using your WSU network ID and password to access your course portal. If you have not yet received this email or have any questions please contact a peer mentor at the CCE ([cce.peermentor@wsu.edu](mailto:cce.peermentor@wsu.edu) or 509.335.7708), stop by the CCE's Student Resource Center in the CUB, L 45, or visit [cce.wsu.edu](http://cce.wsu.edu).

**Center for Civic Engagement Partnership Statement:** The CCE works with community organizations to develop opportunities for student engagement. Opportunities created for students are based on real needs identified by organizations that exist to provide programs and services to the community. It is therefore imperative that students follow through with all commitments made, including all service for which they have registered. It is CCE policy that failure to show up for two CCE projects will result in a suspension of opportunity to participate in CCE projects for the remainder of the semester. Instructors will be notified if you do not show up for a project and do not notify the CCE at least 24 hours in advance. If a project is cancelled by the CCE and/or the community partner organization, CCE staff are available to assist students in locating another opportunity.

**Bathroom Breaks:** Each class meeting is 50 minutes long. Bathroom breaks will be granted only for legitimate personal emergencies. Illegitimate bathroom breaks will likely result in an unexcused absence.

**Office Hours:** Additional office hours may be arranged via email for a mutually available time if it is not possible for you to make my regularly scheduled hours. I require a 24-hour advanced notice for office hours set up via email.

*Course Changes: Course content and schedule as stated on this syllabus may change at the discretion of the instructor. Such changes will be communicated to the class via e-mail and in class as soon as they are made.*

## **COURSE CALENDAR AND DUE DATES**

### ***SECTION I: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL***

#### **Week 1: Class Introduction & Developing a Social Research Question**

**Mon., 01/09:** Introduction/Syllabus

**Wed., 01/11:** Why Social Research?

**Fri., 01/13:** The Research Process

#### **Week 2: The Literature Review**

**Mon., 01/16:** No Class – Martin Luther King Jr. Day

**Wed., 01/18:** Center for Civic Engagement Presentation & Case Study Introduction

**Fri., 01/20:** Finding Articles & Writing a Literature Review

**[Designing a Social Research Question Assignment Due]**

### **Week 3: Ethics in Research**

*Reading:* ASA Code of Ethics, Pp. 1-6; 11-18 [Introduction, Confidentiality, Informed Consent, and Research Planning, Implementation, and Dissemination Sections]

**Mon., 01/23:** Ethical Issues in Social Research

**Wed., 01/25:** Discussion

**Fri., 01/27:** Course Project

**[Literature Review & Hypothesis Assignment Due]**

### **Week 4: Concepts and Indicators**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 01/30:** Concepts and Indicators Lecture

**Wed., 02/01:** Discussion

**Fri., 02/03:** Course Project

### **Week 5: Sampling Methods**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 02/06:** Constructing a Sample Lecture

**Wed., 02/08:** Discussion

**[Identifying Variables Assignment Due]**

**Fri., 02/10:** Course Project

### **Week 6: Research Design**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 02/13:** Research Design Lecture

**Wed., 02/15:** Discussion

**[Selecting a Sampling Method Assignment Due]**

**Fri., 02/17:** Service Learning Discussion

**[Service Learning Exp. Related to the Course Case Study Write-Up Due]**

**SECTION 2: RESEARCH METHODS**

**Week 7: Experimental Research**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 02/20:** No Class – President’s Day

**Wed., 02/22:** Experimental Research Methods

**Fri., 02/24:** Case Study & Guest Speaker

**[Preliminary Research Proposal Due]**

**Week 8: Survey Research**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 02/27:** Survey Research Method Lecture

**Wed., 03/01:** Case Study & Guest Speaker

**Fri., 03/03:** Course Project – **In Class Assignment**

**Week 9: Qualitative Research**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 03/06:** Qualitative Research Method Lecture

**Wed., 03/08:** Guest Speaker – Disability Action Center of the Northwest

**Fri., 03/10:** Writing Field Notes

*Spring Break (03/13 – 03/17) – Be safe!*

**Week 10: Qualitative Research Cont.**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 03/20:** Case Study

**Wed., 03/22:** Guest Speaker

**Fri., 03/24:** Course Project – **In Class Assignment**

**Week 11: Evaluation Research**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 03/27:** Evaluation Research Method Lecture

**Wed., 03/29:** Case Study & Guest Speaker

**Fri., 03/31:** Course Project – **In Class Assignment**

**Week 12: Archival & Secondary Data Research**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 04/03:** Archival Research Method Lecture

**Wed., 04/05:** Case Study & Guest Speaker

**Fri., 04/07:** Course Project – **In Class Assignment**

**Week 13: Misc. Research Methods**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 04/10:** Secondary Data

**Wed., 04/12:** Social Network Analysis

**Fri., 04/14:** How to Lie With Statistics

**Week 14: Reporting Research**

*Reading:* TBA

**Mon., 04/17:** Summarizing and Reporting Research Lecture

**[Qualitative Field Site Exercise and Field Notes Due]**

**Wed., 04/19:** Qualitative Field Site Exercise Discussion/Case Study Wrap Up

**Fri., 04/21:** No Class – Instructor out of town

**Week 15: Research Proposal Presentations**

**Mon., 04/24:** Proposal presentations

**Wed., 04/26:** Proposal presentations

**Fri., 04/28:** Proposal presentations

**Final Research Proposal due on Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 3:10pm. No exceptions.\***