Social Research
SO CI 6013, Section 1

Wednesday, 5:30-8:00 PM, Pafford 305

Dr. Emily McKendry-Smith
Office: Pafford 217
Office hours: Mon. 11-2, Weds. 11-3, or by appointment
Email: mckendry@westga.edu

Course Description and Goals:

Social Research is a graduate-level course covering research design broadly conceived. We will focus on how research questions are developed in such a way that they can be convincingly addressed through the analysis of empirical data.

Over the course of the semester, the major topics we will cover include measurement, validity and reliability, sampling, causality, research ethics, and several main methods of data collection in the social sciences – survey research, semi-structured interviewing, participant observation, content analysis, and comparative historical methods.

This course has four goals:

1. To equip students with the necessary tools to design and conduct their own research.
2. To improve student’s abilities to constructively critique research methods and approaches.
3. To provide a springboard for students, from which they can seek further training in specific methods.
4. To further socialize students in the profession of sociology.

As such, this course relates to two learning outcomes for the MA program in Sociology:

- Understand and apply qualitative research methodologies
- Understand and apply quantitative research methodologies

Things To Know:

- I expect everyone attending class to have done the assigned readings and to be prepared to discuss and apply them.
- We will begin and end class on time.
Please do not use your cell phone during class. Keep cell phones in your bag/pocket, not out on your desk. If you are using your phone in class, I will ask you to leave.

Please check your UWG email daily.

The best way to contact me is to talk with me in person. The next best way is by email. If you phone me, I will likely ask you to either email or come see me in person.

Course assignments must be turned in to me in hard copy. I will not accept or grade assignments turned in via email.

You should be familiar with UWG’s Honor Code and follow it with respect to all work for this course. While you are welcome to use this course as an opportunity to work on your master’s thesis, the work that you turn in should be substantially different from papers written in other courses. “Recycling” papers from previous courses is a form of academic dishonesty and will be treated as such. If you have questions about this, it is much better to contact me *before* turning something in.

**Upholding Academic Integrity:**

As members of the UWG community, we need to fully support and uphold academic integrity on campus. To that end, I ask that you review the UWG Honor Code.

In addition to the Honor Code, you should review the University’s policies on the Americans with Disabilities Act, Email, and Credit Hours, as these change periodically. You can view the Honor Code and other policies here: [http://tinyurl.com/UWGSyllabusPolicies](http://tinyurl.com/UWGSyllabusPolicies)

I expect you to do all of your own work. Initial instances of academic dishonesty (ie plagiarizing on an assignment) will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment. Additional instances of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Readings:**

I have assigned the following two books. They are available for purchase at the university bookstore and online.


All other course readings will be available on CourseDen in the “Resources” section

**Course requirements and evaluation:**

This course will take lots and lots of your time! There is no better way to learn methods of analysis than by using them. The written work for the course includes a set of small
assignments, a literature review, three assignments applying research methods, and a research proposal in which you will apply what you learn in this class to your own sociological interests. The proposal serves as the final exam for the class.

Your grade will be calculated on the basis of your performance on the written work in the following way:

- Salsa Dancing Chapter Exercises, CITI Training, & Misc. (15%)
- Literature Review (15%)
- Interview Assignment (15%)
- Survey Assignment (15%)
- Content Analysis Assignment (15%)
- Research Proposal (25%)

I do not grade on a curve. You will receive point values, but not letter grades, for individual assignments. I will award final grades using this scale:

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- F = 0-69

Research Proposal:

Don’t freak out! Over the course of the semester, the Salsa Dancing chapter exercises and your literature review assignment will help you prepare to write a research proposal. Regarding the literature review, I will give you feedback on that assignment which you will then be able to incorporate into your proposal.

Your paper should be comparable to the first half of a journal article (up through the methods section), in which you introduce a research question, review relevant literature, and explain the method you will use to investigate the research question. The specific methods of analysis you choose will depend on the question you choose to investigate.

Articles published in sociology journals are models for your proposal. It will be a first draft and less developed than published articles, nevertheless your goal should be to prepare as professional a paper as possible. Your paper should look like the first half of an article you are submitting to a journal for publication. Refer to the ASA Style Guide for information about how to format your paper. Your paper will be evaluated on its form as well as its content.

August 26th: Introduction to the Course

September 2nd: Developing a Research Question

READINGS:
- Salsa Dancing Chs 1, 3, and 4

DUE: Salsa Dancing Chapter Exercises for Ch 1 and 4
September 9th: Measurement, Validity, and Reliability
READINGS:
- Total Survey Error Ch 5 (Measurement Error Due to Respondents)
DUE: CITI Training

September 16th: Reviewing the Literature/ The Structure of Academic Articles
READINGS:
- Salsa Dancing Ch 5
- Matthews, Sarah 2005 “Crafting Qualitative Research Articles” JMF, 67 (4): 799-808. (CourseDen)
DUE: Salsa Dancing Chapter Exercise for Ch 5

September 23rd: Measurement, Validity, and Reliability Continued
READINGS:
- Total Survey Error Ch 6 (Measurement Error Due to Respondents Part 2)
DUE: Topic for Literature Review Assignment

September 30th: Interviewing
READINGS:
DUE: Literature Review Assignment

October 7th: Participant Observation
READINGS:
- Salsa Dancing Ch 8
- Excerpt from Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes - TBA
DUE: Salsa Dancing Chapter Exercise for Ch 8
October 14th: Analyzing Qualitative Data
READINGS:

October 21st: Causality
READINGS:
  o Additional Reading on Causality - TBA
  o Salsa Dancing Ch 7 & Appendix 1
DUE: Interview Assignment

October 28th: Sampling
READINGS:
  o Salsa Dancing Ch 6
  o Total Survey Error Chs 7 & 10 (Nonresponse at Item Level and Sampling)
DUE: Salsa Dancing Chapter Exercise for Ch 6

November 4th: Content Analysis
READINGS:
  o Prior, Lindsay. 2004. “Following in Foucault’s Footsteps: Text and context in qualitative research” Pp. 317-333 in Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, Approaches to Qualitative Research. (CourseDen)
DUE: Survey Assignment

November 11th: Comparative Historical Methods
READINGS:
  o Salsa Dancing Ch 9
  o Other readings TBA on CourseDen
DUE: Salsa Dancing Chapter Exercise for Ch 9
November 18th: Re-Coding Survey Data/ Mixed-Methods Approaches
READINGS:
  o Salsa Dancing Ch 10
  o Total Survey Error Chs 9 & 11 (Coverage Error & Data Editing)
DUE: Salsa Dancing Chapter Exercise for Ch 10
DUE: Content Analysis Assignment

December 2nd: Research Ethics
READINGS:
  o Salsa Dancing Ch 11
  o Total Survey Error Ch 14 (Ethics in Surveys)
  o ASA Code of Ethics http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm
  o Other readings TBA

December 9th, 5-7:30: Bringing It All Together
DUE: Research Proposal

Further Reading:

Operationalization and measurement:


