

**Sociology 4000 E01**  
**“Research Methodology”**  
**2016 Fall**

**Online Course**  
**<https://westga.view.usg.edu/>**

**Instructor: Anne Hunter**  
**Email: [ahunter@westga.edu](mailto:ahunter@westga.edu)**



### **Course Description and Goals**

We encounter claims from social researchers almost every day, not only in academic journals, but in the popular press as well. The claims as scholars, as well as the journalists and politicians who cite those scholars, depend on the quality of the research they conduct to supply answers to their questions and evidence for their theories.

In this class, we will learn about the theory and practice of social research. We will learn how social research differs from other forms of human inquiry. We will study the terms and concepts that professional scholars use to describe their work. We will learn how to conduct ethical research involving human subjects. We will study several major research strategies, and learn the criteria scholars use to evaluate completed research as better or worse. Finally, we will learn how to conduct our own research.

We will focus on four major research methods: qualitative observation and interviews, experiments, content analysis, and surveys. We will read an example of each method from an academic journal article. You will also have the chance to conduct your own small research project using one of these techniques.

By the end of class, you should feel confident that you can understand the methods used by social researchers, evaluate the claims those researchers make on the basis of their work, and design and carry out your own independent research project.

### **Online Etiquette**

- I expect everyone in the class to have done the assigned readings and to be prepared to discuss them.
- We will cover a number of controversial topics. I expect everyone to practice sensitivity and respect in all class discussions. You should feel free to share as much as you are comfortable with, but you must keep in mind that your classmates' beliefs and experiences may be different from yours, and that they are equally deserving of respect. I expect you to respect each other's race, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, etc.
- Please check your email and CourseDen daily Monday - Friday. I will do the same.

### **Contacting Your Instructor**

The best way to contact me is by using your official UWG email account to email me at [ahunter@westga.edu](mailto:ahunter@westga.edu). I check my email at least once per day during the normal work week. I will typically respond to questions within 48 hours, although I may take longer if you have a complicated request, or if you email on a weekend or holiday.

**Do not** email me using CourseDen. I will not receive, and **will not** respond to, emails that are sent using CourseDen rather than the official UWG email system.

Your email subject line should include the class number (SOCI 4000), your first and last names, and a brief description of the nature of the email.

Remember when you contact me that you are communicating with a faculty member in an academic setting. Please use correct English grammar and normal capitalization.

### **Honor Code and UWG Policies**

The University Honor Code is in effect for all written assignments and exams. Please read the provisions of the Honor Code carefully, and make certain that you understand and follow them. Violations of the Honor Code **will not** be tolerated.

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 review the Honor Code and other policies at <http://tinyurl.com/UWGSyllabusPolicies>

## **Participating in Class**

In order to participate in an online class, you will need regular access to a computer with a reliable internet connection and the ability to play audio and video files. A smartphone **is not** an adequate substitute for a computer in this context because some course materials will not display properly when viewed on a smartphone.

You will participate in class by doing the assigned readings, viewing the video lectures, and posting in the class discussion forum.

As with any class, you are expected to read all the assigned material. You have the primary responsibility to make sure that you read and understand all the course texts. I encourage you to keep notes on our readings and to review them periodically.

I will post lecture videos on CourseDen. These lecture videos act, in part, as an online equivalent to classroom lectures. I will attempt to summarize and explain any important or difficult ideas from our readings. These lecture videos cannot fully replace the experience of an in-person lecture or class discussion, which makes your own reading and notes even more important than they would be in an in-person course.

I will post discussion prompts to the CourseDen discussion forum. These prompts will act, in part, as an online equivalent to classroom discussion. You should post a thoughtful and substantive response to each discussion prompt. A substantive reply includes both a statement of your answer to the prompt as well as some of the reasoning behind it. A trivial response might include an answer with no reasoning or not actually address the prompt. You may also choose to respond to your classmates in addition to making your own post, although you are not required to. Please be respectful of each other and remember our online etiquette.

## **Readings**

There is one book assigned for our course. In the schedule below, readings from this book will be abbreviated *ISW*. Other readings will be available online through direct hyperlink or on CourseDen / Desire2Learn (D2L).

- *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Social Research*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition by Russell Schutt

This book is available for purchase at the university bookstore. I strongly encourage you to obtain your own copy of it. If you have not already done so, you should purchase this book immediately. You need access to it no later than Monday, August 15<sup>th</sup>.

Previous editions of *ISW* are substantially similar to the 8<sup>th</sup> edition. If you choose to purchase a used copy of a previous edition, I encourage you to double-check each reading assignment based on the chapter title, rather than the chapter number.

## **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

All written assignments must be turned using the CourseDen drop-box. I **will not** grade papers that I receive over email. Grammar and composition are not a formal part of your assignment grades, but both are necessary to clearly present your ideas and experiences in a relatively small number of pages. If I cannot understand what you are trying to say, it is as though you have not said it, which may result in a lower grade.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments due during a specific week must be received no later than Sunday at 11:59 pm of that week. I will not accept technical difficulties or miscalculations occurring around midnight as valid excuses for late work.

All written assignments **must be** written using MS Word and saved in the .doc format. You should put your name and the assignment number at the top of the page. Your work should be written in size 12, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and it should have 1-inch page margins. Your assignments should also be written in complete sentences and paragraphs, rather than as bulleted lists.

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

- Discussion Forum (20%)
- Homework Assignments (20%)
- Exams (40%)
- Final Research Paper (20%)

I will post a discussion prompts on the CourseDen discussion forum. Substantive responses to each prompt will earn full credit. Late or trivial responses may receive partial credit at my discretion.

There will be 4 assignments. I will post an assignment prompt as well as instructional class notes for each assignment. Late assignments may receive partial credit at my discretion.

There will be 2 exams. Your midterm exam must be completed by Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm. Your final exam must be completed by Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5:00 pm. I **will not** accept late exams.

You will write a final research paper based on your own independent data collection and data analysis. Your final paper is due on Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm I **will not** accept late final papers.

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

A 90-100

B 80-89

C 70-79

D 60-69

F 0-59

## Class Schedule

### **WEEK 1: June 10<sup>th</sup> - August 12<sup>th</sup>**

Introduction to the Class

### **WEEK 2: August 15<sup>th</sup> - August 19<sup>th</sup>**

Introduction to Social Research

- Read *ISW* ch 1 “Science, Society, and Social Research”

Research Questions and Hypotheses

- Read *ISW* ch 2 “The Process and Problems of Social Research”

### **WEEK 3: August 22<sup>nd</sup> - August 26<sup>th</sup>**

Research Ethics

- Read *ISW* ch 3 “Research Ethics and Research Proposals”

Example of Research Ethics

- Read “Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study” on D2L

### **WEEK 4: August 29<sup>th</sup> - September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Participant Observation

- Read *ISW* ch 10 “Qualitative Methods”
- Read “The Promise and Pitfalls of Going into the Field” on D2L

Intensive Interviewing

- Read “In Their Own Words: Making the Most of Qualitative Interviews” on D2L

Assignment 1

### **WEEK 5: September 6<sup>th</sup> - September 9<sup>th</sup>**

Analyzing Qualitative Data

- Read *ISW* ch 11 “Qualitative Data Analysis”

Example of Qualitative Research

- Read “Weighing In: Elementary-Age Students and the Debate on Attitudes toward School among Black Students” on D2L

*Assignment 1 due by Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm*

## **WEEK 6: September 12<sup>th</sup> - September 16<sup>th</sup>**

Conceptualization and Operationalization

- Read ISW ch 4 “Conceptualization and Measurement”

Example of Conceptualization and Operationalization

- Read “Flux and Choice in American Ethnicity” on D2L

Validity and Reliability

## **WEEK 7: September 19<sup>th</sup> - September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Levels of Measurement

Measures of Central Tendency

- Read ISW ch 9 “Quantitative Data Analysis”

Assignment 2

## **WEEK 8: September 26<sup>th</sup> - September 30<sup>th</sup>**

Causality

- Read *ISW* ch 6 “Research Design and Causation”

Experiments

- Read *ISW* ch 7 “Experiments”
- Read “The Power of Experiments” on D2L

*Assignment 2 due by Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 11:59 pm*

## **WEEK 9: October 3<sup>rd</sup> - October 5<sup>th</sup>**

Examples of Experimental Research

- Read “The Mark of a Criminal Record” on D2L

## **WEEK 10: October 10<sup>th</sup> - October 14<sup>th</sup>**

Midterm Exam

*Midterm exam due by Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm*

**WEEK 11: October 17<sup>th</sup> - October 21<sup>st</sup>**

Sampling

- Read *ISW* ch 5 “Sampling and Generalizability”

Generalizability

**WEEK 12: October 24<sup>th</sup> - October 28<sup>th</sup>**

Content Analysis

- Read *ISW* ch 13 “Comparative and Historical Research and Content Analysis”
- Read “An Old Tool with New Uses” on D2L

Examples of Content Analysis Research

- Read “Culture and Conflict: The Portrayal of Blacks in Children’s Picture Books through the Mid- and Late-Twentieth Century” on D2L

Assignment 3

**WEEK 13: October 31<sup>st</sup> - November 4<sup>th</sup>**

Analyzing Quantitative Data using Bivariate Cross-Tabulation

- Read *ISW* ch 9 “Quantitative Data Analysis”

Analyzing Quantitative Data using Multivariate Cross-Tabulation

Final Research Paper (observation and content analysis options)

*Assignment 3 due by Sunday, October 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm*

**WEEK 14: November 7<sup>th</sup> - November 11<sup>th</sup>**

Descriptive Statistics using the General Social Survey

Bivariate Statistics using the General Social Survey

Final Research Paper (survey option)

Assignment 4

**WEEK 15: November 14<sup>th</sup> - November 18<sup>th</sup>**

Surveys

- Read ISW ch 8 “Survey Research”
- Read “Sense and Nonsense about Surveys” on D2L

Question Wording

Examples of Survey Research

- Read “Southerners All?” on D2L

*Assignment 4 due by Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm*

**THANKSGIVING BREAK: November 21<sup>st</sup> - November 25<sup>th</sup>**

**WEEK 16: November 28<sup>th</sup> - December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Final Exam

*Final Exam due by Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5:00 pm*

**FINAL EXAM WEEK: December 5<sup>th</sup> - December 9<sup>th</sup>**

Writing and Publishing Research

- Read ISW ch 16 “Summarizing and Reporting Research”

*Final Research Paper due by Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm*