

Sociology 497 Methods and Social Research Fall 2009

Course Syllabus

<http://www.csun.edu/~vcsoc00i/classes/s497f09/homepage.htm>

Professor Jerald Schutte

jschutte@csun.edu

While there will be an orientation meeting the first day of class (Aug 22nd at 2:00 pm in SH 180), this course is essentially held in cyberspace. As such, it will necessitate strong commitment to organize your time in this environment, if you are to achieve the learning objectives. These learning objectives are six fold: 1) you will come to apply your sociological knowledge in a formal scientific setting, so as to create testable hypotheses; 2) you will learn to structure research so as to enable the creation of sampling frames and experimental designs; 3) you will master one or more techniques for collecting data, such as the social survey or secondary analysis; 4) you will apply your knowledge of statistics in the practical setting of data analysis; 5) you will master at least one statistical program (SPSS in this class), necessary to carry out such analysis; and 6) you will come to understand how to read and write research articles, so as to facilitate the consumption of sociological literature. In a larger sense, however, your destiny in this class is to develop a perspective, born from exposure to scientific inquiry, nurtured by the role of data analysis, and tempered by the logic of critical reasoning, such that you will no longer experience the world as you have. Good luck on your journey.

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning This Class

Textbooks: The text is *Social Research Methods* by H Russell Bernard, Sage Publications. In addition, there is the lab manual *Adventures in Social Research* by Earl Babbie. Do not purchase this lab manual, however, until after our orientation meeting, allowing us to have the opportunity to discuss possible cost cutting measures. This will include the potential alternative purchase of either a disk or online version of SPSS.

Grading: The class portion of sociology 497 will consist of online discussion and readings, involving three noncumulative quizzes (50 points each) and a cumulative final (100 points). Tests will be taken online and timed. The attached calendar is immutable. That is, test dates will not change. Therefore, plan your social calendar accordingly as there are no make-up exams. However, the lowest quiz score will be dropped. Hence, your score, out of 200 points, will comprise your class grade for both classes. The lab grade will consist of laboratory exercises submitted and/or discussed each week, as well as demonstrated mastery of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Plus/minus grading will be used.

Communication: A variety of virtual techniques will be implemented. You will be utilizing the Internet, email, “Elluminate” and “Hypernews” to facilitate interaction during the course of the semester and to replace class time. The latter program is unique to campus and is best used by installing VPN on your home or laptop computer. As well, you may follow events on both the class website at: www.csun.edu/~vcsoc00i/classes/s497f09/homepage.htm and on twitter at twitter.com/s497f09ol.

Office hours: Office hours will be held in real time, Thursday 6:00-7:00 pm and each Saturday at 3:30-4:30 pm; otherwise by appointment. For those unable to meet in person, we can hold discussions via telephone and mIRC (chat). If several of you wish to form a study group, we can arrange routine alternative times to review material.

Classroom Expectations: This class has no formal classroom. However, you will be expected to meet in person for a first day orientation. That meeting will take place on Saturday August 22nd at 2:00 pm in SH 180. Beyond the first day, you are expected to attend a weekly one hour online meeting in which we will summarize the weeks’ subject matter and answer questions. These weekly meetings will take place virtually, through “Elluminate” at an agreed upon time Friday, Saturday or Sunday, early evening. As well, as many of you are aware, the CSU faculty has been placed on “furlough” this semester, meaning we must refrain from university duties nine days, of our choosing, during this semester. While I will attempt to ensure that no scheduled contact times for this class will be cancelled, there may be a disruption on one of the days. The timing of this will be articulated well in advance and will not affect any test dates.

Study Habits: Proactive learners tend to thrive in an online environment. Reactive learners, however, must be vigilant in adhering to a schedule. This will necessitate planning at least 8-10 hours per week of concentrated study time. Read the materials in advance, review on a regular basis and establish cohorts with whom you can communicate and study. Finally, attend all Elluminate sessions and come prepared to ask questions.

Sociology 497 Course Outline

I. Research – The What and Who of Science. This section is a general discussion of the nature and history of science and how it differs from our everyday lives. Moreover, it addresses how we measure such a world so as to create testable assertions (i.e. hypotheses).

Topics

August 22nd – Introduction to Perspective, Logistics & Overview
August 29th – Science and the Everyday World
September 12th – Measurement, Variables and Hypotheses
September 19th - Testing, Feedback and Lab Work Presentation

Readings

Handout
Chapters 1, 3
Chapters 2, 8

II. Research - The How of Science. This section discusses how we attempt to control measurement to be assured that we are assessing the proper population and that we are correctly measuring the relationship between our independent and dependent variable.

Topics

September 26th – Sampling Design
October 3rd – Experimental Design
October 10th – Testing, Feedback and Lab Work Presentations

Readings

Chapter 5
Chapters 4

III. Research - The Where of Science. This section focuses on data collection sources and reviews the statistical methods for analysing them. Surveys, observation techniques and non-reactive methods, will be discussed.

Topics

October 17th – Data Collection – Surveys
October 24th - Data Collection – Observation
October 31st – Data Collection – Simulation and Existing Data
November 7th - Testing, Feedback and Lab Work Presentations

Readings

Chapters 6, 7, 15 (PII)
Chapter 9, 10, 12
Handout, Chapter 12

IV. Research - The When of Science. This section discusses measurement and causal inference among variables. It begins with a discussion of the statistical elaboration model and ends with an analysis of how we present findings.

Topics

November 14th - Finding Cause - Multivariate Analysis - Part I
November 21st - Finding Cause - Multivariate Analysis - Part II
December 5th - Presenting Findings in Written Form
December 12th - Fourth and Final Examination (Cumulative)

Readings

Chapter 16 (Part I)
Chapter 16 (Part II)
Handout