

**METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH
SOCIAL SCIENCE 570
COURSE SYLLABUS**

General Information:

Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:40–2:55 p.m.

Meeting Place: Kethley Hall 204

Instructor: Dr. Alan Barton

Telephone: (662) 846-4097

Office: 201F Kethley Hall

E-mail: abarton@deltastate.edu

Webpage: http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/

Office Hours: The professor holds regular office hours at the following times:

Monday 11:00 – 11:30 am; 2:00 – 6:00 pm

Tuesday 3:00 – 5:00 pm

Wednesday 11:00 – 11:30 am; 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Thursday 3:00 – 4:00 pm

If you cannot make one of these times, contact the professor to set up an appointment.

Course Website:

Additional and updated information on the course can be found on the course website:

http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/SSC470/SSC470Syllabus.htm

Readings:

Text:

Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2003. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Fifth Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

The textbook is available at the university bookstore. You should purchase this book, or otherwise make arrangements to access the course readings.

Additional Readings:

Curtis, James E., Douglas E. Baer, and Edward G. Grabb. 2001. Nation of Joiners: Explaining Voluntary Association Membership in Democratic Societies. *American Sociological Review* 66(6): 783–805.

Koeber, Charles. 2002. Corporate Restructuring, Downsizing, and the Middle Class: The Process and Meaning of Worker Displacement in the “New” Economy. *Qualitative Sociology* 25(2): 217–246.

Koons-Witt, Barbara A. 2002. The Effect of Gender on the Decision to Incarcerate Before and After the Introduction of Sentencing Guidelines. *Criminology* 40(2): 297–327.

Course Overview:

The purpose of this course is to familiarize you with the **logic of social science inquiry**, strategies of **research design**, and a variety of **research methods**. In other words, this course is about **how** social scientists do research. We will compare **quantitative** and **qualitative** approaches to social science research in terms of their epistemologies, their research design strategies, and the tools they offer for carrying out social science research. You will engage the course material through readings, lectures, class discussions and activities, and exams. In addition, you will collaborate with classmates to develop a **research proposal**, incorporating a logical design that addresses a specific **research question**.

This course uses a **participatory, learner-centered, adult education** approach. An adult education approach recognizes that **YOU are responsible** for your own learning. The professor can only provide opportunities to learn, but cannot force you to learn. You are expected to work hard in this course, meaning that for every hour of class time, you should spend at least two to three hours outside of class preparing by doing readings, assignments, studying for quizzes and exams, and thinking about the course material.

You are expected to take responsibility for the success of the course, that is, you should take an active interest not just in the course material, but in the course itself, making it a success for all participants. Factors such as interest, motivation, creativity, and initiative are important elements in evaluating your performance in the course and assigning a grade.

Course Objectives:

After you successfully complete this course, you will be able to:

- (1) Distinguish three methodological paradigms and explain characteristics of each.
- (2) Identify the basic elements of a good research design.
- (3) Discuss characteristics of quantitative and qualitative sampling and measurement.
- (4) Discuss three quantitative research methods and three qualitative research methods.
- (5) Distinguish appropriate analytical techniques for quantitative and qualitative methods.
- (6) Find, read, understand and critique a scientific journal article.

These objectives contribute to the overall course goals:

- (1) Developing **critical thinking skills**. The discussions, readings, and tests are designed to encourage you to develop and use higher order thinking skills, including analytical, synthetic and applied thinking.
- (2) Developing **critical inquiry skills**. A goal of all social science courses is to help you understand the nature and workings of the social structures and processes that condition our lives by opening opportunities and imposing constraints on individuals. Sociologist C. Wright Mills called this using your "**sociological imagination**." A basic understanding of research techniques as presented in this course provides you with tools you can use to develop *your* sociological imagination.

Course Policies and Expectations:

- (1) **YOU are responsible** for learning the course material and for your progress in the course
 - You are expected to **attend class regularly** and **complete all of the assignments**.
 - You are expected to know **all** material presented during class sessions, whether you attended the class or not. If you miss a class session, you should check with another student to see what you missed.
 - "I didn't know" is **NEVER** a valid excuse. If you don't know something, it is your job to find out.

- (2) Missed assignments **CANNOT** be made up
 - It is assumed that if you miss class or an assignment, you are making a choice that prioritizes other activities above the class. For this reason, none of the assignments or coursework can be made up.
 - Assignments are due at the time specified; **no late assignments will be accepted**.
 - If you miss an exam, you will receive a grade of zero. In the first instance, this will count as your lowest grade and will be dropped. Subsequent instances will be scored as zero.
 - If you must miss a presentation or other in-class activity, it is up to you to arrange to trade with another student before the event. Please notify the instructor of such changes.

- (3) Illnesses and emergencies **MUST** be documented
 - If you must miss a class due to illness or a personal issue, notify the instructor **BEFORE** the missed class period either by e-mail or telephone.
 - If you cannot notify the instructor in advance due to an emergency situation, bring a note from a doctor or other professional to the next class meeting.
 - Illnesses and emergencies pertain **only** to the student, not to the student's family, friends or others.
 - If you must miss class for an official university activity, you should make arrangements with the instructor **BEFORE** the missed class. Appropriate documentation is required.
 - Notified absences (i.e. you notify the instructor before the event) count as one-half absence. Excused absences (i.e. you bring a note from a doctor or other professional) will not count against you for the first two; after that, each excused absence counts as one-half absence.
 - You are responsible for all material presented in the class, even during an excused absence. You should get class notes from another student for all class sessions you miss.
 - It is in your interest to provide the instructor with **written** notification (e.g. note or e-mail) or documentation for any missed class. It is risky to simply tell the instructor and expect him to remember.

- (4) Class **discussion** and **participation** are important elements in this course
 - Class discussions provide you with an opportunity to practice thinking skills in a safe environment.
 - In discussions, you are encouraged to explore ideas presented in the readings and lectures, to think about and apply concepts, and to develop arguments and evaluate evidence.
 - You must demonstrate **appropriate respect** for the opinions and ideas of other students. If you repeatedly show disrespect toward other students, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
 - Class discussions are **NOT** a time to chat with other students about topics not related to the course. Talking privately with other students while the rest of the class is trying to carry on a discussion is disruptive, bothersome, and disrespectful to other students and to the professor. If you repeatedly talk out of turn, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
 - It is acceptable (and encouraged) to disagree with the perspectives of other students, the instructor, and the readings; however, you should be careful to indicate disagreement with the idea or opinion, not with the person presenting the idea or opinion.
 - Any work missed by a student that was asked to leave the classroom **cannot** be made up under any circumstances.

- (5) Please make sure that all pagers, cell phones, etc. are **turned off** during class time. If your phone or pager repeatedly interrupts class, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
 - **DO NOT** bring cell phones, pagers, etc. to quizzes or exams. If I see a cell phone during a test, I will pick up your test immediately and you will not be permitted to finish the test.
- (6) You are expected to **comply with all academic standards and ethics** as defined in the DSU Bulletin and Handbook
 - You are expected to do your own work in this course. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will **NOT** be tolerated.
 - See the course web page if you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism. If it is still unclear, see the instructor. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO UNDERSTAND THESE GUIDELINES.** If at some point in the semester you are suspected of committing plagiarism, pleas of "I didn't know what plagiarism was" will not be accepted.
 - The sanctions for plagiarism are outlined on the web page. Make sure you are aware of these **BEFORE** you submit any work in this class.
- (7) Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with medical problems or diagnosed disabilities. Have Dr. Richard Houston at the Reily Health Center (846-4690) contact the course instructor to make arrangements.

Assignments and Grading:

There are a total of 100 points available for the semester. Your final score is simply the sum of all points earned over the semester. If you accumulate 90 or more points over the course of the semester, you will get an "A" in the course. If you accumulate 80 to 89 points, you will get a "B," for 70 to 79 points you will get a "C," and for 60 to 69 points will get a "D." If you get less than 60 points, your final grade will be an "F." Note that you start with zero and earn points; you do not start with 100 and lose points.

If you comply with all course requirements and submit all of the assignments satisfactorily and on time, you can expect a "C" in this course. To receive a higher grade, you must demonstrate a superior grasp of course material and an ability to apply the material in productive ways. It is also helpful to show an interest in the course material and in learning, and an achievement-based orientation.

You must complete the following assignments (see the course website for links that will help you complete these assignments):

- (1) **Attendance and Class Participation** (10 points)
You are expected to attend class regularly and participate actively in class discussions. You should come to each session having already read and thought about the assigned material, with questions and points to discuss.
- (2) **Mid-Term Exams** (20 points)
Three in-class exams will be given, consisting of short essay questions. The first exam covers material presented since the beginning of the course, and subsequent exams cover material presented since the previous exam. The exams are worth 10 points each; the lowest grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.
- (3) **Research Proposal** (15 points)
You will pair up with a classmate to prepare a 12-page research proposal, due November 23. Both group members will receive the same grade on the proposal.

- (4) **Preparation of Research Proposal** (10 points)
You will work on assignments pertaining to the research proposal project throughout the semester. You will hand in a research topic (1 point), an annotated bibliography (3 points), a concise research question (1 point), a summary of your methodological approach (3 points), and a critique of another group's approach (2 points). You will do the first four assignments with your group partner, and turn in only one assignment per group. The fifth assignment (critique) is done individually.
- (5) **Presentation of Research Proposal** (10 points)
With your group partner, you will prepare and give a final presentation to the entire class on your project at the end of the semester. The presentation is as a group, but each member will receive an individual grade on the final presentation.
- (6) **Research Paper** (10 points)
You will research and prepare a 10-page analytical paper in which you critique the methodological approaches of four research articles.
- (7) **Discretionary** (10 points)
The instructor will evaluate each student's performance based on factors such as the motivation, interest, and improvement the student demonstrates.
- (8) **Final Exam** (15 points)
A final exam is given at the regularly scheduled time. The exam will include essay questions, similar to those on the mid-terms.

Course Outline:

Week	Day/Date	Topic	Assignment	Reading
Introduction to Social Research				
1	Tue. 8/24	Introduction: Why Conduct Social Research?		
	Thu. 8/26	Overview of the Research Process; Data: What Is It? How Do We Get It?		Neuman (2003) Ch. 1 & 2
2	Tue. 8/31	The Role of Theory in Social Research		Neuman (2003) Ch. 3
	Thu. 9/2	Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Social Research		Neuman (2003) Ch. 6
3	Tue. 9/7	Beginning Social Research: The Literature Review		Neuman (2003) Ch. 5
	Thu. 9/9	Reading a Journal Article		Curtis et al. (2001)
Measurement and Sampling				
4	Tue. 9/14	Capturing Social Phenomena: Measurement in Social Research		Neuman (2003) Ch. 7
	Thu. 9/16	Quiz No. 1 Introduction to the Group Project	QUIZ 1	
5	Tue. 9/21	Designing a Study and Developing a Research Question		Neuman (2003) Ch. 4
	Thu. 9/23	Choosing Subjects and Sampling	RESEARCH TOPIC	
Quantitative Research Design				
6	Tue. 9/28	Collecting Quantitative Data		Neuman (2003) Ch. 10
	Thu. 9/30	Conducting Surveys		
7	Tue. 10/5	Experimental Design Strategies	ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	Neuman (2003) Ch. 9
	Thu. 10/7	Constructing a Table		
8	Tue. 10/12	Gathering and Using Secondary Data	RESEARCH QUESTION	Neuman (2003) Ch. 11
	Thu. 10/14	Quiz No. 2 Group Projects	QUIZ 2	
9	Tue. 10/19	Quantitative Analysis		Neuman (2003) Ch. 12
	Thu. 10/21	Quantitative Case Study		Koons-Witt (2002)

Week	Day/Date	Topic	Assignment	Reading
Qualitative Research Design				
10	Tue. 10/26	Collecting Qualitative Data	METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	Neuman (2003) Ch. 13
	Thu. 10/28	Field Research		
11	Tue. 11/2	Historical and Comparative Research	CRITIQUE	Neuman (2003) Ch. 14
	Thu. 11/4	Research Ethics		
12	Tue. 11/9	Qualitative Analysis		Neuman (2003) Ch. 15
	Thu. 11/11	Qualitative Case Study		Koeber (2002)
Presenting Research Results				
13	Tue. 11/16	Presenting Research Results		Neuman (2003) Ch. 16
	Thu. 11/18	Quiz No. 3 Presentation of Group Projects/Seniors	QUIZ 3	
14	Tue. 11/23	Presentation of Group Projects/Seniors	RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE	
	Thu. 11/25	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY		
15	Tue. 11/30	Presentation of Group Projects		
	Thu. 12/2	Presentation of Group Projects Course Evaluation		
Final Exam				
Exam Week	Tue. 12/7	No Class Meeting	GRAD RESEARCH PAPERS DUE	
	Thu. 12/9	Final Exam, 3:00 – 6:00	FINAL EXAM	

PREPARATION and PERSEVERANCE are the KEYS to SUCCESS

Be prepared; don't give up