

Methods of Social Research
SOCIAL SCIENCE 470
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:

Mon., Wed. and Fri. 9:00 – 10:00 am; 11:00 am – 12:00 noon

Tue. and Thu. 3:00 – 5:00 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/SSC470FA05/SSC470Syllabus.htm

Course Materials:

Text: Neuman, W.L. (2004). *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston: Pearson Education/Allyn and Bacon. ISBN: 0-205-355788-1.

Writing Notebook: Roaring Springs Paper Products Writing Notebook; “The Original Marble Cover–80 Sheets,” College Ruled.

The text and writing notebook are available at the campus bookstore. You should purchase the text, or otherwise make arrangements to access the course reading assignments. YOU **MUST** PURCHASE A WRITING NOTEBOOK. Bring your writing notebook to each class session.

Additional Readings:

Curtis, J.E., Baer, D.E., and Grabb, E.G. (2001). Nation of joiners: Explaining voluntary association membership in democratic societies. *American Sociological Review*, 66(6), 783–805.

Koeber, C. (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, B.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, assignments, quizzes 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 two methodological paradigms and explain characteristics of each;
- (2) Name steps in the research process and identify the basic elements of a good research design;
- (3) Discuss characteristics of quantitative and qualitative sampling, and apply various sampling techniques;
- (4) Discuss characteristics of quantitative and qualitative measurement, and understand how to operationalize concepts using each approach;
- (5) Apply various data collection techniques, for both quantitative and qualitative research;
- (6) Select and describe appropriate analytical techniques for quantitative and qualitative methods;
- (7) Find, read, understand and critique a scientific journal article.

These objectives contribute to the overall course goal of developing **critical thinking skills**. The discussions, readings, assignments, quizzes and exams are designed to encourage you to develop and use higher order thinking skills, including analytical, synthetic and applied thinking.

Course Policies and Expectations:

Responsibility:

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.

Assignments:

You are responsible for completing all of the assignments in this course in a timely fashion. Assignments are due at the time specified; **no late assignments will be accepted**, and missed assignments **cannot** be made up. If you miss class or an assignment, you are making a choice that prioritizes other activities above the class. If you miss an assignment, you will receive a grade of zero for that assignment. 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. If you miss a scheduled presentation, you are affecting the entire class, and points will be **deducted** from your grade for the assignment.

Illnesses and Emergencies:

Illnesses and emergencies **MUST** be documented. If you must miss class due to illness or another personal emergency, notify the instructor **BEFORE** the missed class period either by e-mail or telephone. If you cannot notify the instructor in advance, 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.

University Activities:

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.

If you miss a quiz or an assignment due to an illness, emergency or official university activity, this will count as your drop grade.

Absences:

If you are absent, and do not notify the instructor or bring a note, it will count as one full absence. If you **notify** the instructor before the absence, the missed class will count as one-half absence. If you bring a note from a doctor or other professional, the first two missed classes will count as **excused**, and will not count as an absence. After two excused absences, each additional excused absence counts as one-half absence. One or two absences during the semester will result in a one point deduction from your attendance and participation grade; three or four absences will result in a two point deduction; five or six absences will result in a four point deduction; seven or eight absences will result in a six point deduction; nine or ten absences will result in an eight point deduction.

You are responsible for all material presented in all classes, 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. a note or e-mail) to document any missed classes. It is risky simply to tell the instructor and expect him to remember.

Make sure that you **sign the roll sheet** at each class meeting.

Class Participation:

Class participation is an important element in this course. The purpose of class discussions is to 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.

If you repeatedly engage in **disruptive behaviors** during class discussions, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

- You must demonstrate **appropriate respect** for the opinions and ideas of other students during class discussions. It is acceptable (and encouraged) to disagree with the perspectives of other students or the instructor, but you should phrase this to show disagreement with the **idea or opinion**, not with the person presenting the idea or opinion. If you repeatedly show disrespect for other class members, 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 speak when you do not have the floor, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Class is **NOT** a time to catch up on your sleep. If you are not prepared to stay awake and participate in class discussions and other activities, you should not come to class. If you continually fall asleep during class activities, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

If you are asked to leave the classroom for disruptive or disrespectful behavior, you **cannot** make up any work that you miss as a result.

Electronic Devices (Cell Phones, Pagers, etc.):

Please make sure that all cell phones, pagers, and similar electronic devices 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 or other portable communication devices to class during quizzes, exams, or in-class assignments. If the instructor sees a cell phone or other device during a quiz, exam or in-class assignment, you will receive a grade of zero on the quiz, exam or in-class assignment, and you will be asked to leave the classroom.

If you must have a cell phone or pager (e.g. if you are a volunteer fireman or emergency responder), you **MUST** make arrangements with the instructor in advance.

Academic Honesty:

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.

You should be fully aware of the **Course Policy on Plagiarism and Cheating**. If you are caught cheating in this course, you will be dismissed from the course with a grade of "F." In addition, a report will be filed with the university's Vice President for Academic Affairs.

IT IS **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** TO UNDERSTAND THESE GUIDELINES. Make sure you know what constitutes plagiarism and cheating **BEFORE** turning in any assignments. Once you turn in an assignment, you are representing it as your own work. If you are suspected of committing plagiarism, pleas of "I didn't know what plagiarism was" will not be accepted.

If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, see the DSU Library's "**Plagiarism Prevention: A Guide for Students.**" The **Course Policy on Plagiarism and Cheating** also outlines examples of plagiarism. If it is still unclear, see the instructor.

The DSU Library's "Plagiarism Prevention: A Guide for Students" can be viewed at:
<http://library.deltastate.edu/libguides/plagiarismstudents.pdf>

The Course Policy on Plagiarism and Cheating can be viewed at:
http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/SOC470FA05/PlagiarismPolicy.htm

Special Accommodations:

Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with medical problems or diagnosed disabilities. Have Dr. Richard Houston at Reily Health Center (846-4690) contact the course instructor to make arrangements.

Assignments and Grading:

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.

See the course website for tips on taking effective notes and on getting the most out of class sessions.

(2) **Quizzes** (20 points)

Three in-class quizzes will be given, designed to take 20–30 minutes to complete. The quizzes will consist of short answer questions (e.g. true/false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc.). The first quiz covers material presented since the beginning of the course, and subsequent quizzes cover material presented since the previous quiz. The quizzes are worth 10 points each. The lowest grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. Bring a No. 2 pencil to quizzes.

See the course website for suggestions on studying for quizzes and for an explanation of quiz grading.

(3) **In-Class Writing** (10 points)

You must purchase the writing notebook indicated in the required materials section above. Bring the notebook to each class session; we will use them frequently for informal writing assignments during class. Keep up with the informal writing in your notebook; you will be asked to submit your notebook occasionally for the instructor to review. You are expected to do your own work on these essays. The policy on plagiarism and cheating will be enforced with **no exceptions**.

See the course website for more information on in-class writing.

(4) **Research Proposal** (15 points)

You will pair up with a classmate to complete a project throughout the semester. Each group will prepare a 12-page research proposal, due December 1. Both group members will receive the same grade on the proposal.

See the course website for information on the group project assignment, for groups and topics, and for additional information on preparing research proposals.

(5) **Preparation of Research Proposal** (20 points)

Assignments pertaining to the research proposal project are assigned throughout the semester. You will hand in a research topic (2 points), an annotated bibliography (5 points), a concise research question (3 points), a draft of your methodological approach (5 points), a critique of another group's approach (3 points), and an evaluation of your partner's contribution to the project (2 points). You will do the first four assignments with your group partner, and turn in only one assignment per group. The fifth and sixth assignments are done individually.

See the course website for guidelines on the proposal preparation assignments.

(6) **Presentation of the 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.

See the course website for a schedule of research proposal presentations.

(7) **Final Exam** (15 points)

A final exam is given at the regularly scheduled time. The exam will include short answer questions (as in the quizzes) and essay questions.

See the course website for tips on taking essay tests.

(7) **Engagement** (+/- 10 points)

The instructor can add or subtract up to 10 points from each student's final grade, based on the student's overall engagement in the course. Engaged students demonstrate qualities such as motivation, extra effort, interest in the course material, improvement over the course of the semester and leadership. Lack of engagement is manifested by frequent absences, talking with others during class, lack of interest in the course material, failure to prepare for class, and lack of participation in course activities.

See the course website for more information on student engagement.

Calculating Grades:

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.

Course Outline:

Week	Day/ Date	Topic	Assignment	Reading
Introduction to Social Research				
1	Tue. 8/23	Introduction: Why Conduct Social Research?		
	Thu. 8/25	Overview of the Research Process; Data: What is it? How do we get it?		Neuman, Ch. 1
2	Tue. 8/30	Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Social Research		Neuman, Ch. 2
	Thu. 9/1	The Role of Theory in Social Research; Modeling Social Phenomena		
3	Tue. 9/6	Beginning Social Research: The Literature Review		Neuman, Ch. 4
	Thu. 9/8	Reading a Journal Article		Curtis et al. (2001)
4	Tue. 9/13	Using the Library to Do Research; Citing Sources (Class Held in Roberts- LaForge Library)		
	Thu. 9/15	Introduction to the Group Project	QUIZ 1	
Measurement and Sampling				
5	Tue. 9/20	Capturing Social Phenomena: Measurement in Social Research; Validity and Reliability		Neuman, Ch. 5
	Thu. 9/22	Constructs and Concepts; Operationalization	RESEARCH TOPIC DUE	
6	Tue. 9/27	Designing a Study and Developing a Research Question		Neuman, Ch. 6
	Thu. 9/29	Choosing Subjects and Sampling		
Quantitative Research Design				
7	Tue. 10/4	Collecting Quantitative Data: Conducting Surveys	ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE	Neuman, Ch. 7
	Thu. 10/6	Experimental Design Strategies		Neuman, Ch. 8
8	Tue. 10/11	Content Analysis	RESEARCH QUESTION DUE	Neuman, Ch. 9
	Thu. 10/13	FALL BREAK		

Week	Day/ Date	Topic	Assignment	Reading
9	Mon. 10/18	Gathering and Using Secondary Data		
	Wed. 10/20	Quantitative Analysis		Neuman, Ch. 10
10	Mon. 10/25	Quantitative Case Study		Koons-Witt (2002)
	Wed. 10/27	Exercise: Constructing a Table	QUIZ 2	
Qualitative Research Design				
11	Tue. 11/1	Field Research		Neuman, Ch. 11
	Thu. 11/3	Historical/Comparative Research	METHODO- LOGICAL APPROACH DUE	Neuman, Ch. 12
12	Tue. 11/8	Qualitative Analysis		Neuman, Ch. 13
	Thu. 11/10	Qualitative Case Study	CRITIQUE DUE	Koeber (2002)
Presenting Research Results				
13	Tue. 11/15	Presenting Research Results		Neuman, Ch. 14
	Thu. 11/17	Research Ethics		Neuman, Ch. 3
14	Tue. 11/22	Presentation of Group Projects (Seniors)	QUIZ 3	
	Thu. 11/24	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY		
15	Tue. 11/29	Presentation of Group Projects		
	Thu. 12/1	Presentation of Group Projects	RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE	
Final Exam				
Exam Week	TBA	FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM	

PREPARATION and PERSEVERANCE are the KEYS to SUCCESS
Be prepared; don't give up

See the course website for other perspectives on preparation and perseverance