

# *Methods of Social Research*

**SOCIAL SCIENCE 470**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**FALL 2006**

## **General Information:**

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

**Meeting Place:** Bailey Hall 207

**Instructor:** Dr. Alan Barton

**Telephone:** (662) 846-4097

**Office:** 37 Ward Hall

**E-mail:** [abarton@deltastate.edu](mailto:abarton@deltastate.edu)

**Webpage:** [http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/)

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

Monday: 9:00 - 10:00 am; 11:00 - 12:00 noon

Tuesday: 3:00 - 4:00 pm, 5:00 - 6:00 pm

Wednesday: 9:00 - 10:00 am; 11:00 - 12:00 noon

Thursday: 3:00 - 5:00 pm

Friday: 9:00 - 10:00 am; 11:00 - 12:00 noon

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/SSC470FA06/SSC470Syllabus.htm](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/SSC470FA06/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.

The text is available at the campus bookstore. You should purchase the text, or otherwise make arrangements to access the course reading assignments.

### ***Additional Readings:***

All of the following articles can be accessed through the DSU Library's Full Text Electronic Journals. See the course website for instructions on locating, downloading and printing these articles.

Bengston, D.N. and Fan, D.P. (1999). Conflict over natural resource management: A social indicator based on analysis of online news media text. *Society and Natural Resources*, 12(5), 493-500.

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.

Linders, A. (2004). Victory and beyond: A historical comparative analysis of the outcomes of the abortion movements in Sweden and the United States. *Sociological Forum*, 19(3), 371-404.

Weitzer, R. and Tuch, S.A. (2005). Racially biased policing: Determinants of citizen perceptions. *Social Forces*, 83(3), 1009-1030.

## **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 and exams.

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) Find, read, understand and critique a scientific journal article.
- (2) Distinguish two methodological paradigms and explain characteristics of each;
- (3) Name steps in the research process and identify the basic elements of a good research design;
- (4) Discuss characteristics of quantitative and qualitative sampling and measurement;
- (5) Understand various techniques for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data;
- (6) Select and describe appropriate analytical techniques for quantitative and qualitative methods;

These objectives contribute to the overall course goal of developing **critical thinking skills**. The discussions, readings, assignments 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.

### ***Learning Opportunities:***

You are responsible for completing all of the assigned work in this course in a timely fashion. Assigned work is designed to provide you with learning opportunities, and all work is 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, and you will receive a grade of zero for any assignment that you fail to turn in.

**ALL** work that you submit (except in-class work) should be **typed/word processed**. If you submit a paper with more than one sheet, please attach all sheets with a staple or paper clip **BEFORE** you bring the assignment to class to turn in. The instructor will **NOT ACCEPT** work that is handwritten or that has multiple pages that are not attached with a staple or paper clip.

### ***Absences:***

You are expected to attend all class sessions and activities. Please make sure that you **sign the roll sheet** at each class meeting, as this will serve as official documentation of your attendance. If you miss class, you must document your absence, or points will be deducted from your grade (See the information on grading attendance). Please notify the instructor **IN ADVANCE** if you must miss class. 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.

***Illnesses and Emergencies:*** Illnesses and emergencies **MUST** be documented with a note from a doctor or other professional. You should bring the note to the next class meeting and submit it to the instructor. 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.

***Making Up Missed Work:*** If you miss an exam or other assignment due to a documented illness, emergency or official university activity, a make up will be given at the end of the semester. The make-up exam will be an oral exam with the instructor, in which you will be required to respond to a series of questions

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.

### ***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 sessions, 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), 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, which you can view from the course website. If you are suspected of cheating in this course, your case will be referred to the Division of Social Sciences Student Honesty and Ethics Committee. If the violation is confirmed, a report will be filed with the university's Vice President for Academic Affairs and other offices.

**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," at <http://www.deltastate.edu/pages/1268.asp>. The Course Policy on Plagiarism and Cheating also outlines examples of plagiarism. If it is still unclear, see the instructor.

***Special Accommodations:***

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

**Learning Opportunities:**

The following assignments are designed to assist you in learning the course material:

(1) **Attendance** (10 points)

You are expected to attend class regularly. You cannot learn the course material adequately if you are not in class to benefit from lectures and discussions. Make sure you sign the attendance sheet at each class session.

(2) **Discussion and Participation** (10 points)

You should come to each class session having already read and thought about the assigned material, with questions and points to discuss. You can learn the material more easily and effectively if you actively discuss the topics with the instructor and other class members.

(3) **Discussion Questions** (25 points)

We will read and discuss five journal articles during the semester, each illustrating a different data collection technique commonly used by social scientists. Prepare five discussion questions on each article, and submit a copy to class on the day the article will be discussed. Your questions should be presented in a professional manner. We will then use these questions to discuss the article.

(4) **Midterm Exams** (30 points)

Two midterm exams are given during the semester. Each exam is worth 15 points, and each consists of 30 multiple choice, true/false and matching terms questions. Bring a Scantron form no. 882-E and a no. 2 pencil to each exam. The first exam covers material from the beginning of the course until the exam, including readings, lectures, discussion and in-class activities. The second exam covers material between the first and second exams.

(5) **Final Exam** (25 points)

A final exam is given at the regularly scheduled time. The exam consists of 50 multiple choice, true/false and matching terms questions. Bring a Scantron form no. 882-E and a no. 2 pencil to the final exam. The final exam is comprehensive, but emphasizes material since the second mid-term exam.

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

The instructor can add or subtract up to 10 points from your final grade, based on your 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, leadership, and a professional attitude and approach. 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, lack of participation in course activities, and an unprofessional approach to the course.

**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.



**Course Outline:**

Week	Day/Date	Topics and Assignments	Reading
<b><i>Introduction to Social Research</i></b>			
1	Tue. 8/22	Introduction; Review Syllabus; Why Conduct Social Research?	
	Thu. 8/24	Overview of the Research Process; What are Data? How Do We Get Data?	Neuman (2004) Ch. 1
2	Tue. 8/29	Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Social Research	Neuman (2004) Ch. 2
	Thu. 8/31	The Role of Theory in Social Research; Modeling Social Phenomena	
3	Tue. 9/5	Reading a Journal Article	Curtis et al. (2001)
	Thu. 9/7	Beginning Social Research: The Literature Review, Research Questions and Study Design	Neuman (2004) Ch. 4
<b><i>Measurement and Sampling</i></b>			
4	Tue. 9/12	Measurement in Social Research: Constructs, Concepts, Variables; Operationalization	Neuman (2004) Ch. 5
	Thu. 9/14	Measurement in Social Research: Validity and Reliability; Levels of Measurement	
5	Tue. 9/19	Choosing Subjects and Sampling	Neuman (2004) Ch. 6
	Thu. 9/21	<b>Mid-Term Exam 1</b>	

Week	Day/Date	Topics and Assignments	Reading
<b><i>Quantitative Research Design</i></b>			
6	Tue. 9/26	Collecting Quantitative Data: Conducting Surveys	Neuman (2004) Ch. 7
	Thu. 9/28	Case Study: Quantitative Research Using Surveys <b>Discussion Questions 1 Due</b>	Weitzer & Tuch (2005)
7	Tue. 10/3	Experimental Design Strategies	Neuman (2004) Ch. 8
	Thu. 10/5	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	
8	Tue. 10/10	Content Analysis	Neuman (2004) Ch. 9, pp. 216-226
	Thu. 10/12	Case Study: Quantitative Research Using Content Analysis <b>Discussion Questions 2 Due</b>	Bengston & Fan (1999)
9	Tue. 10/17	Gathering and Using Secondary Data	Neuman (2004) Ch. 9, pp. 226-238
	Thu. 10/19	Case Study: Quantitative Research Using Secondary Data <b>Discussion Questions 3 Due</b>	Koons-Witt (2002)
10	Tue. 10/24	Quantitative Analysis	Neuman (2004) Ch. 10
	Thu. 10/26	<b>Mid-Term Exam 2</b>	

Week	Day/Date	Topics and Assignments	Reading
<b><i>Qualitative Research Design</i></b>			
11	Tue. 10/31	Field Research	Neuman (2004) Ch. 11
	Thu. 11/2	Case Study: Qualitative Research Using Field Studies <b>Discussion Questions 4 Due</b>	Koeber (2002)
12	Tue. 11/7	Historical/Comparative Research	Neuman (2004) Ch. 12
	Thu. 11/9	Case Study: Qualitative Research Using Historical/Comparative Methods <b>Discussion Questions 5 Due</b>	Linders (2004)
13	Tue. 11/14	Qualitative Analysis	Neuman (2004) Ch. 13
	Thu. 11/16	Presenting Research Results	Neuman (2004) Ch. 14
14	Tue. 11/21	Research Ethics	Neuman (2004) Ch. 3
	Thu. 11/23	<b>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</b>	
15	Tue. 11/28	<b>Final Exam</b>	
	Thu. 11/30		

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***PREPARATION and PERSEVERANCE are the KEYS to SUCCESS***

***Be prepared; don't give up***