

Research Methods

SYA 3300 Spring Semester 2006

Monday and Wednesdays 12:30 am to 2:30 pm

Biscayne Bay Campus, AC I Room 328

Sociology and Anthropology Department

Florida International University

Course Web Page: www.fiu.edu/~wiedmand/courses/methods/

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Email communication should be within WebCT. I try to respond to emails within three days.

Teaching Assistant: Rhodner Orisma. Email within WebCT.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This course introduces the research methods of Sociology and Anthropology. By presenting the how's and why's of research, it stimulates students to utilize social science research methods as an exciting way to understand the world. No knowledge of statistics or mathematics is required before beginning the course.

The course begins with a discussion of the philosophy of science: what it means to be scientific and why it is important. Then we will focus on the interrelatedness of theory, assumptions, hypotheses, and variables. We will review a wide array of research methodologies such as interviewing, historical documents, geographic information systems, surveys, focus groups, and participant-observation. By the end of the course students will have conducted a research project by formulating a research problem and research design and then by collecting data, interpreting results, writing a report, and making an oral presentation.

On completion of this course the student should be able to:

- 1) Distinguish between science and other ways of knowing.
- 2) Critically judge other people's research and publications.
- 3) Choose the best methods for a given research problem.
- 4) Construct and critique a research design.
- 5) Conduct a basic research project.
- 6) Present research in a professional manner.

FORMAT OF THE COURSE

Class meetings are composed of lectures, presentations, discussions, and exercises. The course is based on the assumption that the best way to learn research methods is by actually trying them out and implementing them. Accordingly, the course requires the students' active involvement. Your participation in both classroom discussions and assignments outside of the class is essential to passing the course. Assigned readings provide a foundational framework for the lectures, class exercises, and projects. Students must read the assigned reading material before the scheduled class meeting in order to properly engage in thoughtful discussions. Students are graded on their participation in on-line and in-class discussions.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Babbie, Earl

2004 Basics of Social Research w/SPSS. 3rd Edition. Thomson 0-534-22168-8

Bernard, Russell

2002 Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. 3rd Edition. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. RLPG 0-7591-0148-5.

REQUIRED SOFTWARE

These software are available for your use in any FIU computer lab.

Microsoft Word, Excel, and Presentations.

Internet Explorer: Free download from Microsoft

Adobe Reader: Free download from Adobe.

Refworks: Free use from FIU Library.

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. With Babbie Textbook

WEB ASSISTED COURSE MATERIALS

WebCT supports class presentations and the student learning experience with learning components such as related readings, web page links, study aids, discussions, emails, and extra credit exercises. Read "Announcements" for course instructions and be sure to regularly check "Content" for course information. Email instructor only within WebCT. It is required that students participate in the on-line email, discussions, and assignments within WebCT. Internet access can be through any computer. Computers in the FIU computer labs and the library are available for those who do not have personal computers. Begin WebCT from bottom of FIU main page, or go directly to:

http://webct.fiu.edu/webct/ticket/ticketLogin?action=print_login&request_uri=/webct/homearea/homearea%3F

Learn how to get started with WebCT or find answers to your questions at:

http://uts.fiu.edu/index.cfm?action=webct_studfaq

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) **Quizzes** focus on class lectures, films, readings, and special presentations up to prior class meeting. Through quizzes the student can demonstrate an understanding of the subject. They are composed of essays, multiple choice, and word identifications, etc.
- 2) **Discussions** both in-class and on-line demonstrate the student's interest in the course, understanding of the materials, as well as critical thinking, verbal, and writing skills.
- 3) **Exercises** introduce students to specific research skills, analytic procedures and presentation styles. These out-of-class exercises and fieldnotes are submitted regularly via WebCT and in printed form.
- 4) **Group Research Project:** This project is conducted as if you are a professional social scientist conducting original research, preparing a professional report and presentation. Your team will decide on a research topic, prepare a literature review, formulate a research design, implement the selected methods, analyze the data, write the report and make a class presentation. There will be weekly progress reports, and at the end of the semester the group will make an oral and written presentation.

For the group research project, the group, not individuals, will be responsible for completing assignments. Each group will decide who will do what. The group will make one report. Within groups it is always the case that some people work harder than others and deserve more credit. At the end of the semester, everyone in a group will evaluate everyone else in their group. Those who have contributed more will be given more credit than those who have not fulfilled their responsibilities to the group. While some people prefer to work alone and not in groups, everyone in this class must work with a group. It will mean less work for each individual, since work will be shared within the group and you will learn from other members in the group as you help each other out.

- 5) **Writing Style:** In order to enhance your professional writing style all written text must be in the format and style used by the *American Anthropologist*. Style guidelines are discussed in WebCT – Content - “Reference Your Sources.”

EXTRA CREDIT

Learning projects will become available throughout the course within WebCT. Extra credit points vary. Bring print copy to class, electronic copy via WebCT. April 12 is the last date to submit extra credit projects.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be taken throughout the term. Three or more recorded absences results in a reduction of the student's Total Points for the course. Students who observe religious holidays should inform the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester.

ACADEMIC ETHICS

It is strictly prohibited to submit as one's own work material provided by a professional research agency, the internet, or other persons. Students who violates these principles receive a grade of "F" for the course. Instructor may submit essays to "Turn-It-In" for an assessment of originality. The instructor also has the authority to consider academic misconduct charges that carry considerable penalties. Please consult the University student handbook for further information on plagiarism and its consequences.

GRADING

Final grades are based on participation, quizzes, exercises, and the Group Research Project. The quiz with the lowest score will be dropped.

Quizzes 4 drop lowest. 3 @ 10 points each	30
Exercises	35
Participation: On-line	5
In-Class	5
Group Research Project	25
Total Points	100
Extra Credit	# #
Subtract Attendance	# #
Grand Total	# # #

FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

Grand Total Points

A	= 95 – 100	C	= 70 -72
A-	= 90 – 94	C-	= 67 - 69
B+	= 85 – 89	D+	= 63 - 66
B	= 80 – 84	D	= 60 - 62
B-	= 77 – 79	F	= 59 or less
C+	= 73 – 76		

COURSE TOPICS AND SCHEDULE

Week One – January 9 & 11

Topic: Introductions and Course Overview
Multiple Methods and Triangulation
Careers and Applications

Week Two – January 16 & 18

Topic: Philosophy of Science, Theory and Methods
Ethnography, Participant Observation
Readings: Babbie, Chapters 1 and 2.
Bernard, Chaps. 1 – 3. (Optional)

Week Three – January 23 & 25

Topic: Literature Review, Refworks
eHRAF Human Relations Area Files
Research Ethics, Fieldnotes
IRB – Human Subject Research Certification
Readings: Babbie, Chap 3, 10, Appendix A.
Bernard, Chap 4, 13

Week 4 – January 30 & February 1

Topic: Research Design, Conceptualization, and Operationalization
Fieldnote Coding and Management, Genealogical Methods
Readings: Babbie, Chap 4-5
Bernard, Chap 14.

Quiz 1 – Feb 1

Week Five – February 6 & 8

Topic: Indexes and Scales
Content Analysis, Social Network Analysis
SPSS
Readings: Babbie, Chap 6, 11
Bernard, Chap 15

Week Six – February 13 & 15

Topic: Survey Research, Sampling
Focus Groups, U.S. Census
Geographic Information Systems
Readings: Babbie, Chap 7-8.
Bernard, Chap 15

Week Seven – February 20 & 22

Topic: Interviewing Open-Ended & Semi-Structured
Choosing Informants
Historical Document Analysis

Readings: Babbie, Chap 9
Bernard, Chap 9 - 10

Week Eight – February 27 & March 1

Topic: Survey Questions and Questionnaire Design
Cultural Domain Analysis

Readings: Babbie, Chap 12.
Bernard, Chap 11

Quiz 2 – March 1

Week Nine – March 6 & 8

Topic: Analyzing Research Data
Secondary Survey Analysis, Meta Analysis

Readings: Babbie, Chap 13.

Week 10 – March 13 & 15

Topic: Applications: Making it useful.
Evaluation Research
Rapid Ethnographic Assessment

Readings: Babbie, Chap 14.

March 20-24 – Spring Break – No Class

Week Eleven – March 27 & 29

Topic: Writing and Presenting Research
Readings: Babbie, Chap 15.

Week Twelve – April 3 & 5

Topic: Effective MS PowerPoint Presentations
Tables, Graphs and Illustrations

Quiz 3 – April 5

Week Thirteen – April 10 & 12

Topic: Group Presentations

Last date to submit extra credit projects – Class meeting of April 12.

Week Fourteen – April 17 & 19

Topic: Group Presentations

Week Fifteen – April 24 – Final Exam Week

Quiz 4 at scheduled University time.