

**Sociology 46A: Introduction to Social Research**  
Summer Session I - 2015  
Syllabus

**Instructor:** Kelsey Meagher, M.A.  
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**Office Hours:** Monday 12-1pm & Wednesday 9-10am

**Lecture Time:** M/Tu/W/Th 10:00-11:40am  
**Location:** Hutchison 102

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course aims to provide students with a fundamental understanding of how social science research is designed and conducted. Students will be exposed to a variety of research methods, including experimental design, survey research, qualitative field research, and unobtrusive research. By the end of the course, students will understand the logics of social inquiry and the benefits and challenges of different research methods.

This course also aims to put social research in context. Together, we will explore what makes science different from other ways of learning things about the world around us. We will examine the features that make science well suited for the production of knowledge, and we will also learn its limitations. We will even examine the political and ethical implications of social science research.

This course is designed for students with multiple career goals. Even if students don't plan to pursue careers in research, they will still *consume* a great deal of research over their lifetimes. This course will help students become critical consumers of research studies published in popular media and the academic literature. Course activities will help students develop widely applicable skills in critical thinking, project design, and writing.

**TEXTBOOK:**

Earl Babbie. 2012. *The Practice of Social Research* (Cengage Learning, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition). (Available for about \$22 on [Amazon](http://Amazon.com).)

*Note: The 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> editions are also acceptable. Copies of the textbook will be available in the Course Reserves at Shields Library.*

Additional readings will be posted to SmartSite.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

<p><b>Midterm Exam:</b> July 8 <b>Assignment 1:</b> Due July 16 at 10am in class and on SmartSite <b>Assignment 2:</b> Due July 23 at 10am in class and on SmartSite <b>Final Exam:</b> July 30</p>
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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Participation	10
Reading quizzes	10
Assignment 1	15
Assignment 2	20
Midterm Exam	20
Final Exam	25

**Active participation** in class is expected of all students and is worth 10% of the total course grade. I will provide many types of opportunities for student participation, including structured discussions in pairs and small groups, in-class exercises, and the occasional take-home exercise. These activities are designed to help you understand and engage with the course material more deeply. Because you cannot participate in class without actually being there, regular attendance will factor into your participation grade. Missing class, arriving late, and leaving early is disrespectful to your fellow students and will negatively affect your participation grade.

**Reading quizzes** will be given *before* the class meeting every day that readings are assigned (i.e., almost every class meeting). These quizzes will consist of 8-10 multiple-choice questions that cover the reading's main topics. They are not designed to be especially difficult, so anyone who reads the material thoroughly should expect to perform well. I have chosen to give reading quizzes for three reasons: (1) Quizzes incentivize students to do the readings on time, which dramatically improves the quality of in-class discussions. (2) Regular quizzes help students monitor their own learning and identify gaps in their knowledge long before exams, giving them ample time to seek help. (3) Similarly, regular quizzes help me identify common student misunderstandings and adjust my lectures accordingly. Thus, these quizzes are designed with your learning in mind.

Reading quizzes will be administered on SmartSite. They are timed, 30-minute quizzes that will be available to you from 5pm on the day before the reading is due until 2 hours before lecture (8am). Your scores and the correct answers will be released at 8:05am. Make-up quizzes will *not* be available, although the lowest quiz score of the quarter will be dropped. Reading quizzes will begin on the second day of the course.

**Assignments 1 and 2** will ask students to synthesize course material and apply it to hypothetical and real research studies. See the Resources folder on SmartSite for detailed instructions and grading rubrics for each assignment. I require students to submit *both* an electronic version of their assignment on SmartSite *and* a hard copy in class. The electronic version should be uploaded prior to our class meeting on the due date, and the hard copy must be submitted at the *beginning* of class that day.

The **midterm** and **final exam** will include multiple-choice, true/false, and short answer questions. Students must bring a UCD Scantron Form 2000 to each exam (available at the Campus Bookstore and the vending machine in Olson Hall). Paper will be provided for the short answer responses. We will have a review session in class on the day before each exam.

There will no opportunities for extra credit in this course. No exceptions.

Student performance will be measured using this grade system:

- A Excellent. Student displays mastery of course material and uses strong analytic skills to apply, synthesize, and evaluate it creatively. An “A” grade denotes **superior** work.
- B Very good. Student displays a solid grasp of the material with good (but not excellent) analytic skills. Fulfills all course requirements with high quality work.
- C Fair. Student displays some mastery of the material. Fulfills all course requirements to a satisfactory degree.
- D Barely passing. Student does not submit satisfactory work or fails to complete some course requirements as stipulated in the syllabus.
- F Not passing. Student fails to meet minimum course requirements, and work must be repeated to receive recognition.

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS:**

In fairness to the students who submit their work on time, late assignments will suffer a grade penalty. Late assignments will be docked **one** full letter grade for each day they are late, including weekends. In other words, an assignment that would earn an “A” if submitted on time will only earn a “B” if submitted one day late. Assignments submitted more than 3 days late will not be accepted and will be entered as a 0 in the gradebook.

### **EMERGENCIES:**

Make-up exams are available *only* in cases of a **documented** emergency, such as a serious illness or a death in the immediate family. If such an emergency occurs, please contact me as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements.

### **EMAIL POLICY:**

I try to respond to student emails within 48 hours. This means that I may not be able to answer last-minute questions about exams or assignments, so I encourage you to plan accordingly. Email is best reserved for short questions that can be answered in only a few sentences. If you have a question about course material that requires a more detailed response, I will ask you to come to my office hours or talk to me after class.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

Students with documented disabilities should see me during the first week of class to discuss accommodations. Students requesting exam accommodations must provide me with a letter from the Student Disability Center as soon as possible, and no later than two weeks before the first exam. See the UC Davis exam policy for more information:

<http://catalog.ucdavis.edu/academicinfo/exams.html>.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & PLAGIARISM:**

I take violations of academic integrity (i.e., cheating and plagiarism) very seriously. According to the UC Davis [Code of Academic Conduct](#), it is the student’s responsibility to know what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and how to avoid it. Students who are confused about what counts as academic misconduct should consult the resources available from [Student Judicial Affairs](#), including [this pamphlet](#) about plagiarism.

Academic misconduct has many damaging consequences. It gives you an unfair advantage over students who submit original work. It hampers my ability to give you honest feedback about your work and help you improve in the course. Finally, it prevents you from knowing what you're really capable of – and from pushing yourself to expand your capabilities.

Students who are found cheating on exams or plagiarizing written assignments will be assigned a 0 on the exam/assignment and reported to Student Judicial Affairs.

**GROUND RULES:**

In order to maintain a respectful and productive classroom environment, I have created the following ground rules for our class:

1. Arrive on time.
2. Come to class prepared for discussion. Complete all readings on time.
3. Avoid distracting your fellow classmates. Turn off or silence your cell phone, and use laptops only for taking notes or completing assignments.
4. If you are confused, ask questions. You are probably not the only student who is confused.
5. During discussion, only one person speaks at a time. Do not interrupt each other.
6. Do not monopolize discussion. Everyone should get the opportunity to voice their thoughts and questions.
7. If you disagree with something said during discussion, challenge it respectfully. Criticize *ideas*, not people.
8. Speak from your own experiences, without generalizing to a larger group.
9. If you offer an opinion during discussion, always use evidence to support it.
10. Build on other students' comments. Work together to improve everyone's learning.
11. Take responsibility for the quality of class discussions. Look for opportunities to improve them.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

*May be adjusted as needed. Changes to this schedule will be posted on SmartSite.*

### **Part 1: An Introduction to Inquiry**

- June 22 Course Introduction
- June 23 Human Inquiry and Science  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 1*
- June 24 Paradigms, Theory and Research  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 2*
- June 25 The Ethics and Politics of Social Research  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 3*  
*Also: Skim the ASA Code of Ethics (Available here:*  
<http://www.asanet.org/images/asa/docs/pdf/CodeofEthics.pdf>*, p. 1-24)*
- June 29 The Ethics and Politics of Social Research (cont.)  
*Reading quiz on Becker, Howard S. 1967. "Whose Side Are We On?"* *Social Problems* 14(3): 239-247. *(Available on SmartSite.)*

### **Part 2: The Structure of Inquiry**

- June 30 Research Design  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 4*
- July 1 Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 5*
- July 2 Indexes, Scales, and Typologies  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 6*
- July 6 Logic of Sampling  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 7*
- July 7 Classroom activities & review for midterm
- July 8 **Midterm Exam**

### **Part 3: Modes of Observation**

- July 9 Survey Research – Guest Speaker  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 9*
- July 13 Survey Research (cont.)  
*Reading quiz on Singer et al. 2010. "The Effect of Question Framing and Response Options on the Relationship Between Racial Attitudes and Beliefs About Genes as Causes of Behavior." Public Opinion Quarterly* 74(3): 460-476. *(Available on SmartSite.)*
- July 14 Experiments  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 8*  
*Also: Listen to Planet Money Episode #379 (Available on SmartSite) – not on reading quiz, but a topic for discussion in class*

- July 15      Qualitative Field Research  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 10*
- July 16      Qualitative Field Research (cont.) – Guest Speaker  
*Reading quiz on Smith (2015). Will be available on SmartSite.*  
**Assignment 1 Due** in class and on SmartSite
- July 20      Interviews & Mixed-Method Research – Guest Speaker  
*Reading quiz on Nguyen (2015). Will be available on SmartSite.*
- July 21      Unobtrusive Research  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 11*
- July 22      Unobtrusive Research (cont.) – Guest Speaker  
*Reading quiz on Haraway (2015). Will be available on SmartSite.*

**Part 4: The Broader Context of Social Research**

- July 23      Reading & writing social research  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 17*  
**Assignment 2 Due** in class and on SmartSite
- July 27      Public Sociology: Evaluation Research  
*Reading quiz on Babbie ch. 12*
- July 28      Public Sociology: Media Engagement & Policymaking  
*Reading quiz on:*
  - Vaughan, Diane. 2005. “On the Relevance of Ethnography for the Production of Public Sociology and Policy.” *BJS* 56(3): 411-416
  - Best, Joel. 2004. “Why Don’t They Listen to Us? Fashion Notes on the Imperial Wardrobe.” *Social Problems* 51(1): 154-160.*Both available on SmartSite.*
- July 29      Classroom activities & review for final exam
- July 30      **Final Exam**