

SOCI 5303.001, Research Design
Spring 2012
W 6:00-8:50pm, University Hall Room 13

Instructor: Chunping Han, Ph.D.

Office Hours: T and Th 11:30pm-12:30pm and by appointment

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Course Description

This course provides an intensive introduction to conducting theoretically informed social research. We will focus on the logic of research design as well as procedures for conducting research. We will cover a variety of techniques for gathering data including survey research, field and observational methods, experiment, and using available data. By the end of this course you should be familiar with the range of methods available to social scientists. You should also be able to select and craft a research design such that the data collected are appropriate for the theory to be tested.

This course may be one of the most difficult courses during your graduate study and requires your commitment of a lot of time and efforts. As a graduate student, you are expected to take initiatives in learning, including completing assigned readings prior to class, attending all the lectures, participating in class discussions actively, turning in assignments in time, and consulting with me when you have questions.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of the course, students will be able to: (1) understanding the strengths and weaknesses of major social research methods, (2) evaluate existing social research critically, (3) identify the appropriate method for your research purpose, and (4) develop and implement your own research design.

Required Textbook

Singleton, Royce A., Jr. and Bruce C. Straits. 2010. *Approaches to Social Research* (Fifth Edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional readings are available online from the UTA library website unless indicated as on course reserve.

Course Requirements:

Weekly memos: 20%

Course presentations: 15%

Research project assignments: 45%

 Research topic and outline of research design: 10%

 Instrument: 5%

 Final paper: 20%

 Paper presentation: 10%

Attendance and participation: 20%

Weekly memos: You are required to turn in a memo on the readings assigned for a specific week. The memo must consist of your comment on at least one aspect of the readings that strikes you and at least one question that can provoke thoughtful discussion. Send your memo to me and your classmates by email by 5pm the Tuesday before Wednesday's class. You are exempted from a memo in the week during which you make a presentation. Weekly memos are worth 20% of your final grade.

Course presentations: You are required to make two presentations on course materials in collaboration with one of your classmates in class. Course presentations account for 15% of your final grade.

Research project assignments: You are required to work on a social research project, which consists of several steps of work. All project-related assignments add up to 45% of your grade.

Attendance and participation: Regular attendance and active, thoughtful discussion are crucial for the success of the class. In addition, you will be asked to share your progress in your research project. Attendance and participation are worth 20% of your final grade.

Late policy: Since you are graduate students, I do not accept late work unless under extreme conditions beyond personal control where documentation of proof is required. Late work must be turned in within one week of the due date.

Drop Policy: Census date is **February 1**. If you decide not to complete this course, it is solely your responsibility to officially drop. You will need to see an advisor in your major department in order to drop this class. The **final drop date** for the spring 2012 semester is **March 30**. Failure to do so will result in a grade of **F**.

Electronic Communication Policy: The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University "MavMail" address as its official means of communication with students. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/>. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

Course-Related Announcements: Course-related announcements are made either in class or via "MavMail." It is your responsibility to check your email regularly. It is also your responsibility to check with a classmate whether you have missed any announcement if you have to miss a class.

Academic Integrity: At UT Arlington, academic dishonesty is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any form, including (but not limited to) "cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2). Suspected violations of academic integrity standards will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Americans with Disabilities Act: UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Student Support Services Available: UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline by calling 817-272-6107, sending a message to resources@uta.edu, or visiting www.uta.edu/resources.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory will be asked to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS) about the course and how it was taught. Instructions on how to access the SFS system will be sent directly to students through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback data is required by state law; student participation in the SFS program is voluntary.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Course Outline and Assignments

(Subject to change by the instructor according to the need of the class)**

Week 1, January 18: Introduction

- Syllabus
- Why do we study research design?

Week 2, January 25: Theory and Methodology in Social Research

- Singleton and Straits: Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 (pp.104-114)
- Lieberman, Stanley and Freda B. Lynn. 2002. "Barking Up the Wrong Branch: Scientific Alternatives to the Current Model of Sociological Science." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:1-19.

Week 3, February 1: Conceptualization and Measurement

- Singleton and Straits: Chapter 5
- John Iceland. 2005. "Measuring Poverty: Theoretical and Empirical Considerations." *Measurement* 3 (4): 199-235.
- Cornwell, Erin York and Linda J. Waite. 2009. "Social Disconnectedness, Perceived Isolation, and Health among Older Adults." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 50(1): 31-48.

Week 4, February 8: Causality

- Singleton and Straits: Chapter 4 (pp.79-103)
- Link, Bruce G. and Jo Phelan. 1995. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* (Extra Issue): 80-94.

Week 5, February 15: Sampling

- Singleton and Straits: Chapter 6
- Kasinitz, Philip, John H. Mollenkopf, Mary C. Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway. 2008. *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Introduction and Methodological Appendix. [On course reserve.]

Week 6, February 22: Survey Research

- Singleton and Straits: Chapter 9
- Broh, Beckett A. 2002. Linking Extracurricular Programming and Academic Achievement: Who Benefits and Why? *Sociology of Education* 75: 69-91.
- Kluegel, James R., David S. Mason, and Bernd Wegener. 1999. "The Legitimation of Capitalism in the Postcommunist Transition: Public Opinions about Market Justice." *European Sociological Review* 15:251-283.

Week 7, February 29: Survey Instrumentation

- Singleton and Straits: Chapter 10
- Stanley Presser et al. 2004. "Methods for testing and Evaluating Survey Questions." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68 (1):109-131.
- Oishi, Shigehiro. 2010. "Culture and well-being: Conceptual and methodological issues." In E. Diener, D. Kahneman, & J. F. Helliwell, (Eds.), *International differences in well-being*. New York: Oxford University Press. [On course reserve.]

*****Research topic and outline of research design due in class**

Week 8, March 7: Discussion of Research Proposals

(March 14: Spring break. No class.)

Week 9, March 21: Qualitative Methods (1): Field Observation

- Singleton and Straits: Chapter 11
- Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review*. 67(5): 747-776.

****Instrument due in class**

Week 10: March 28: Qualitative Methods (2): Intensive Interview

- Young, Alford A., Jr. 2004. *The minds of Marginalized Black Men: Making Sense of Mobility, Opportunity, and Future Life Chances*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Introduction and Chapter 4. [On course reserve.]

Week 11: April 4: Experiment

- Singleton and Straits: Chapters 7 and 8
- Lutfey, Karen E., Kevin W. Eva, Eric Gerstenberger, Carol L. Link, and John B. McKinlay. 2010. "Physician Cognitive Processing as A Source of Diagnostic and Treatment Disparities in Coronary Heart Disease: Results of a Factorial Priming Experiment." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51: 16-29.

Week 12, April 11: Using Available Data

- Singleton and Straits: Chapters 12
- Schnittker, Jason. 2007. "Diagnosing Our National Disease: Trends in Income and Happiness, 1973 to 2004." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 71 (3): 257-280.
- Schmidt, Vivien A. 2002. "Does Discourse Matter in the Politics of Welfare State Adjustment?" *Comparative Political Studies* 35:168-193.

Week 13, April 18: Writing Social Research Reports

- Singleton and Straits: Chapter 17
- (Recommended reading) Yellin, Linda L. 2009. *A Sociology Writer's Guide*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. [On course reserve.]

Week 14, April 25: Presentation of Projects

Week 15, May 2: Presentation of Projects

*****Final paper due in class**