

**Social Research Methods**  
**Sociology 212**  
 Spring 2013  
 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:00 – 5:15pm  
 Sturges 223

Instructor: Christy Panagakis

Office: 121D Sturges Hall

Phone: 245--5335 (note: I rarely check my phone, email is the quickest way to reach me)

E-mail: panagakis@geneseo.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 – 11:00am and 1:30 – 2pm, or by appointment.

**Course objectives:**

In this course, we will explore what research methodologies social scientists use to study questions and issues surrounding our daily lives. This course has three main objectives:

1. The first goal of this course is to enable students to recognize and pose researchable sociological questions.
2. A second aim of this semester's work is to familiarize students with a variety of different forms of research methodology and identify the strengths and weaknesses of those methods.
3. The third purpose of this class is to learn to critically evaluate published social science research.

**Required readings:**

Fenstermaker, Sarah and Nikki Jones. 2011. *Sociologists Backstage: Answers to 10 Questions About What They Do*. New York: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0415870931

Additional readings are located in a reader, available to purchase at the Sundance Books Textbook Outlet. These readings will be denoted with an asterisk (\*) on the syllabus.

**Course Requirements:**

**1. Class participation: 10 percent**

Participation credit will be earned through two different methods. First, students will individually respond to questions posed in class and submit their written responses for credit. Second, students will work together in informal groups to respond to questions and problems posed in class. The written responses will be submitted for credit.

**2. Exam: 20 percent**

Much of the success on the other assignments is dependent on knowledge of the material covered during the first half of the class. Because these other assignments will assess your ability to make practical applications of the material, this class only has one exam. The exam will be multiple choice and short answer and cover all of the material during the first half of the semester.

3. Response essays: **20 percent**

Three response essays will be required out of five opportunities available; each essay is worth 10 points. Each response essay will be a critical review regarding the research methods used in one of the articles read during the prior week. Each essay will be typed, double spaced, stapled in the top left hand corner, have page numbers, and be written in size 12 Times New Roman font with 1" margins. The essays will be a minimum of two full pages, but no more than three full pages. Instructions for the response essays will be distributed in class.

4. Research proposal: **20 percent**

Students will be assigned to groups to work together to produce a research proposal. Each member of the group will have a specific role in the completion of the project, ultimately culminating in a four to five page paper and a presentation. Instructions for the research proposal will be distributed in class.

5. Methods activity: **20 percent**

Students will be required to undertake a small research project and write a paper about their experiences. While students are able to practice different methodologies in class, these activities allow more real world experience with the practice of conducting research. Instructions for the methods activities will be distributed in class.

6. Syllabus test: **5 percent**

During the second week of the semester, students will take a short test concerning the content of the syllabus. Too frequently students are not familiar with assignments and guidelines on the syllabus that will help them excel in this class; this short test will help to ensure that students are aware of information that is important for their overall success in this class.

7. Individual meeting: **5 percent**

Because class participation is earned on the basis of being in class on the day an activity occurs, it is possible that a student can go the entire semester without ever speaking in class. For those shy students, this may seem like a perfect situation; however, this does not help students learn how to feel more confident speaking with their professors, nor does it help them develop relationships with professors. You are required to come meet with me once, during my office hours, prior to the first exam. This opportunity is designed for me to get to know a little bit more about you, without putting anyone on the spot in class. If my office hours are not conducive to your schedule, please email me to schedule another time for us to meet.

**Grading scale:**

A: 94-100 percent

A-: 90-93 percent

B+: 87-89 percent

B: 84-86 percent

B-: 80-83 percent

C+: 77-79 percent

C: 74-76 percent

C-: 70-73 percent

D: 66-69 percent

E: less than 65 percent

**Total: 100 percent**

**Special Needs:** SUNY Geneseo will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented physical, emotional or learning disabilities. Students should consult with the Director in the Office of Disability Services (Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin, tbuggieh@geneseo.edu) and their individual faculty regarding any needed accommodations as early as possible in the semester.

### **Course Policies:**

1. There is no attendance policy for this class, however class participation will count for 10 percent toward your final grade. A large portion of the material for this course will be covered in class and emerge from class discussions. Because of this, it is strongly encouraged that you attend every class. Because there is no attendance policy, there are no excused absences. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Speak with other students first to find out what you missed before coming to see me.
2. Please familiarize yourself with the university's cheating and plagiarism policies ([http://www.geneseo.edu/dean\\_office/dishonesty](http://www.geneseo.edu/dean_office/dishonesty)). Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated and the consequences of such offenses will be, at a minimum, a zero on the assignment and reporting to the university. You must adequately cite others' work in the text and as references. Ignorance of appropriate citation practices is not an acceptable excuse.
3. Please give me and your classmates your undivided attention. This means arriving on time and not preparing to leave until the class discussion has ended. Listen to and respect what others say in class. Dissenting viewpoints are always welcome as long as they are respectfully presented.
4. All cell phones **MUST** be on silent during class meetings. Cell phone ringing or buzzing is VERY disruptive during discussions and I consider it disrespectful of class members as well as of myself. I will assume that you simply forgot the first time it occurs. However, the second time it occurs you will be subject to disciplinary action. Also, texting during class is not allowed, as it shows that you are not giving the class your undivided attention. The warning policy regarding phones ringing and buzzing in class will also be followed regarding texting.
5. It is essential that you do all of the readings before class. Your grade will be influenced by your preparation for class (as measured by in-class writing assignments about the readings, class and small-group discussions) and your understanding of the readings (as measured by exams, proposal, and writing activities). There is not a lot of reading assigned (in terms of number of pages), but many of the readings are from academic journals and are, therefore, very dense and will take *considerably* longer to read, understand, and critically examine than would the similar amount of reading in a textbook. See <http://www.brockport.edu/sociology/journal.html> for help on reading journal articles.
6. Unless stated otherwise on the assignment, papers **MUST** be submitted at the beginning of class and presented to me. Papers simply left in my office mailbox without receiving approval beforehand to do so will not be accepted. Most importantly, I do not accept assignments submitted electronically.
7. When you send me an email, please put your name and the name of your class in the subject line of your email. For example: "Susan Smith, Socl 100." Also remember that

your emails should follow the proper grammatical, spelling, and punctuation conventions. This is an email to your professor, not a text message. I will respond to your email within 48 hours. Please do not resend your email to me, unless you have gone more than 48 hours without a response.

**Letters of recommendation:** If you believe that I know you well enough to speak to someone about your academic and classroom performance, I will gladly be a job reference or write a letter of recommendation for an internship. However, I do not write letters of recommendation for graduate school. Graduate school admissions committees want to see that you have formed relationships with faculty members and I am still just a graduate student myself. I will gladly help you through the process of finding other faculty members to ask and answer questions about graduate school, but please do not ask me to write a letter for you. Exceptions can be made to this rule, but only on a case by case basis.

### **Course Schedule:**

**Tuesday, January 22: Introduction.**

**Thursday, January 24: How do we begin to think about conducting research?**

\*Berger, Peter L. 2011. "Invitation to Sociology." Pp 7 – 10 in *Wadsworth Classic Readings in Sociology, Fifth Edition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

\*Mills, C. Wright. 2011. "The Promise of Sociology." Pp 1 – 6 in *Wadsworth Classic Readings in Sociology, Fifth Edition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

**Tuesday, January 29: Sociologists Backstage.**

Introduction and Section 1: Urban Sociology in the Post Civil Rights Era. (pp 1 – 60)

**Thursday, January 31 and Tuesday, February 5: Ethics in research.**

\*Haney, Craig, W. Curtis Banks, and Philip G. Zimbardo. 2010. "Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison." Pp 43 – 52 in from *Mapping the Social Landscape: Readings in Sociology, Sixth Edition*, edited by Susan J. Ferguson. New York: McGraw Hill.

\*Meyer, Philip. 2003. "If Hitler Asked You to Electrocute a Stranger, Would You? Probably." Pp 253 – 260 in *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings, Twelfth Edition*, edited by James M. Henslin. New York: The Free Press.

**Thursday, February 7: Research design.**

\*Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2003. "Using Sources" and "Making Good Arguments." Pp 90 – 123 in *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

**Tuesday, February 12: Sociologists Backstage.**

Section 2: Global Ethnography and the Study of Transnational Labor Migrations (pp 61 – 98)

**Thursday, February 14: Research proposal project in class workshop.**

**Tuesday, February 19 and Thursday, February 21: Conceptualization and operationalization.**

\*Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2003. "From Topics to Questions." Pp 40 – 55 in *The Craft of Research, Second Edition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

**Tuesday, February 26: Sociologists Backstage.**

Section 3: Studying Gender, Crime, and Violence in the Era of Mass Incarceration (pp 99 – 162)

**Thursday, February 28 Theory.**

\*Yogan, Lissa J. 2008. "School Tracking and Student Violence." Pp 23 – 32 in *Readings in Social Research Methods, Third Edition*, edited by Diane Kholos Wysocki. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

**Tuesday, March 7: Sampling.**

\*Michael, Robert T., John H. Gagnon, Edward O. Laumann, and Gina Kolata. 2008. "Sex in America." Pp 123 – 129 in *Readings in Social Research Methods, Third Edition*, edited by Diane Kholos Wysocki. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

**Thursday, March 9: Sociologists Backstage.**

Section 4: The Researcher As... (pp 163 – 230)

**Tuesday, March 12: Exam review/research proposal project in class workshop.**

**Thursday, March 14: Exam.**

**Tuesday, March 19 and Thursday, March 21: no class, spring break.**

**Tuesday, March 26 and Thursday, March 28: Surveys.**

\*Ellison, Nicole B., Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe. 2007. "The Benefits of Facebook Friends: Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites." *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. 12: 1143 – 1168.

\*Wright, Kevin B. 2005. "Researching Internet-Based Populations: Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Survey Research, Online Questionnaire Authoring Software Packages, and Web Survey Services." *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. 10:

**Tuesday, April 2: Interviews.**

\*Aronson, Pamela. 2008. "The Markers and Meanings of Growing Up: Contemporary Young Women's Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood." *Gender and Society*. 22: 56 – 82.

\*Seidman, Irving. "Interviewing as a Relationship" from *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*.

 **Tuesday, April 2: VanLaningham et al response essay due - mandatory**

**Thursday, April 4: Focus groups.**

\*Kitzinger, Jenny. 1994. "The Methodology of Focus Groups: The Importance of Interaction Between Research Participants." *Sociology of Health and Illness*. 16: 104 – 121.

\*Manago, Adriana M., Michael B. Graham, Patricia M. Greenfield, and Goldie Salimkhan. 2008. "Self-presentation and Gender on MySpace." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*. 29: 446 – 458.

**Tuesday, April 9 – Tuesday, April 16: Field research.**

\*Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. "Introduction" from *Sidewalk*.

\*Lofland, John and Lyn H. Lofland. "Getting In" from *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*.

 **Thursday, April 11: Sassler et al response essay due**

**Thursday, April 18 and Tuesday, April 23: Content analysis.**

\*Aubrey, Jennifer Stevens. 2004. "Sex and Punishment: An Examination of Sexual Consequences and the Sexual Double Standard in Teen Programming." *Sex Roles*. 50: 505 – 514.

\*Giordano, Peggy. 1995. "The Wider Circle of Friends in Adolescence." *American Journal of Sociology*. 101: 661 – 697.

 **Tuesday, April 23: Leyser response essay due**

**Thursday, April 25 – Thursday, May 2: Research proposal presentations.**

 **Thursday, May 2: Hatton and Trautner response essay due**

**Tuesday, May 7: wrap up.**

 **Tuesday, May 7: Methods activity due**

**Thursday, May 9: Final class meeting, 3:30 - 4pm.**

 **Group proposal due**

**Sociology 212**  
**Social Research Methods**  
**Response Essay Guidelines**

Response essays will count for 20 percent of your total grade. You will write at least three response essays, offering suggestions for ways to improve the methodology of published academic research. These essays allow you to take the information we have discussed in class and add your own critique of the methodologies being used by sociologists today.

**Guidelines:**

All response essay articles can be found on MyCourses, under the “Course Materials” section in a folder labeled “Response Essay Articles.” These articles will not be articles that we have read as a class. However, they use same methodology that we discussed the previous week.

While I am only requiring you to write three response essays, there are four possible weeks where you can turn in an essay. This means that you have the option of taking a week off from writing a response essay. However, if you choose to turn in a paper every week, I will drop your lowest score. The first response essay, due on **April 2**, is mandatory. Everyone will turn in this response essay; if you do not turn in this essay, one of your three essay scores will automatically become a zero. The other three possible turn in dates are: **April 11, April 23, and May 2**. Of those three dates, you only have to turn in response essays on two of them. For every day that the response essays are late I will deduct half letter grade. For example, if the paper is due on Tuesday and you hand it to me on Thursday, the highest grade you can possibly receive is a B+. As mentioned in the syllabus, papers must be handed in to me. I do **NOT** accept papers submitted electronically.

I expect that you will follow the guidelines mentioned on the syllabus about the formatting of these papers. Papers should be no less than two **FULL** pages, but no more than three full pages. Essays will be typed, double spaced, stapled in the top left hand corner, have page numbers, and be written in size 12 Times New Roman font with 1” margins.

**Instructions:**

The purpose of these essays is to work on honing your sociological imagination in the context of academic research. Whether you intend to go to graduate school or not, you will be surrounded by academic research in many different avenues of your life. These essays require you to make three suggestions about ways you can see to improve published academic research. For each essay, I ask that you:

1. Make three different suggestions about methodological changes that would benefit the research. Remember, these are only changes to the **methods**; while this can involve changes to the methodology, sample, or analysis, this does not mean you can suggest a new research question.

2. Along with each suggestion, include a full explanation of how to execute this change and why it would benefit the research. So, as well as explaining **what** your suggestion is, also discuss **how** it would be implemented and **why** this suggestion will benefit the research. For example, if you suggest a bigger sample size, tell me what size it would be and how you would go about finding your sample. Then, explain how a larger sample size will make the research stronger. When you are writing your explanation, remember to reflect back on the article's research question. What was this research trying to learn more about? How will your suggestion help a researcher better understand this topic?

### **Assigned articles:**

VanLaningham, Jody, David R. Johnson, and Paul Amato. 2001. "Marital Happiness, Marital Duration, and the U-Shaped Curve: Evidence from a Five-Wave Panel Study." *Social Forces*. 78: 1313-1341. **(due Tuesday, April 2)**

 **Reminder: this response essay is mandatory – everyone will turn in this response essay.**

Sassler, Sharon, Desiree Ciambrone, and Gaelan Benway. 2008. "Are They Really Mama's Boys/Daddy's Girls? The Negotiation of Adulthood upon Returning to the Parental Home." *Sociological Forum*. 23: 670 – 698. **(due April 11)**

Leyser, Ophra. 2003. "Doing Masculinity in a Mental Hospital." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 32: 336 – 359. **(due Tuesday, April 23)**

Hatton, Erin and Mary Nell Trautner. 2011. "Equal Opportunity Objectification? The Sexualization of Men and Women on the Cover of *Rolling Stone*." *Sexuality and Culture*. 15: 256 – 278. **(due Thursday, May 2)**

**Sociology 212**  
**Social Research Methods**  
**Methods Activities Guidelines**

While you are given opportunities to try out different research methods in class, they only allow you a modified version of what it is actually like to conduct research. These activities allow you to create a research question of your choosing and collect data that will help you answer that question. You have four opportunities for research, but will only have to complete one of them. Each opportunity requires you to develop a research question and utilize one of the four potential research options to answer that question. After you conduct the research, you will be required to write a four to six page report about your experiences. Reports will be typed, double spaced, stapled in the top left hand corner, have page numbers, and be written in size 12 Times New Roman font with 1" margins. The report should include:

1. The research question you developed
2. The methodology you chose to employ in order to collect data that will answer that question
3. Your reason for choosing that methodology
4. A description of how you employed the methodology (where did you go, how many people did you speak with, how many articles did you read, what questions did you ask, etc)
5. Your findings – what conclusions can you draw from your research?
6. An explanation of any difficulties you encountered
7. How you would modify your project if you were going to do it again
8. Your data collection instrument (for surveys, interviews, or content analysis), attached at the end of the report

As mentioned above, you have four potential methodologies to choose from:

1. Administer a survey to 10 people
2. Conduct 3 observations, each at least one hour long
3. Interview 5 people
4. Conduct a content analysis of 15 pieces of text

When you are working on your activity, remember what we have talked about in class; we choose a method based on the research question, not the other way around. Be thoughtful when choosing your method, as you want to be sure it is going to help you collect data that is both valid and reliable.

**Due date: Tuesday, May 7.**