

Research Methods

SYA 3300

Fall Semester 2005

GL263

F 9:30 – 13:30

Professor: Dr. Alex Stepick

Office: DM 320C

Phone: 348-2247

Office Hours: Fridays After Class And By Appointment

Email address: Stepick@fiu.edu

Teaching Assistant: Connie Viamonte

Office: DM 323

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Email address: cviam001@fiu.edu

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This is a Web-assisted course. All materials for this course are available on the Web at:

<http://webct.fiu.edu>

At this website you will find the complete class syllabus, readings, and assignments. You will also use this website to submit all your work, both homework and tests. This website also contains supplementary information on sociology and anthropology, including help with the reading and course material along with information on careers in anthropology and sociology.

You need to check this WebCt site during the week between classes. Do not wait until Thursday or Friday before class to check it!

Research Methods is designed to introduce you to the philosophy and methods of Sociology and Anthropology research. In other words, I hope to give you some idea of the how's and why's of Sociology and Anthropology research. No knowledge of statistics or mathematics is required before beginning the course.

The purpose of this course is to give you the tools for judging critically other people's research and to be able to conduct basic research yourself. At the end of the course, you should also be able to construct and critique a research design. A good research design is important so that data is collected in a usable and scientifically "valid" form. Sound research design will help insure that inferences about hypotheses made from the data collected (that is, the conclusions drawn from the information collected) are as accurate as possible. My aim is to teach you to choose the best method for a given situation and to be able to make judgments about the choices of a research design made by others. In short, I will teach you to recognize the difference between science and opinion.

The course begins with a discussion of the philosophy of science -- what it means to be scientific and why it is important. I will then introduce the notion of theory, the idea of building models of social reality. We will focus particularly on the roles of assumptions, hypothesis, and variables. We then will implement these ideas with some particular methodologies: the use of secondary sources and interviewing.

FORMAT OF THE COURSE

One best learns methods not by reading but by actually trying them out and implementing them. This course requires the students' active involvement. Your participation in both classroom discussions and assignments outside of the class is essential to passing this course. **Reading assignments must be done before the first class period of the week they are assigned (with the obvious exception of the very first class period of the semester).** We will

discuss the readings in class and students will be graded at least partially on their participation in those discussions. One cannot pass this course by simply memorizing the reading. In fact, there will be no memorization of facts in this course. The readings provide only a minimal framework. There will also be a weekly quiz on case studies from the book, *Experiencing Social Research*, that will allow you to utilize the skills you have learned from your conceptual readings and apply it to real research situations. Most of the conceptual material will be provided in the lectures.

The readings will be complemented by a semester long group assignment. Groups will be formed the first day of class. This assignment will be constructed as if you are a professional social scientist who has been asked to prepare a professional report on some particular subject. Your team will make weekly progress reports on particular aspects of your report. Each week the group will assign one member to be the lead spokesperson to give a 3-5 minute oral summary of that week's work. At the end of the semester, your team will make an oral presentation after which you will hand in the compilation of the semester group project.

While the assignments will require significant time, they will be flexible. Most of them will be done in groups with other students. The groups, 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, I will ask everyone in each group to 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.

EVALUATION AND TESTING

There will be three bases for your grade: written examinations, quizzes, and group assignments. There will be two written examinations, a midterm and a final. The midterm will be worth 25% of the grade and the final 30%. The group assignments will count for 35% of the total grade and quizzes will be 10%.

READING

There are two required books: *The Basics of Social Research* by Earl Babbie

There is one recommended book. It is highly recommended for anyone who intends to have a career in anthropology.

Research Methods in Anthropology by H. Russell Bernard

COURSE OUTLINE

September 2nd Week 1

Introduction to the course and philosophy of science

Required Reading: Babbie *Basics*: Chapters 1 and 2, Appendix A and Sociology Research on the Web available on our WebCT site (also available at http://www.wadsworth.com/sociology_d/research.html#)

Recommended: Check out the Chapter 1 links on WebCT under Course Content. For the seriously research inclined, read Bernard, Chaps. 1 & 2

ASSIGNMENTS 1.1, 1.3 AND 1.4 TO BE DONE BY THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8th, 8:00 a.m.. EXCEPT EXERCISE 1.4 PART OF WHICH IS DUE SEPTEMBER 8th AND PART OF WHICH IS DUE ONE WEEK LATER, SEPTEMBER 15th.

1. Exercises for Week One Assignment: Selective Perception and Unfocused Observation (1.1), Social Pressure (1.2), and False Conclusions (1.3) posted on WebCT. These exercises are to be done individually. ON ANY ASSIGNMENT (SUCH AS 1.3 SOCIAL PRESSURE AND FALSE CONCLUSIONS), **WHEN YOU USE A JOURNAL ARTICLE YOU MUST SUPPLY THE COMPLETE REFERENCE.** (Examples will be available on the power point lecture.)

2. Exercise 1.4 Research Reports posted on WebCT are to be done by your group. The list of group topics is on WebCT under Group Assignment for Fall 2005. The final choice of one of them will be in class. Your group then does the rest of the assignment. The second part of exercise 1.4 will be turned in September 15th.

3. **All assignments are to be emailed to both Dr. Stepick and Connie Viamonte via WebCT account**

September 9th Week 2

Literature Review

Required Reading: Check out: <http://www.fiu.edu/~library/assistance>

and read, Babbie *Basics* Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6

Recommended: Bernard, Chaps 3, 5 and 6

ASSIGNMENTS 2.1 and 2.2 TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 15th, 8 a.m.

Completion of Research Report Critiques' Annotated Bibliography. You must have a minimum of 30 Research Report Critiques including the minimum of 10 for the previous week's assignment.

2.1 Summary of Research Themes

The most important thing to read for doing this and next week's assignment is *How to Do a Literature Review* which is available on WebCT.

2.2 Research Problem and Operationalization

September 16th Week 3

Samples and Populations

Required Reading: Babbie, *Basics*, Chap. 8; and the document available at http://www.wadsworth.com/sociology_d/census.html

Recommended: Bernard, Chap. 4.

ASSIGNMENT 3 TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22nd, 8:00 a.m.: Drawing Samples Assignment based on the 2002 U.S. Census. Both will be posted on WebCT.

There are **two** parts to this assignment: working with census and a hypothetical situation analysis using drawing samples methods you have learned in class.

Both are due on September 22nd by 8 am

September 23rd Week 4

Indirect, Unobtrusive Observation

Required Reading: Babbie, *Basics*, Chap. 9

Recommended Reading: Bernard, Chap. . 17

ASSIGNMENT 4 TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29th, 8 a.m.: Content Analysis Assignment to be posted on Web

September 30th Week 5

Required Reading: Babbie, Basics, Chap 12

Recommended: Bernard, Chap 15

Review for Midterm

HAND OUT TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM

TURN IN TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAMINATION FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7th, 8:00 a.m.

October 7th Week 6

Participant and Non-Participant Observation

Required Reading: Babbie, *Basics*, Chap 11

Recommended: Bernard, Chaps. 7-9, 14

ASSIGNMENT 5 TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13th, 8 a.m.: Participant Observation Assignment to be posted on WebCT.

October 14th Week 7

Interviewing Open-Ended & Semi-Structured

Required Reading: None

Recommended: Bernard, Chaps. 10 and 16

ASSIGNMENT 6 TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20th, 8 a.m.:

Open-ended and Semi-structured Interview Assignment to be posted on WebCT.

October 21st Week 8

Focus Groups

ASSIGNMENT 7 TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27th, 8 a.m.:

Focus Group Assignment to be posted on WebCT. Moderator's Guide and reflective paper on focus group participation

October 28th Week 9

Survey Research Design

Required Reading: Babbie, *Basics*, Chap. 10

Recommended: Bernard, Chaps. 11-13

ASSIGNMENT 8 TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3rd, 8 a.m.:

Survey Questionnaire Design Assignment to be posted on WebCT. Surveys will be administered over the course of the next week. Each person will administer 10 surveys.

November 4th Week 10

Coding Survey Research

Required Reading: Babbie, *Basics*, Chaps. 13 & 14

Recommended Reading: Babbie, *Basics*, Appendix D; On Reserve: Schutt, Chapt. 11; True Chapters 11 & 12

ASSIGNMENT TO BE HANDED IN FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11th, at the beginning of class: Survey Questionnaire Completion Administer 10 surveys.

November 11th Week 11

**ASSIGNMENT TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH 8 AM:
Survey Codebook and Excel spreadsheet for survey data**

November 18th Week 12

Preparing for Group Presentations

Analyzing Survey Data

**ASSIGNMENT TO BE HANDED IN THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1st, 8 a.m.:
Survey Questionnaire Analysis of frequencies, crosstabs and difference
of means for your group survey**

November 25th Week 13

(Thanksgiving Break, No Class)

December 2nd Week 14

Presentation of Results

GROUP PRESENTATIONS to be conducted in the Labor Center. Please bring refreshments to share with the class.

Week 15

Final exam

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM POSTED ON WEB

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12th, 8:00 A.M., EMAIL TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM

