

SOC 2820 - METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION
Fall 2008: CRN 40434, Section 104

Instructor: Michael D. Gillespie
Sangren Hall 2201; T/R: 2:00pm –3:15pm

Office: 3201 Sangren Hall
Office Hours: T/R: 11:00-12:00
or by appointment

E-Mail: michael.d.gillespie@wmich.edu
Telephone: 734-717-0901
Mailbox: 2515 Sangren Hall

Web Address: <https://homepages.wmich.edu/~m6gillespie/>

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the topic of sociological inquiry. More specifically, it is designed to train students how to, as sociologists, criminologists, and social scientists, ask questions of the social world. The sociological method, as the process by which we answer research questions, test or develop theories, and evaluate policies and/or programs, are both qualitative and quantitative; you will learn how we design both means for the collection of information, how this information is assessed, and what types of activities this information can inform.

Course Goals:

You will critically explore and utilize social research methods to conduct original research, individually and as a part of a research team.

Specifically, by the completion of this course, you will:

- Demonstrate a working knowledge of the quantitative and qualitative methods social researchers use to collect data.
- Know how to conduct social research in an ethical manner.
- Be able to design and conduct your own research projects.
- Know the relationship between theory and methods in the research process.
- Be able to develop reliable and valid measures of social concepts.
- Be able to communicate your research findings in an appropriate manner.
- Be able to critique research conducted by other social researchers.

Required Texts:

Babbie, Earl. 2008. *The Basics of Social Research*. 4th ed. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Additional Required Items:

A series of companion readings will be provided in class, on Vista, and through electronic reserve on the Library Website (<http://www.wmich.edu/library/>). **The password for our course is 'methods'.**

Access and knowledge of Vista is important for course announcements, discussion groups, and grade feedback. Additional class materials, if available, will also be posted prior to each class session.

Course Requirements:

Below is a list of the course assignments with total point values and due dates. Each item listed is required. A detailed assignment guide will be provided on Vista.

Graded Requirements:

- Midterm Exam (10/14)	75 points
- Final Exam (12/11)	100 points
- Observation Project (10/21)	50 points
- In-Depth Interview Project (11/4)	75 points
- Survey Research Project (11/25)	75 points
- Research Team Presentation	50 points
- 5 Research Team Status Reports	25 points
- 10 In-class Assignments (Random)	50 points
Total Points:	500 points

NOTE: NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Every effort should be made to turn in assignments on time. If you know that you will be absent from lecture the day an assignment is due, you can email the assignment prior to the class period, give it to a classmate to turn in for you, or leave it in my mailbox in the Sociology Mailroom, 2515 Sangren Hall.

Examinations:

There will be a midterm exam on October 14 and a final exam during our scheduled final exam block on December 11 from 2:45 pm to 4:45 pm. Each exam will consist of multiple choice, true/false, term definition, and essay questions covering lectures and required readings. The final examination will be cumulative.

Research Teams

In the second week of class (9/9), students will get to petition being on one of 10 research teams. Your research team will meet regularly in and outside of class and work together conducting the in-depth interview project and survey research project, both of which are included in the final research team presentation. Final team assignments and topics will be given on September 18.

Research Team Status Reports: Each research team will submit 5 status reports throughout the semester. The purpose of these reports is to ensure that each member of the research team is contributing to the overall project. The format for these reports are available on Vista. Each member must submit their own report in packet with the group cover sheet signed and dated by all group members. Failure to submit a status report will result in a deduction of points given for assignments. Status report points are awarded to the entire research team.

Key Assignments:

Observation Project: Direct observation is an important technique that social scientists use to collect information and gain knowledge of the social world. Observational skills are also important in many professions, including law enforcement, social work, nursing, and most other human services. Each student will conduct an observation of social interaction in a *public* setting on campus and specific to your research topic. Specific details of the requirements for this assignment will be given in a separate handout and posted on Vista.

In-depth Interview Project: Social researchers often conduct in-depth interviews with members of the population they are studying to develop survey questionnaires as well as to uncover deeper meanings of phenomena. These meanings can be used to design meaningful survey questions and contextualize survey results. Who you interview will depend on the topic attached to your research team. Specific details of the requirements for this assignment will be given in a separate handout and posted on Vista.

Survey Research Project: Based on the results of the interview project, each research team will construct a questionnaire. Each student in the group will administer the survey instrument to at least 10 members of the population they are studying. Then, each research team will write up the research results and present the findings from their project, including the interviews and the survey, in a 20-minute presentation to the class during the last two weeks of the semester. Specific details of the requirements for this assignment will be given in a separate handout and posted on Vista.

Grading:

Based on the requirements, there are 500 points to be earned in this course. Final letter grades are based on the following scale:

A = 462-500	BA = 437-461
B = 412-436	CB = 387-411
C = 362-386	DC = 337-361
D = 312-336	E = < 312

At any moment in the semester, you can gauge your progress in the course by taking the total amount of points you have earned divided by the total amount of points possible to that point. I will also attempt to keep your grades up to date on Vista.

Grading FAQ:

Question: *Do you grade on a 'curve'?*

Answer: No. I grade on absolute points; a grading curve is simply grade inflation.

Question: *Can I earn extra credit?*

Answer: Any opportunities for extra credit will be afforded to all students in the course and at the discretion of the instructor.

Other Expectations:

What is 'Class Participation'?:

Class participation is analogous to class *engagement*. Engagement in this course is exercised through your continued productive contribution to the course – reading assignments are completed, assignments are finished and submitted on time, and you come to class ready to be engaged. Because much of the work for this course is group-based, engagement in the course is both critical to your personal success and the success of the group.

If you are going to be absent from a class session and have a legitimate reason for missing class (emergency, illness, death, etc.), please *contact me by email prior to the start of class*. It is your responsibility to be accountable for your attendance and engagement in the class. While I do not take attendance, in-class assignments cannot be made-up; providing a legitimate justification for missing class and a possible assignment is necessary.

Academic Integrity:

ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE THEIR OWN INDEPENDENT WORK. While students are encouraged to study in groups, their completed assignments are expected to be the independent work of the individual student. You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate Catalog that pertain to Academic Integrity. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. *Any breach of academic integrity will result in a failing grade.*

If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic misconduct, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s) and if you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a mediated hearing. If you are unsure of any breaches in your work, please seek assistance from me or through other means prior to submitting it.

You are responsible for your work, the quality of your work, and the validity of your work. Any violation of academic integrity is serious and, if founded, will result in a zero for the assignment. *Ignorance is not an excuse and will not prevent a failing grade from being assigned.*

Help with course material:

Office hours are provided for students to seek guidance and help with course content. Office hours are provided for the sole purpose of helping students and should be taken advantage of as needed.

Cell Phone and Computer Policy:

If you bring your cell phone to class, please show respect for me and the other members of the class by either turning it off or setting it so that it does not make

any noise. It is unacceptable to make or receive calls, or to do text messaging while in the classroom. Should you be an EMT, police officer, or other professional "on call," please set your phone to vibrate during class, and quietly leave the classroom to return any calls received. Failure to abide by this policy will result in your dismissal from the classroom.

I do not allow use of personal computers in class. While Western Michigan University is fortunate to have wireless internet access, it should not be used during class; there is too much temptation to surf the web, check e-mail, etc. while in class, which may cause you to miss important information. If you do bring your PC to class, you will be required to put it away or to leave the classroom. If you must use a computer for academic purposes in the class, you must bring appropriate documentation from the office of student services.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week of September 2 & 4, 2008: The Sociological Method – Thinking Sociologically

Readings (9/4): Babbie: Chapters 1 (pp.1-30)
 Reserve: Mills, C.W. (1999). The Sociological Imagination.

Week of September 9 & 11, 2008: An Introduction to Inquiry

Readings (9/9): Babbie: Chapter 2 (pp. 32-62)

Readings (9/11): Reserve: Durkheim (1966). "The Discovery of Social Facts."

Week of September 16 & 18, 2008: Ethics of Social Research

Readings (9/16): Putnam: Chapter 1 (pp. 15-28)

Readings (9/18): Babbie: Chapter 3 (pp. 64-91)
 Reserve: Belmont Report

SEPTEMBER 18: RESEARCH TEAMS FINALIZED

Week of September 23 & 25, 2008: Research Design and Concepts

Readings (9/23): Babbie: Chapter 4 (pp. 92-128)
 Reserve: Adler and Adler, "Observational Techniques"

Readings (9/25): Babbie: Chapter 5 (pp. 130-142)
 Putnam: Research Team Specific Chapter

Week of September 30 & October 2, 2008: Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

Readings (9/30): Babbie: Chapter 5 (pp. 130-142)

Readings (10/2) Babbie: Chapter 5 (pp. 142-166)

Week of October 7 & 9, 2008: Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement

Readings (10/7): Babbie: Chapter 5, continued

Readings (10/9): Babbie: Chapter 5, continued
Review for Exam 1

Week of October 14 & 16, 2008: Exam 1 and Qualitative Research, Part 1

10/14: **MIDTERM EXAM**

Readings (10/16): Babbie: Chapter 10 (pp. 312-332)
Reserve: Denzin and Lincoln, "Entering the Field of Qualitative Research"

Week of October 21 & 23, 2008: Qualitative Research, continued

Readings (10/21): Babbie: Chapter 10 (pp. 333-347)

OCTOBER 21: OBSERVATION PROJECT DUE

Readings (10/23): Reserve: Merriam, "Conducting Effective Interviews"

Week of October 28 & 30, 2008: The Logic of Sampling; Survey Research Design

Readings (10/28): Babbie: Chapter 7 (pp. 198-241)

Readings (10/30) Babbie: Chapter 9 (pp. 268-310)

Week of November 4 & 6, 2008: Surveys, continued; Indexes, Scales and Typologies

Readings (11/4): Babbie: Chapter 9 (pp. 268-310)

Babbie: Chapter 6 (pp. 168-196)

NOVEMBER 4: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROJECT DUE

Readings (11/6): Babbie: Chapter 6 (pp. 168-196)

Reserve: Schuman, "Sense and Nonsense About Surveys"

Week of November 11 & 13, 2008: Experimental Designs; Elementary Quantitative Data Analysis

Readings (11/11): Babbie: Chapter 8 (pp. 244-267)

Readings (11/13): Babbie: Chapter 14 (pp. 442-469)

Week of November 18 & 20, 2008: Research Team Work Day; Elementary Quantitative Data Analysis

Readings (11/18): Research Team Work Day – No Class Meeting

Readings (11/20): Babbie: Chapter 14 (pp. 442-469)

Week of November 25 & 27, 2008: Other Methods; Final Group Presentations

Readings (11/25): Babbie: Chapter 11 (pp. 348-380)
Chapter 12 (pp. 382-411)
Reserve: Becker, "Visual Sociology..."

NOVEMBER 25: SURVEY PROJECT DUE

11/27: No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week of December 2 & 4, 2008: Final Group Presentations

4/14: Final Group Presentations

4/16 Final Group Presentations

Week of December 8, 2008: Final Exam: Tuesday December 11: 2:45pm to 4:45pm

Course Bibliography*

Adler, Patricia A. and Peter Adler. 1998. "Observational Techniques." In *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Babbie, Earl. 2008. *The Basics of Social Research*. 4th ed. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 1998. "Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research." Pp. 1-34 in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Durkheim, Emile. 1966. *The Rules of the Sociological Method*, Edited by G. E. G. Catlin. Translated by S. A. Solovay and J. H. Mueller. New York: The Free Press.

Merriam, Sharan B. 1998. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* Revised and Expanded. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mills, C. Wright. 1999. "The Sociological Imagination." in *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, edited by C. Lemert. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Schuman, Howard. 2002. "Sense and Nonsense about Surveys." *Contexts* 1(2): 40-47.

* All readings in addition to the required text will be made available through Electronic Course Reserves through the University Library.