Social Research Methods – Sociology 397/397L

Lectures: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00-11:50 a.m. in 388 NH
Labs: Tuesdays or Thursdays, 12:20-1:50 p.m. in 450 NH

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Introduction:
Sociology 397 trains you on how to understand and conduct sociological research. It is a required course for undergraduate sociology majors (but not for social science majors). The course includes an examination of the major research concepts (e.g., concepts, indicators, causality, reliability, validity, and sampling) and methodologies (survey research, content analysis, and field research). You must have already taken and passed the following courses: (1) SOC 200 (Intro to Sociology) and (2) STAT 243 (Introduction to Probability and Statistics I). You will use the skills learned this quarter to conduct an original research project next quarter in Sociology Research Project (SOC 398). You can think of Soc 397 and 398 as being two parts of the same course. You must get a grade of C or higher in Soc 397, however, in order to take Soc 398.

Learning Goals:
1. Learn how to conduct sociological research.
2. Learn how to think and speak like a researcher.
3. Analyze data using a statistical computer program called SPSS.
4. Sharpen your critical thinking skills.
5. Evaluate the quality of sociological research.

Required Items:
1. Flash drive that you will bring to your weekly lab session. You will save your weekly assignments on it.

Note 1: You can use the first, second, or fourth edition of the textbook, but the page numbers will be different.
Note 2: You will use the same textbook for the follow-up course, Soc 398, during the winter term.
Part I: Survey Research

September 27 Class 1: Introduction and Concepts & Indicators

Read: Try to read Chapter 5 [except “Criteria of Measurement Quality”] before Class 1. However, if that is not possible, then read it before Class 2, September 29.

Handed Out, Survey Assignment: Paper copy handed out during Class 1 and electronic version available on D2L after Class 1. Bring the paper copy to every class so that you can work on the multi-part assignment during and after classes.

September 29 Class 2: More on Concepts & Indicators

Read: Try to read all of Chapter 5 except “Criteria of Measurement Quality” before Class 1. However, if that is not possible, then read it before Class 2, September 29.

October 4 Class 3: Validity & Indexes

Read: In the part of Chapter 5 called “Criteria of Measurement Quality,” read about validity, face validity, content validity, and the section titled “Who Decides What’s Valid?” In Chapter 6, read the introduction (pp. 155-156), index construction (pp. 158-167), and “The Status of Women” (pp. 171-172).

October 6 Class 4: Evaluating the Quality of Survey Questions

Read: In Chapter 9, read pages 252-259.

October 11 Class 5: Perfecting Steps 1-5 of Survey Assignment

Bring the paper copy of the survey assignment to class with the first draft of Steps 1-5 completed. Also, bring a paper copy of your relevant survey questions. We will dedicate this class to improving Steps 1-5.
October 13  Class 6: Introduction to Probability Sampling

Read: In Chapter 7, read pages 184-188, 192-197, and 206-208.

October 18  Class 7: Ways of Surveying **CLASS STARTS AT 10:15**

Read: In Chapter 5, read about reliability (intro only, pp. 145-146), using established measures, reliability of research workers, and tension between reliability and validity.

October 20  Class 8: Perfecting Steps 6-9 of Survey Assignment

Exam review passed out at end of class and posted on D2L after class.

October 25  Class 9: Guest Lecture

This class will be a good review for exam 1.

Due: Survey Assignment is due by Tuesday, October 25 at 10:00 a.m.
Give the paper part of the assignment to the TA or put in “Soc 397 Assignment” mailbox in 217 CH before class.

October 27  Class 10: Exam 1

Exam 1 will take place at our regular class time in our regular classroom. Paper will be provided by the instructor.

Part II: Content Analysis

November 1  Class 11: Introduction to Content Analysis

Read: In Chapter 11, read pages 327-339. [If you feel it would helpful, reread the parts regarding reliability and validity.]

Bring to Class: Any magazine that has ads with people in them.

Handed Out, Content Analysis Assignment: Paper copy handed out during Class 11 and electronic version available on D2L after Class 11. Students should bring the paper copy to every class so that they can work on the multi-part assignment during or after classes.

November 3  Class 12: Pre-testing, Validity, and Reliability
November 8  Class 13: Advanced probability sampling.

**Handed Out, Out-of-class lab assignment:** There are no lab sessions this week. Instead, there will be an out-of-class lab assignment handed out at lecture on November 8 (available on D2L after class).

**Read:** In Chapter 7, read about types of sampling designs, pages 208-222.

**Reminder:** No labs this week.

November 10 Class 14: Guest lecture

**Reminder:** No labs this week.

**Part III: Field Research**

November 15 Class 15: Introduction & Guest Lecture

**Read:** In Chapter 10, read all except “Some Qualitative Field Research Paradigms.”

**Due: Content Analysis Assignment** is due by November 15 at 10 a.m.
Give the paper part of the assignment to the TA or put in “Soc 397 Assignment” mailbox in 217 CH before class.

**Due: Out-of-class lab assignment** is due by November 15 at 10 a.m.
Give the paper part of the assignment to the TA or put in “Soc 397 Assignment” mailbox in 217 CH before class.

**Handed Out, Field Research Assignment:** Paper copy handed out during Class 15 and electronic version available on D2L after Class 15. Students should bring the paper copy to every class so that they can work on the multi-part assignment during and after classes.

November 17 Class 16: Nonprobability Sampling & More re: Validity & Reliability

**Read:** Chapter 7, pages 188-192.

November 22 Class 17: Regressions – Attendance Mandatory (in place of Week 9 lab)

**Read:** Read one-page intro on D2L re: regressions before class.

**Reminder:** No labs this week.

**Handed Out, Regression assignment:** Paper copy handed out during Class 17 and electronic version available on D2L after Class 17.
November 29 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

November 29 Class 18: Ethics

Read: All of Chapter 3.

**Due: Field Research Assignment** is due by November 29 at 10:00 a.m.
Give the paper part of the assignment to the TA or put in “Soc 397 Assignment” mailbox in 217 CH before class.

December 1 Class 19: Synthesizing Main Methodological Content

December 6 Exam 2
10:15-12:05 in our classroom.

**Due: Regression Assignment** is due by December 6 at 10 a.m.: Give the paper part of the assignment to the TA or put in “Soc 397 Assignment” mailbox in 217 CH before class.

In-class Exercises:
I believe strongly in the “learning-by-doing” philosophy, so we will be doing a number of in-class exercises. These exercises are a way for you to participate in class and to reinforce the main methodological points.

Out-of-Class Assignments:
You will be performing four out-of-class assignments corresponding to the topics of surveys, content analysis, field research, and regression analysis.

Labs:
- Lab attendance is mandatory (unless you are sick) because students cannot do the assignments well without first hearing the statistics lecture.
- Due to limitations on space, you should attend the lab that you have signed up for.
- Bring your flash drive to all lab sessions.
- There is no eating or drinking in labs per university policy.
- Do not use the computers for anything else but lab assignments.
- Each week we will go through a lesson on statistics, followed by an assignment.
- Tuesday lab assignments are due by 3 p.m. on Friday; Thursday lab assignments are due by the next Tuesday at 2 p.m. If done early, please give it to the TAs as soon as you are finished so that they can grade it in a timely manner. These deadlines are important so that we can return the graded assignment by the next week’s lab session.
- Please use the electronic version of the lab assignments in D2L so that you can type your answers.
- Please keep a copy of all of your lab assignments and SPSS output to guide you in Soc 398 (winter term).
Week 1:  **Introduction to SPSS/Univariate Analysis I** [Concepts & Indicators] 5%

**Read:** In Chapter 14, read pages 414-421 (up to and including the section called “Distributions”). Read about secondary analysis on pages 286-289.

Week 2:  **Univariate Analysis II: Indexes** [Validity] 5%

Week 3:  **Univariate Analysis III: Central Tendency and Dispersion** [Levels of Measurement] 5%

**Read** these parts of Chapter 14: “Central Tendency,” “Dispersion,” and “Continuous and Discrete Variables.”

Week 4:  **Bivariate Analysis I: Cross-tabs** 10%


Week 5:  **Bivariate Analysis II: ANOVA** 10%

Week 6:  **Bivariate Analysis III: Correlations** 10%

Week 7:  **NO LABS** 25%

Instead, there will be an out-of-class lab assignment handed out during lecture on November 8 (also available on D2L after class) that is due by November 15 at 10 a.m. Give the paper part of the assignment to the TA or put in “Soc 397 Assignment” mailbox in 217 CH before class.

Week 8:  **Multivariate Analysis I: 3-way Cross-tabs** 15%

Read Chapter 14: “Introduction to Multivariate Analysis” and “Sociological Diagnostics.”

Week 9:  **NO LABS DUE TO THANKSGIVING**

Instead, a lecture on regression analysis on November 22 is mandatory. There will also be an out-of-class regression assignment due by December 6 at class time.

Week 10:  **Advanced graphics and Multivariate Analysis II** 15%

**Reread:** In Chapter 4, “The Time Dimension,” pages 104-108.
Notes:
1. Use D2L to access the syllabus, calendar, lab outlines, lab assignments, and out-of-class assignments. All completed assignments will be in paper form and turned in to the TA.
2. Instructor contacting students: The instructor will use D2L’s private e-mail system to alert students of important announcements. Please make certain that you look at that e-mail account regularly or have it forwarded to your regular e-mail.
3. Students contacting the instructor: The best ways to communicate with the instructor is in person before or after lecture in our classroom or in our weekly lab. You can also contact him via e-mail (dsulliva@pdx.edu) [not via D2L] or visit him in his office (217Q CH) during his office hours (Thursdays, 2:45-3:45 p.m.).

Grading: Exams: = 30% (exam 1 = 10%; exam 2 = 20%); Survey assignment = 20%; Content analysis assignment =10%; Field research assignment = 10%; Regression assignment = 10%; Lab assignments = 20%.

Class Policies:
All of our individual actions affect the classroom environment. If you are not fully engaged in the material, you make it more difficult for others to be engaged. The following policies are intended to foster a learning environment:
1. Come to all classes, unless you are sick.
2. No eating (unless you absolutely have to – in which case do so quietly).
3. No technology in the classroom: Turn off cell phones. Put away all forms of technology: cell phones, Blackberries, lap tops, etc.
4. No late arrivals or early departures. (If you have to be late or need to leave early for one class period, please let the instructor know in advance: dsulliva@pdx.edu)
**Resources:** People learn in different ways and, hence, rely on different types of resources to learn. Here is a list of diverse resources available to you:

1. If you are a student with a disability in need of academic accommodations, you should first contact the Disability Resource Center (435 SMU; 725-4150) and then let me know.
2. Free statistics tutoring; check out their schedule at http://www.setc.pdx.edu, 503.725.4005, or 425 SMU.
3. The Writing Center, 188F CH, 725-3570, http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu, writingcenter@pdx.edu, if you feel your writing on lab or out-of-class assignments need improving. You can make an appointment or go to their drop-in hours.
4. The reference librarians on the second floor of the Millar Library are a great resource. One or two of them are on duty at any given time. You can also ask questions online at http://library.pdx.edu/askus.html.
5. The TA is available (a) at break and right after lecture, (b) during your weekly lab, or (c) during her office hours: Tuesdays, 8:30-9:30.
6. The instructor is available (a) at break and right after lecture, (b) during your weekly lab, or (c) during his office hours: Thursdays, 2:45-3:45.
7. Students can learn a lot from each other – students may be able to explain something in a way that is clearer than the instructor, TA, or textbook.
8. The flipside is that you may find yourself at times in a position to teach material to other students. The act of teaching/explaining not only helps them, but it is a great way for you to understand the material better.

**Suggestions for Succeeding in this Course:**

1. This is a 5-credit course; you may need up to 10 hours per week outside of the classroom to prepare for class. If you do not have enough time this term, I recommend that you take this course when your schedule is more manageable.
2. Many students find this course challenging because it is more quantitative than other sociology courses and it requires learning a research vocabulary that involves many new terms. Some students perform poorly on the first exam and then study harder and do better on the following exam. Do yourself a favor and study hard from the beginning.
3. If you are having a difficult time keeping up with lectures, read the required readings carefully before lecture. If you are still having problems understanding the material, please talk to fellow students, the instructor, or TA.
4. Come to all classes. [But if you miss one, make certain to get notes from a fellow student.]