

SBS 304
Research Methodology
Fall, 2021
T, Th 9:30-10:50am
Harbert 325

Lab
Lab: Th: 3:30 – 4:50pm
(Does not meet every lab period; see syllabus for details on when meeting)
Harbert 325

Professor Clinton Jenkins
Harbert 315
Office Hours: Th 3:30-5:30 & by appointment
205-226-4829
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Course Overview and Goals

The social sciences (political science, economics, and sociology) are by their nature empirical disciplines. These fields are interested in understanding the state of the world and how the world works, and do so most frequently using "real world" data. This course is an introduction to the ways in which we obtain that "real world" data. In particular, this course provides an introduction to the research process and methods in the social sciences. In addition to focusing on specific research methods, this course will introduce students to the use of the scientific method in the social sciences and the field of epistemology. This course focuses on survey and interview research, but it will also cover experimental, quasi-experimental, content analysis, and evaluation methods.

By the end of the course, students will:

1. Understand and apply the scientific method in the context of the social sciences
2. Be able to write a research design, including a literature review
3. Be able to design, field, and analyze results of a survey
4. Be able to design, conduct, and analyze interviews
5. Understand the elements of experimental and

In addition, this is a scientific methodologies SM course, and as such, has the following objectives as well. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Define a problem/question
- State an appropriate rationale for investigation
- Develop a testable hypothesis
- Test the hypothesis using a suitable design
- Analyze the resulting data
- Draw appropriate conclusions
- Communicate the findings in oral or written form

COVID-19 Policies – Fall 2021

You are required to properly wear a face covering (covering both nose and mouth) during the entire duration of class. Per college guidance, if you do not have a face covering on, I must ask you to leave class and you will only be able to return once you have one on. Please help remind each other to bring and wear face coverings so that this moves smoothly for everyone.

Readings

Most readings will come from the text assigned for the course. Although, I will also assign additional readings. These will usually be posted on Moodle at least one week prior to the class you need them for. It is your responsibility to obtain the readings listed for the class period if they are not posted on Moodle.

There is one text assigned for the class. It is available at the bookstore.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory, G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 2016. *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Evaluation

Your grade will be determined based on the following (weights in parentheses):

- Literature Review (15%)
- Interview Assignment (15%)
- Problem Sets (35%, first worth 5%, 3 @ 10% each)
- Final Group Research Project (20%)
- Attendance and Participation (15%)

Research Project – During the semester, you will work on a group project, the final product of which will be a presentation to the class. The project will be presented to the class. The goal of the project is to design a research study to answer a particular research question.

The research project is divided into two sections. The first is the final memo that your group will turn in to me. The second is the presentation to the class. Your group's grade on each portion will count towards 10% of your final course grade, for a total of 20%. I will provide more information about each of this assignment as it gets closer.

Problem Sets– Throughout the semester, you'll be asked to complete four problem sets. The first one is worth 5% of your grade, and is shorter in length. The remaining three are each worth 10% of your grade. The problem sets will ask you to apply the ideas, concepts, and tools we've covered in class to scenarios involving research. For the first you will be asked to complete the college's IRB training. For the second you will be asked to consider a number of scenarios you may face with research, as well as creating interviews. The third will focus on questions of survey design. And the fourth will ask you to consider experimental research and content analysis.

Literature Review – You will individually write a literature review on a research question of your choosing. The literature review should be between 5 and 7 pages in length. We will talk

more about this in class. This is worth 15% of your course grade. The literature review is due October 12th.

Interview Assignment – You will conduct three in-depth interviews on a research question of your choice. You will conduct these interviews by identifying a target population and sampling frame (18 and older, only). You will then interview three adults for between 30 minutes and 1 hour each about your research question. You may conduct structured or semi-structured interviews, designing your interview instrument based on your choice. After the interviews are done, you will write a short memo documenting your methodology (how you selected your sampling frame, selected participants, and how conducted the interviews) and your findings from the interviews.

Attendance and Participation – Your attendance and participation grade will be based on my subjective estimate of how frequently you participate actively and respectfully in class discussion and your completion of weekly in-class reflections and small group discussions. You needn't talk in every class, nor do you need to speak for long. But you should be respectful, engaged, and participate frequently and substantively. I will speak more about how I grade participation during the first day of class.

Pete Wentz is attributed as having said 80% of success is showing up. I believe this is true. Part of being a good colleague and college citizen is showing up to do your part. This means showing up to class, listening respectfully to what your fellow students have to share, and offering your own perspectives on the subject matter. We all benefit by having robust discussions surrounding the topics we cover in class. Not only will participating in discussions help reinforce material from class, but it will also help you think about the world in different ways. But, in order to participate you must be there. You are allowed three absences per-semester. Every absence after that will see your final participation and attendance grade reduced by five percentage-points. I do not excuse absences – it is your responsibility to decide when it is appropriate or inappropriate to use one of your “free” absences or to take the grade reduction. If you have a unique situation, such as an extreme illness, that will cause you to miss a large number of classes during the semester come speak with me.¹

Being subject to quarantine or self-isolation measures due to suspected, diagnosed COVID-19 or novel coronavirus infection, or contact with someone who has been diagnosed with it, will count as a unique situation, for which you will not be penalized. We will work out a plan for how to handle this situation should it arise.

At the end of the semester your final grade will be calculated using your grades on each of the metrics above and their respective weights, and you will receive a letter grade based on the following grading scale:

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76),

¹ Pete Wentz probably didn't say this, Woody Allen is often attributed with saying that. I changed it for two reasons. First, students who have me for multiple classes got tired of reading the same quote. Two, Woody Allen's a creep. Pete Wentz did write, “And perfect boys with their perfect lives Nobody wants to hear you sing about tragedy.” Nobody wants hear celebrities complain. It's annoying.

C- (70-72), D (60-69), and F (0-59).

Here are some final notes about grading in the class:

- If you have questions about the grade you received on an assignment please come see me during office hours or send me an e-mail to schedule an appointment to meet in person. I do not discuss grades over e-mail, but am more than happy to sit down with you in person and help you understand why you earned the grade you did and help you get the grade you wish next time.
- If you do not believe that the grade you received is not indicative of your work I will regrade your assignment for you. You must contact me in writing, sending a memo about why you believe you did not deserve the grade that you received. You must contact me within one week of receiving back your work, if you do not you waive the right for me to reconsider your grade for that assignment. Once I receive your petition in writing I will regrade your work, and the resulting grade, whether higher or lower than your original, will be your final grade for that assignment.
- Late assignments will be penalized by 10-points per business-day that it is late (Monday through Friday).
- The only acceptable excuses for not completing an assignment on time are illness or family emergency. If either circumstance arises, I will give you extra time, but only if you (1) communicate with me before the assignment is due, and (2) provide documentation of the circumstance. After that is completed we will discuss a new due date.
- If you fail to complete an assignment, you will receive a 0 for that assignment.
- There is no extra credit

Religious Observances

Birmingham-Southern College is committed to the spiritual development of a diverse student body. The College makes every reasonable effort to allow students to observe religious holidays of obligation without academic penalty. Holidays of obligation are those holidays during which the observant person, according to religious practice, cannot work. Within the first 15 days of the term, students should review course syllabi for potential religious conflicts and notify me of potential conflicts. I will then work with you to make arrangements concerning missed work. Should you fail to alert me of this during the first 15 days of the term you forfeit your right to reschedule.

Scholastic Dishonesty and Academic Integrity

Please don't cheat. Seriously, do not do it. It's not worth it and will be a big headache for both of us. It's really just easier, and far more beneficial, to do the work.

Every BSC student has agreed under the Honor Code, "not to give or receive aid unfairly or dishonestly in any academic work or in any way act dishonestly in any student activity." Academic dishonesty is a violation of the Honor Code and will not be tolerated. If you are unsure as to whether a particular act will violate the Honor Code and be in any way academically dishonest, do not hesitate to ask me for clarification. Should an act of academic dishonesty take place, everyone involved will receive a zero on the assignment. In addition, depending on the severity, the act of academic dishonesty may be taken before the Honors Council and additional sanctions pursued.

Academic Accessibility and Accommodations

Students with a disability that qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and require accommodations should be registered with BSC's Accessibility Office. If you are registered for academic accommodations, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations that may be necessary. During this discussion you are not expected to disclose any details concerning your disability though you may do so at your discretion. If you have a disability but have not yet registered, please contact Dr. Sandra Foster, Assistant Director of Accessibility Services and Resources, at 205-226-7909 or smfoster@bsc.edu, or visit Olin 210. Keep in mind that no accommodation will be made unless and until the instructor receives official notification from the College.

Academic Freedom

Each student is strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions. In any classroom situation that involves discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may not only disagree with each other at times, but the students and instructor may also find that they have disparate views on sensitive and volatile topics. It is my hope that these differences will enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where all of us will be encouraged to think and learn from each other. Therefore, be assured that students' grades will not be affected by any beliefs or ideas expressed in class or in assignments. Rather, we will all respect the views of others when expressed in classroom discussions.

BSC Resources for Writers and Readers

Located in Humanities 102, the BSC Writing Center offers in-person and virtual peer-to-peer tutoring and quiet, supportive lab space to work on writing assignments. The Center's tutors are students from a wide variety of majors on campus and have the range to address student writing needs with discipline specificity. Supervised and assisted by BSC Writing Center directors, the tutors provide one-on-one consultations for any student at any point in the writing process. The BSC Writing Center is open Sunday-Thursday 4pm-8pm. To ensure a full 30-minute tutorial time slot, students are encouraged to be mindful of assignment-heavy weeks, keep track of due dates, and visit the Writing Center at their earliest availability during open hours. Please contact Dr. MK Foster or Professor Laura Tolbert (writingcenter@bsc.edu) with any questions or requests for virtual appointments.

BSC's Academic Resource Center (ARC)

The Academic Resource Center (ARC), located on the ground floor of the Library, offers tutoring and one-on-one assistance for all BSC students. For more information or to make an appointment email arc@bsc.edu or visit the Academic Resource Center web page and submit a form. Reach out to us, we can help!

Title IX

Birmingham-Southern College is committed to the creation and maintenance of a safe learning environment for students and the campus community. The College forbids any type of sexual or gender-based misconduct among its students, faculty, and staff. The College encourages all members of the academic community to report suspected sexual and gender-based misconduct to the appropriate authorities so that it can be investigated, remedied, and

eliminated. BSC forbids retaliation against any person who has opposed, reported, or participated in an investigation concerning sexual or gender-based misconduct. See the BSC Title IX website (www.bsc.edu/titleix) for more information, including an online report form. If you or a peer have experienced such misconduct, there are faculty and staff members who are trained in supporting students by answering questions and helping them navigate this process. The list of advocates can be found along with other helpful resources on the Title IX website.

Technology

Technology's great. It has made us more efficient as a people and has provided humankind with more ability and power than we've ever had before. But, the fact is that laptops, smart phones, and other electronic devices are a distraction to your classmates and to me. Not only that, but research has shown that we learn more when we take notes by hand:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>

Thus, you may not use electronic devices in class. However, should you have a unique reason for needing a laptop to take notes, please contact me and we can make accommodations as necessary.

Course Schedule and Readings

(Note: This is subject to change at the will of the instructor as the semester progresses)

Part I: Science, Knowledge, and Research Questions

Week 1: Introduction

Thursday 8/26: Introduction

- Reading
 - No reading. Get a head start on next week's (2/6)
- Due
 - Nothing due

Week 2: What is Social Science Research; Research Ethics

Tuesday 8/31: What is Social Science Research?

- Reading
 - Watch: "How the Social Sciences Change the World" (link on YouTube)
 - Booth et al., Prologue + Chapter 1
 - Joel Achenbach, "The Age of Disbelief." National Geographic Magazine, March 2015: 30-47.
- Due
 - Nothing due

Thursday 9/2: Ethics in Research

- Reading
 - Booth et al., pages 271-274.
- Due
 - Nothing
- Lab
 - No lab today

Week 3: Research Questions

Tuesday 9/7: Topics and Research Questions

- Reading
 - Booth et al., Chapter 3
- Due
 - Problem Set I handed out
 - In class discussion 1

Thursday 9/9: Puzzles and Research Questions

- Reading
 - Booth et al., Chapter 4
 - Kurt Weyland, "The Arab Spring: Why the Surprising Similarities with the Revolutionary Wave of 1848?" *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 4 (December 2012): 917-934 (read only the introduction on p. 917-18 for today)
- Due
 - In class discussion 1 cont.
- Lab

- No lab today

Week 4: Literature Reviews; Constructing an Argument

Tuesday 9/14: Literature Reviews

- Reading
 - Booth et al., Chapter 5 (skim)
 - Booth et al., Chapter 6 (read carefully)
- Due
 - Nothing

Thursday 9/16: Theory and Hypotheses

- Reading
 - Booth et al., Chapters 7 and 8
- Due
 - Nothing
- Lab
 - Lab meeting 3:30 to 4:30
 - Come to lab with three research questions you're thinking about investigating. For each idea, write a brief paragraph about what the idea is, what the specific research question is, why it's interesting, and the potential contribution research on this question could provide your discipline, society, and anyone else you think relevant. You'll turn this in to me on Moodle at the end of class and it will count towards your participation grade.

Part II: Research Design

Week 5: Introduction to Research Design; Choosing the Right Method

Tuesday 9/21: Introduction to Research Design

- Reading
 - Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science* (2nd ed.), Los Angeles: Sage, 2012: Ch. 7 "Making Your Plan and Protecting Yourself from Criticism: The Research Design" (pp. 99-129).
- Due
 - Problem set I due

Thursday 9/23: Selecting Your Methods and Cases

- Reading
 - Reading TBA
- Due
 - Nothing
- Lab
 - Lab meeting 3:30-4:30pm
 - Come to lab prepared to present the research question you have settled on and workshop them in groups.
 - By the end of lab submit your research question proposal to me. One paragraph with your research question, why you selected it, and why you

believe it's important to study. This is the research question you'll focus your literature review on. You'll also use it throughout the semester for other projects.

Week 6: Research Design

Tuesday 9/28: Conceptualizing Research and Measurement Pt. I

- Reading
 - TBA
- Due
 - Nothing

Thursday 9/30: No class on account of the Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association and the Political Communication Section

- Work on finding sources for literature review. We'll refresh on how to do that on Tuesday.

Week 7: Finding Sources/Library Workshop; Research Design cont.

Tuesday 10/5: Library Resources Workshop

**We'll meet in the library's electronic classroom for this class*

- Reading
 - Chapter 14, Booth
- Due
 - None

Thursday 10/7: Conceptualizing Research and Measurement Pt. II

- Reading
 - TBA
- Due
 - Problem set II handed out
- Lab
 - No lab, but I'll be available during this time to meet about last minute questions regarding the literature reviews.
 - Otherwise, use this time to work on your lit review.

Part III: Qualitative Methods – Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data

Week 8: Interviews Pt. I; Fall Break

Tuesday 10/12: Interviews Pt. I

- Reading
 - Brancati, Chapter 10
- Due
 - Think about ideas for your interview project
 - Literature Review due

Thursday 10/14: Fall Break

- No class, fall break!

Week 9: Interviews Pt. II; Individual Meetings

Tuesday 10/19: Interviews Part II

- Reading
 - Review Brancati, Chapter 10
- Due
 - Problem set II due

Thursday 10/21: Individual Meetings

- Reading
 - None
- Due
 - Prepare
- Lab
 - We'll continue our individual meetings during this time
 - We'll schedule who meets when ahead of time.

Part IV: Quantitative Methods – Collecting Quantitative Data

Week 10: Survey Research

Tuesday 10/26: Introduction to Quantitative Methods & Survey Research and Sampling Frames

- Reading
 - Brancati, Chapter 18, pgs. 263-268
 - Tom W. Smith. 2013. "Survey-Research Paradigms Old and New," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 25(2): 218-229.
- Due
 - Nothing

Thursday 10/28: Survey Design

- Reading
 - Groves et al. 2009. Selected readings TBA.
 - Other readings TBA
- Due
 - Nothing
- Lab
 - No lab, but available for questions about interview project.

Week 11: Survey Research Pt. II

Tuesday 11/2: Survey Design cont. (Workshop and Discussion)

- Reading
 - Tourangeau et al. 2000. Selected readings TBA.
- Due
 - Come prepared to discuss the readings and then work through survey-question design exercises.
 - Interview project due.

Thursday 11/4: Survey Deployment and Analyzing Survey Data

- Reading
 - Groves, 2009. Selected readings TBA.
 - Other readings TBA
- Due
 - Problem set III handed out
- Lab
 - Lab will be dedicated to working on problem set III.

Week 12: Experimental Research

Tuesday 11/9: Experiments Intro, Lab Experiments

- Reading
 - Brancati, Chapter 19
- Due
 - Nothing

Thursday 11/11: Field and Natural Experiments

- Reading
 - TBA
- Due
 - Nothing due
- Lab
 - No lab meeting today.

Week 13: Research Project Workshop; Content Analysis

Tuesday: 11/16: Final Research Project Assignment and Workshop

- Reading
 - Nothing
- Due
 - Problem set III due
 - Problem set IV handed out

Thursday 11/18: Content Analysis Pt. I

- Reading
 - Brancati, Chapter 12
 - TBA
- Due
 - Nothing due
- Lab
 - Lab 3:30 to 4:30
 - Use this time to meet with your groups to work on the group research project.

Week 14: Content Analysis cont.

Tuesday 11/23: Content Analysis cont.

- Reading

- TBA
- Due
 - Nothing

Thursday 11/25: No class, Thanksgiving Break

- Reading
 - Nothing
- Due
 - Nothing
- Lab
 - None

Week 15: Final Research Project Workshop

Tuesday 11/30: Final Research Project Workshop

- Reading
 - None
- Due
 - Come prepared to discuss the progress of your final group projects with me
 - Problem set IV due

Final exam: There is no final exam in the class. However, we will use this period for final group research project presentations.