

**Syllabus**  
**Sociology 575**  
**Advanced Research Methods**  
**Fall, 2012**  
**Texas A&M University-Commerce**

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Required Text: Babbie, Earl. PRACTICE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH, 13ed. Cengage, 2013.  
ISBN 978-1-1330-4979-1

**COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS:**

This course is intended to expose the graduate sociology student to professional level methods of research design and methods. A certain degree of knowledge of basic research methodology is required and assumed. The course will focus on not just understanding how research “works” but being able to “do” hands-on research, as well as developing the ability to interpret the research findings of others in the discipline.

Specific Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes include:

- Developing the “Sociological Perspective” (especially as explained by Peter Berger) as a way of thinking and understanding the social world;
- Realizing the basic connection between sociological theory and social research methods design, and how deductive and inductive logical processes guide scientific inquiry;
- Developing an awareness of the overall research process used in the social sciences - this involves an understanding of what all “science” is and a familiarity with the systematically organized methodology called the scientific method.;
- Developing the foundations for intellectual honesty and integrity in structuring research design, sampling procedures, operationalization, data collection, and data coding preparatory to data analysis;
- Investigating the somewhat nebulous concept of causality in the social sciences – this also begins to make one aware of the limitations of social science research;

- Becoming familiar with key concepts in research, such as conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, validity and reliability;
- Understanding the rationale behind sampling procedures, and realizing that we never “prove” anything in the social sciences;
- Becoming familiar with the various methods of data collection used in both qualitative and quantitative sociology;
- Developing the ability to state testable hypotheses in deductive research, and understand the logic behind hypothesis testing;
- Investigating the connection between statistical analysis and research methodology, and understanding that the most advanced statistical techniques and findings are useless without a solid methodological base;
- Developing an understanding of the techniques of evaluation research and single-subject designs in the social sciences; and,
- Becoming a knowledgeable consumer of social science research.

#### COURSE FORMAT:

The course format will be primarily discussion/lecture, and in most parts of the course the class discussions will retrace the readings in the text, as well as provide substantive examples of the material being read. For most students this will probably be helpful as the readings can be heavy-going if left solely to individual understanding. IT IS THEREFORE IMPERATIVE that the readings are done before the date assigned for that topic to be discussed in class. Any course in research methods is, by its very nature, a study-intensive course. By this I mean that the student cannot sit in class, absorb the material, cram before exams, and expect to do well in this course. The nature of the course will be sequential and developmental, in that a minimal degree of understanding of the primary concepts is essential before progressing in this course. Good note-taking will also be a definite asset.

Please feel free to ask questions or make comments at any time. Also, be prepared to answer questions about or discuss your assignments at any time. The format will be largely seminar, and class participation will be essential for the success of this course (if you don't talk, we end up listening to me talk on-and-on, and none of us will enjoy that).

If you need help in this course, please contact me, either before or after class, or call me at home, or my day-time office or cell number. The University has resources to help you, and I will help you in any way that I can. If you begin to feel overwhelmed at any point, please let me know. Do not just stop attending class or withdraw without talking with me about alternatives.

Each class session will include a seminar/discussion over the assignments from the previous week, and new material from the assigned readings as well as a hands-on session working with actual research articles or projects. It is very important for every student to participate in the seminar as well as the application section of each class period. Please try not to miss class sessions, as you can fall behind very quickly in this class.

## EXAMS:

There will be two scheduled exams, a mid-term take-home, and an in-class final exam. Each exam will be worth one-third of the final grade in this course. There will be a review period before the final exam. Make-up exams will be given only for University-excused absences. There will be no individual extra credit work in this course.

## ASSIGNMENTS/NOTEBOOK

There will be a weekly assignment given every class session (beginning week 2), due the following week. There will be a total of 12 assignments; all are required. Each assignment will be graded (60-100 points) and returned the following week; these assignments should be kept in an organized notebook. The mean score of these assignments will be computed and will be one-fourth of your final course grade. The notebook will also be turned in with your final exam, and will be returned. Two, or more, students will be asked to present the results of their assignments to the class each week. These presentations will be an important component of this course.

## RESEARCH METHODS PROJECT/PROPOSAL

A formal project will be required for this course. This project may be the first draft of your proposal for a 595 or 518 research project, or a research project individually developed for any student who will not be completing a 595 or 518 project for the graduate degree in sociology. A complete guide to developing this project will be distributed later in the course, as well as a project grading rubric. The research project will be equal to one exam grade (one-fourth of your final grade).

## COURSE GRADE

Your grade in this course will be determined by the percentage of total possible points you can earn.

Mid-term Exam	= 1/4 of course grade. (Total 100 possible points)
Final Exam	= 1/4 of course grade. (Total 100 possible points)
Assignments	= 1/4 of course grade. (Total 100 possible points)
Research Proposal	= 1/4 of course grade. (Total 100 possible points)

400 total points possible

A = 90-100% (360-400 points)

B = 80-89% (320-350 points)

C = 70-79% (280-319 points) and so on.....

## ATTENDANCE:

Come to class! We will be covering a large amount of information in some class sessions and you can fall behind very quickly. If you must miss a class session, please let me know, if at all possible.

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS:

Please bring your textbook and notebook to class every time we meet. This course is very text dependent, and class discussions/lectures will reiterate the material in the text. I will call on you for discussion of the text in class and draw your attention to specific portions of chapters. Please feel free to express your ideas on topics, and also allow others to express views that may differ from yours.

Please be attentive in the classroom. Cell phones should be turned off in class – NO TEXTING IN CLASS IS ALLOWED. I do allow you to use laptops for notes in class, or to search topics we are discussing on the internet. HOWEVER, you will not like my response if you are caught playing games, surfing the web, listening to music, facebooking, etc. in class!

“All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” (Student’s Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)

## COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

### Academic Honesty/Cheating and Plagiarism

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. *It is especially important in a research methods course.* All members of the academic community must work to provide an environment in which each student has the opportunity to be evaluated fairly on the basis of his/her own performance. It should go without saying that every student is expected to do his/her own work. Department policy provides that anyone caught cheating in any form or fashion will receive an “F” for the course and may be subjected to further disciplinary action by the University. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to both the Department Head, as well as the Dean. Plagiarism (the use of others’ words, phrases, and ideas in your own work without giving credit to the original author) is a form of cheating and not only violates academic ethical standards, but is against the law. Just don’t do it – you will be caught and you will not like the consequences.

### POLICIES ON ENROLLMENT, X, DP, DF, AND WITHDRAWAL

Every student has the right to drop the course without penalty until the drop date. Students dropping the course during this period will be assigned a grade of “DP” (drop passing). A grade of DP is GPA neutral, but a grade of DF (drop failing) counts as an F on your transcript.

Students should check the University catalog, current semester schedule, website, and other official sources for specific dates, policies, etc. It is your responsibility to see that all University procedures are properly followed.

### STUDENTS REQUIRING ASSISTANCE

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
Gee Library, Room 132  
Phone 903.886.5150 or 903.886.5835  
Fax 903.468.8148  
Email [StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)