

2008



INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH SOC 3000 SYLLABUS SUMMER QUARTER Professor Georges GOMA-GAKISSA, Ph.D.



“Method” has to do, first of all, with how to ask and answer questions with some assurance that the answers are more or less durable. “Theory” has to do, above all, with paying close attention to the words one is using, especially their degree of generality and their logical relations. The primary purpose of both is clarity of conception and economy of procedure, and most importantly just now, the release rather than the restriction of the sociological imagination.

C. Wright Mills 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*, p.178.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, EAST BAY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- 🚩 Office Number: MI 3101
- 🚩 Office Hours: 5:25pm-6:25pm
- 🚩 Room: MI, Hall Rm. 3051
- 🚩 Phone Number: (510) 885-2154
- 🚩 Email:
georges.goma@csueastbay.edu

Course Description

“Sociology is the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. Sociologists investigate the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, and how people interact within these contexts” (American Sociological Association). This course provides an introduction to the fundamentals of social and scientific research. Focusing upon social and behavioral research methodology, it will also provide a close examination of the major steps in an empirical investigation: the statement of a problem (problem formulation); the derivation of hypotheses; the operationalization of variables; the design of the study; the collection and statistical analyses of data; and the interpretation and generalizability of findings.

Rationale

This course focuses largely on learning concepts, skills, and attitude necessary to be a critical consumer of research. The basic assumption underlying this course is students in Sociology and social services must be willing to use the results of research as a major criterion for selection of their approaches to practice in order to enhance their effectiveness. Such applications require both knowledge about research, and critical skills for evaluating such research findings. Accordingly, this course provides an introduction to principles of scientific methodology in behavioral and social science research.

Course Goals

Upon completion of the course, the student will have acquired a basic understanding of research methods and designs. This knowledge will (1) enable the student to understand different research approaches and designs reported in the social and behavioral science literature and (2) prepare him/her for more advanced research design and statistical topics.

Course Objectives

1. Create a sense of responsibility for contributing to the professional body of sociology and social services knowledge especially as it relates to the special problems of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
2. Demonstrate an ability to critically examine, interpret, and utilize social research reports and their relationship to everyday social work practice.
3. Discuss the ethical principles and values that guide research in sociology and social services.
4. Understand the principles of scientific inquiry, their relationships to sociology, and the value premises upon which they rest.
5. Understand the key aspects of qualitative research designs and their use in social research.
6. Identify and discuss the process of doing sociological research which includes particular research designs, measurements, sampling, and data analysis.

7. Apply a research strategy that is appropriate to social world and social work practice and its administrative demands.
8. Apply a quantitative practice evaluation model to a social world related practice situation
9. Demonstrate an increased awareness and sensitivity to special research issues in relation to oppressed groups, minorities, and other diverse groups.
10. Use modern technology including the internet, on-line discussions, and a statistical package in the service of conducting research.

Values and ethics

Values and ethics will be an important component of the course when the student learns to apply sociological research models. As a sociologist or a social work researcher, the student will have to examine their personal values when conducting research with different ethnic and special population groups. Ethical decision making and informed consent will also be an important part of the course. Students will also learn to be aware of personal bias and how these biases may become a barrier when researching on underrepresented communities.

Diversity

The California State University, East Bay Department of Sociology and Social Services is also situated to respond to the diverse needs of people and communities. Curriculum content will include a focus on the particular concerns of the urban underserved and disenfranchised populations. This course will address important research issues concerning race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation and religion. Methodological issues and problems pertaining to the study of different ethnocultural populations will also be discussed.

Promotion of Social and Economic Justice

Research methods that address social and economic justice will be included in the course. The student is encouraged to engage in research projects that would address issues of racism and discrimination.

A.P.A. Format and Writing Requirements

All assignment should follow current American Psychological Association (APA) format guidelines (4th edition) with the following exceptions: (1) margins should be 1.25 inches left and 1.00 inches top, right, and bottom; (2) pages must be consecutively numbered within either the top right or bottom center margins starting with the abstract; and (3) the use of running heads is optional. All papers must use standard, 12-point fonts (e.g., Times Roman) and be free of typographical, formatting, spelling, and content errors, as the quality of the writing will be evaluated as part of the grade for all written assignments. Be sure to carefully review and edit all drafts prior to submission. **All ideas, quotes, and**

information taken or derived from other sources must be appropriately cited and referenced in accordance with APA rules.

Special Note

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours.

Textbook

Chambliss Daniel F. & Schutt Russell K. (2006). Making sense of the Social World. Methods of Investigation (Second Edition), Pine Forge Press.

Recommended Supplemental Readings

1. Rubin Allen & Babbie Earl R. (2008), Research Methods for Social Work (Sixth Edition). Thomson Brooks/Cole.
2. Galvan, J. L. (1999). Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences. Los Angeles: Pyszczak Publishing.
3. Pyszczak, F., & Bruce, R. R. (1998). Writing empirical research reports: A basic guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Pyszczak Publishing.
4. Yaffe, J., & Gotthoffer, D. (2000). Quick guide to the internet for social work. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Course Grading

93% and above	A
90% to 92%	A-
87% to 89%	B+
84% to 86%	B
80% to 83%	B-
77% to 79%	C+
74% to 76%	C
70% to 73%	C-
60% to 70%	D
59% and below	F

GRADING

ASSIGNMENT	PERCENT OF GRADE	DUE DATE
Take-Home Quizzes	10%	Weekly-Based
Written Assignment 1	20%	July 14 th , 2008
Midterm Examination	20%	July 28 th , 2008
Written Assignment 2	20%	Sept 1 st , 2008
Final Examination	20%	Sept 8 th .2008
Class Participation	10%	All Quarter

TOPIC OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Note: the readings listed below should be read by the week indicated, and students should be prepared to discuss this material in class.

I - SCHEDULE

Week 1: The Society & the Scientific Perspective in Social Research: Why do we do Social Research?

- 6/23/08**
- Course overview
 - The problem in the Social Research
 - Social scientists and the social world
 - How well have we done our research?

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Ch. 1: "Science, Society, and Social Research."

Week 2: Research is Process: Problem Formulation, Designing Research, and Ethical Issues

- 6/30/08**
- Choosing and Formulating a Research Question
 - The Role of Theory in Social Research: What is the Theory?

- The Good Strategy and the Good Design in Social Research
- The Ethical and Cultural Context of Social Research

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 2: “The Processus and Problems of Social Research.”

Week 3: Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement

- 7/07/08**
- What the Concept is to Social Research?
 - Conceptualizing and Defining Variables in Social Research
 - The meaning of Measurement and Levels of Measurement
 - The Theory of Measurement

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 3: “Conceptualization and Measurement”

Week 4: Data Collection Methods with Large Sources of Data I

- 7/14/08**
- Sampling: Some basic Definitions
 - The Representativeness of a Sample
 - Sampling Theory: How it Works?
 - Sampling Methods at Disposal

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 4: “Sampling”

Week 5: Causal Inference versus Correlational Designs, and the Experimental Designs

- 7/21/08**
- Causality (also known as Causation) and Correlation
 - Internal Validity and External Validity
 - What Experiment is to Social Research?
 - Threats to validity in Experiments

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 5: “Causation and Experimental Design”

Written Assignment 1 Due

Week 6: Data Collection Methods with Large Sources of Data II

- 7/28/08**
- The Survey Defined and its Frequent use in Social Research
 - Constructing the Questionnaire
 - The Social Work Interview
 - Different Methods for Administrating Surveys

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 6: “Survey Research”

Midterm Examination in Class Session during the Second Part of Class

Week 6: Data Collection Methods with Large Sources of Data II

- 8/04/08**
- The Survey Defined and its Frequent use in Social Research
 - Constructing the Questionnaire
 - The Social Work Interview
 - Different Methods for Administrating Surveys

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 6: “Survey Research”

Week 7: Qualitative Research Methods

- 8/11/08**
- Introduction: What makes Methods Qualitative?
 - Participant Observation as a Research Method
 - Interviews and the In-Depth Understanding of Social World
 - Analyzing Qualitative Data

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 7: “Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating, and Listening”

Week 8: Data Analysis – Qualitative Analysis

- 8/18/08**
- What is distinctive about Qualitative Data?
 - Techniques and Instruments at Disposal in Qualitative Research
 - Alternatives in Qualitative Data Analysis
 - Ethical Considerations while Using Qualitative Research

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 8: “Qualitative Data Analysis”

Week 9: Analysis of Quantitative Information

- 8/25/08**
- Making Sense of Quantitative Data
 - Preparing Data for Analysis and Displaying Statistical Distributions
 - Inferential Data Analysis
 - Options for Summarizing Distributions, Reading Tables, and Controlling for the third variable
 - Ethical Considerations in Quantitative Data Analysis

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 9: “Elementary Quantitative Data Analysis”

Week 10: Writing Research Proposals and Reports

- 9/01/08**
- Why Write a Research Report?
 - Comparing Research Designs and Reviewing Research
 - Proposing New Research and Reporting Research
 - Proposal writing examples Regarding Substance Abuse Treatment, Child Abuse Prevention, and AMDR
 - Characteristics of Scientific writing

Required Readings:

Daniel F. Chambliss & Russell K. Schutt, *Making sense of the social World*

Chapter 10: “Reviewing, Proposing, and Reporting Research”

Written Assignment 2 Due

Week 11: Final Examination

II – OVERVIEW ON THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

The workload within this course is represented by five types of exercises and commitment:

(1) Take-Home Quiz

On a weekly base, a take-home quiz will be assigned for each lesson to be posted on the black board every Saturday proceeding the Monday’s Class session.

(2) Written Assignment 1: Please, select only one of the following topics (A or B) to deal with.

A/ How Error Prone is Popular Reasoning

This project provides an estimate of the frequency with which errors are made in reasoning about individuals, societies, and social processes.

1. Collect seven issues of a daily newspaper. Locate the letters to the editor in each.
2. Read each letter to the editor and circle all those that make assertions about individuals, societies, and social processes; that is, about the social world.
3. Identify examples of any of the four errors in reasoning in those letters. (Search through more newspaper issues, if necessary, until you find at least three examples of errors in reasoning about the social world.)
4. Speculate on the likelihood that the social world's complexity, self-interestedness, human subjectivity, or resistance to change resulted in each of the errors.
5. Rewrite the text of one of the letters to eliminate the errors of reasoning within it, but without changing the basic point of the letter.
6. Suggest two or more criteria that newspaper editors could use to spot errors in reasoning in the letters they are asked to publish.

B/ How popular is Social Science?

What use is made of the results of social science research in the popular press?

1. Review one week's daily papers and check all those articles that report or refer to social science research results.
2. Calculate the proportion of news articles that take advantage of social science research.
3. Read each of the articles you checked. Indicate for each article the type of research involved (descriptive, evaluative, explanatory, or exploratory). Circle any statements in the articles that pertain to measurement, causality, or generalizability.
4. Summarize the information presented in each article about measurement validity, causal validity, and sample and cross-population generalizability.
5. Now grade each article on the basis of the extent to which information was provided with which to judge the validity of any statements made about measurement, causality, and generalizability. Use grades from 0 (failure) to 4 (excellent).
6. Describe your findings and review your conclusions in a short paper.

I expect meaningful contributions from each of you in completing this exercise. All written assignments must be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. Late submissions will not be accepted.

(3) *The Midterm and Final Examinations* are both in-class-taking exercise under quiz format. These quizzes are comprehensive. The midterm will encompass the first five chapters of our textbook while the Final will concern the five last chapters of the same textbook. Note that quizzes cover the reading materials for the specified lesson. They are (the quizzes) my measure that you have read and understand the material.

(4) *Assignment 2: Research Proposal.*

The research proposal will serve as a term paper for which you will select a topic, write a research question, conduct a literature, and select and describe a proposed methodology for answering your research question. Your textbook includes "exercises" at the end of each chapter that will guide you through the process of writing a research proposal. If you spread the work out throughout most of the quarter, it will not be a particularly onerous project. If you wait till the last minute, it will be a major pain to accomplish. I must approve each topic and will be available to discuss your selection through direct contact (appointment) or through email. Also, if you run into a particularly difficult snag, we can schedule an appointment to see me. Select a topic you find interesting and this can be a fun process. You need my approval for any topic you are interested on to write your paper.

I expect meaningful contributions from each of you in completing this exercise. All written assignments must be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. Late submissions will not be accepted.

(5) *Participation and attendance.*

The course is taught as a combination of lecture and discussion. Thus, your active class participation is an important part of the course. Plan to complete the readings before each class session, and engage in discussion of the materials. This dimension of class weighs 10% of the overall grade. So, be dynamic and enthusiastic in class session to easily catch these points.

End