

# **The Logic and Methods of Social Inquiry** **(Tentative Syllabus – Subject to Change)**

Sociology 103B

Summer 2012

Instructor: Dr. Rachel Bryant-Anderson

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The first part of the course focuses on basic ethical, political, and logical issues in social scientific inquiry. The second part develops a wide range of skills and methods appropriate to actual research.

Through this course, you'll learn to become effective producers and savvy consumers of social research. You'll also learn the disciplinary conventions, standards, and practices common to professional sociologists. Whether or not you plan to become a social researcher, the skills you'll develop in this course will be useful to you as a student, employee, and citizen.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Social Research Counts*, by Earl Babbie

Various readings posted on eCommons

## **CLASS TIME**

Our class time will take a variety of formats, including lecture, large group discussion, small group discussion, in-class exercises, and writing workshops. I encourage you to ask questions during lectures. Because much of our time together will be interactive, your participation will be essential.

In order to make our class discussions and activities successful, you should complete all required readings and homework assignments before each class period.

## **LEARNING ACCOMODATIONS**

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of the Summer Session. Contact DRC at 459-2089, drc@ucsc.edu, for more information on the requirements and/or process.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### Research Proposal

This course is largely organized around the completion of an original research project that addresses a sociological question. Your written report of this project will be how you demonstrate your comprehension of the methodological tools and principles you learn through the readings and lectures. It will be completed in several phases and will culminate in a 20 page (approximately) paper that establishes: the context and rationale for your project; the details and justification for your research method; your findings; and your proposal for a larger project addressing your research question.

This is a writing-intensive course, satisfying one of your general education requirements. As such, it will place considerable emphasis on the development of skills that will prepare you to write effectively as a professional social researcher. We will engage in writing workshops in lecture and

lab to train you in these skills, and your assignments will be evaluated based on the quality of writing as well as the level of mastery of methodological tools and principles.

The various elements of this assignment are:

- Research Question Due:
- Reading Notes/Method Proposal Due:
- Literature Review Due:
- Methods Due:
- Final Proposal, consisting of: Due:
  - Introduction
  - Revised Literature Review
  - Revised Methods Section
  - Findings and Discussion
  - Proposal for Larger (Future) Project

### Research Presentation (Optional Extra Credit)

In addition to presenting the results of your project in your final research proposal, you have the option to share them with the entire class during our last meeting. Over the session, you will become familiar with one another's projects, and this will be the culmination of our collective and cooperative work together. In addition, the oral presentation of a research project is an important skill for a professional sociologist, and this aspect of the course will provide a model for participation in professional conferences such as those held annually by the American Sociological Association (among many others).

### Homework Assignments

I will assign homework assignments regularly. These assignments will help you learn some of the skills you'll use in your own research project and will also give you a chance to try out research methods you won't use in this project. It is essential that you complete all of the assigned exercises – both for the sake of your skill development as well as your ability to participate in the accompanying in-class exercises.

### Participation / Lab

Because much of this course is designed around the principle of cooperative learning, your regular and thoughtful participation will be essential. Your participation will be evaluated in at least three contexts: lab, lecture large-group discussions, and your research workgroups.

Lab attendance is mandatory and will be a very productive use of your time. Among other things, labs will provide you an opportunity to work on certain aspects of your assignments with the benefit of one-on-one assistance when needed. You will also participate in useful skill-building exercises in lab.

Our class time will also be highly participatory, and the frequency and quality of your contributions during lecture will affect your final course grade. Each student will be charged with the task of crafting and carrying out an original project, and I am confident that you will benefit greatly from hearing your peers' input on these projects, as well as on methodological issues more generally. Behaviors that indicate a lack of engagement and/or respect during class (lecture or lab) will

significantly and negatively impact your participation grade. These behaviors include (but are not limited to): sleeping, texting, engaging in side conversations, arriving late, and leaving early.

I will assign you to research workgroups, and these groups will be a major resource for you as you learn to be a social researcher and carry out your own project. You will engage in cooperative learning with your workgroup members by doing assigned exercises and offering extensive feedback on one another's work. At the end of the course, you will evaluate the quality of each member's workgroup participation, and they will do the same for you. The basis for this evaluation will be the extent to which you: were prepared for workgroup sessions (by completing all assigned readings, activities, and assignments); were focused during workgroup sessions (staying on-task rather than engaging in side conversations, etc.); were respectful of other workgroup members; and offered valuable input and feedback on other members' work.

### Course Workload

According to the UCSC General Catalog, you should expect to spend 3 hours per week for every unit of coursework during a regular academic quarter, meaning that a 7 unit course such as this one would entail approximately 3 hours of lecture, 2 hours of lab, and 15 hours of work outside of class and lab. Due to the compressed nature of this course, you should double these estimates. Please note: **you will be expected to do the same amount of work** (readings, class/lab time, and assignments) during this summer session offering of SOCY 103B **in half the amount of time normally allotted**. This will be a challenging course, and passing it will require persistent hard work and excellent time management. Be assured that if you are willing to invest the time and effort required, you will have plenty of support (from me, the TA, and your peers) to facilitate your success.

### Academic Integrity and Honesty

This class will be conducted in full accordance with the University's "Policy on Academic Integrity." Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, quoting or paraphrasing without attribution; copying from other students' papers or exams; plagiarizing portions of assignments; presenting another's work as your own. I, like all instructors, am required to report students engaged in such activities to their college provost. Students are responsible for knowing what the standards for academic integrity are and adhering to them. Penalties for plagiarism are outlined at: <http://oasas.ucsc.edu/avcue/integrity/student/htm>.

## **SCHEDULE**

**Monday, July 30: Introduction and Overview**

**Wednesday, August 1: Problem Formulation and Research Design**

**Monday, August 6: Ethics**

**Wednesday, August 8: Unobtrusive Methods**

**Monday, August 13: Surveys & Interviews**

**Wednesday, August 15: Field Research**

**Monday, August 20: Methodological Innovations**

**Wednesday, August 22: Data Analysis**

**Monday, August 27: Communicating Findings**

**Wednesday, August 29: Wrap-up & Optional Presentations**