

**Syllabus**  
**SOC 3620 Sociological Research Methods**

Times: MWF 10-10:50AM

Location: Blair 3103

Professor: Shane Soboroff

Office: Blair 3990

Office hours: MWF 3:00—4:30PM

Welcome to Sociological Research Methods! This class is required for the major in Sociology and provides an overview of the methods used by sociologists to develop, test, and refine theories to explain social phenomena. The major topics covered in this course include **the relationship of theory to method, the development of testable hypotheses, issues of validity and reliability in measurement, methods of qualitative inquiry, and the refinement of theory in light of empirical findings.** The overall goal of this course is to help students understand that the scientific method is one of developing valid theories to explain the empirical world, and that this method can be applied to social phenomena. Useful examples of research are provided, and students will complete assignments that help them practice conducting research.

Course Description and Objectives:

Sociologists gather empirical evidence to construct, test, and refine theories about social phenomena. The data we seek may come from a variety of sources. These include historical data from libraries and public archives, laboratory experiments, surveys and structured interviews, participant observation, and even personal experience. This course introduces you to the methods sociologists use and the rules they follow to gather, analyze, and interpret data. As such, you should find much of the course useful in your statistics class—another required course for the sociology major.

Key Objectives: By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Understand a variety of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and demonstrate that you understand the strengths and weaknesses of each.
2. Explain the connection between theory and research and show evidence of this in your writing.
3. Explain techniques for collecting, analyzing, and presenting results from research.
4. Contemplate ethical concerns in scientific research and apply what you learn within these guidelines.

To accomplish these goals, students will do the following activities:

1. Learn to **summarize a research article** and identify (1) the research question, (2) assumptions and propositions of the theory, (3) specific hypothesis, (4) methods used, and (5) the findings and results.
2. **Develop a hypothesis** and use recent research to explain how you arrived at it.
3. Conduct a **short survey** on attitudes and behavior among students at EIU, administering the survey to people on campus.

4. Develop **an interview** and practice interview techniques with classmates.
5. Design **an experiment** to answer a basic research question with appropriate pretests and posttests.

Required texts: You are required to read assigned chapters from the textbook prior to attending the first meeting of each week. Lectures will be designed assuming you have read all materials. Activities will require you to read materials. The majority of these readings will be from the following book:

**Babbie, Earl. 2013. *The Practice of Social Research, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.**

This **text is available in the University Textbook Rental**. In addition, readings will be posted on D2L. Check the course schedule for the appropriate readings for each week.

### **Course Guidelines:**

1. ***Collegiality*** – You are expected to respect the viewpoints expressed by others. If you disagree with what someone has said, you are encouraged to express your disagreement but are expected to do so in a civil, respectful, & polite manner. Failure to comply will result in course dismissal.
2. ***Attendance/Participation*** – I record attendance daily. You are expected to attend class daily and participate fully. You will obviously miss critical information if you have excessive absences and this will be reflected in your exam and homework grades. Also, walking into class late is disrespectful to both your professor & your colleagues & will not be tolerated.
3. ***Readings*** – I write each lecture with the expectation that you have completed the assigned readings for the day. We will use class time to discuss & build on the readings. Reading is required to participate in class and for successful completion of this course.
4. ***Cell Phones/Texting/Technology*** - NOT ALLOWED! Turn off or silence all cell phones before entering class & DO NOT use them for texting during class. If I see someone texting, the entire class will have a pop quiz. You also may NOT use laptops or tape recorders in class unless you have these as part of an academic accommodation.
5. ***Academic Integrity*** – Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct ([www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php](http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php)). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. You will automatically fail the course if you submit any work that violates these principles.
6. ***Communication*** – I am always available to meet with you to discuss grades, lecture, exams or other the course matters. Please make use of my posted office hours, call my office phone, or use email to schedule appointments. If you use email, please be professional and follow standard email guidelines. 1) Put the course # in the subject line (SOC 3620), 2) include greeting (Dr. or Professor Soboroff), 3) use standard English,

**write in complete sentences, avoid abbreviations and text slang (TTYL, LOL), 4)) and end with a signature (your full name).**

**Graded Material:** I believe that everyone can earn an “A” in research methods. It only requires putting in the work. This class is required for the major, and will provide skills useful on the job market. It is an investment. Therefore I will expect material to be read, assignments to be completed on time, and class attendance to be a priority for you throughout the semester.

*Daily Attendance and Participation (15%):* Attendance for this course is necessary if you want to pass and so will be taken. Online quizzes will be over book material, but your exam grades will depend on the completeness of your lecture notes. Further, discussion and in-class practice assignments will be conducted **regularly** but are not on the schedule. These depend on our progress through the course. If you miss these, you may NOT make them up.

*Chapter Quizzes (15%):* You will be given a quiz over material covered in readings and lecture. See Attached calendar for weeks in which quizzes will be due. These will be accessible only through D2L.

*Practice Assignments (25%):* There will be five assignments required in this class. These will be posted on D2L, and must be turned in to the appropriate dropbox.

*Midterm 1 (10%):* Multiple choice, matching, true-false, short answer.

*Midterm 2 (15%):* Multiple Choice, matching, true-false, short answer.

*Final (20%):* Multiple choice, matching, true-false, short answer.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE FALL 2015**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>LECTURE TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS (B) = Babbie text</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES</b>
<b>1/9—13</b>	<b>Sociological Research Basics</b>	<b>B Ch. 1</b>	<b>Quiz Chapter 1</b>
<b>Jan 16—20 No Class on 16<sup>th</sup> (MLK Day)</b>	<b>Ethics of Research</b>	<b>B Ch. 3</b>	<b>Quiz Chapter 3</b>
<b>Jan. 23—27</b>	<b>Theory Construction I</b>	<b>B Ch. 2</b>	<b>Ridgeway Article Summary Due Jan 28 by 11:59 PM</b>
<b>Jan. 30—Feb. 3</b>	<b>Theory Construction II</b>	<b>D2L</b>	<b>Quiz Chapter 2</b>

<b>Feb. 6—10</b>	<b>From Theory to Method</b>	<b>B Ch. 4</b>	<b>Developing a Hypothesis Assignment Due February 11 By 11:59 PM</b>
<b>Feb. 13—17</b>	<b>EXAM I REVIEW, EXAM I (Feb 17)</b>		<b>EXAM—NO ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS</b>
<b>Feb. 20—24</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>B Ch. 5</b>	<b>Quiz Chapter 5</b>
<b>Feb. 27— March 3</b>	<b>Indexes and Scales</b>	<b>B Ch. 6</b>	<b>Quiz Chapter 6</b>
<b>Mar. 6—10</b>	<b>Sampling</b>	<b>B Ch. 7</b>	<b>Quiz Chapter 7</b>
<b>SPRING BREAK March 13—17</b>			
<b>Mar. 20—24</b>	<b>Experiments</b>	<b>D2L</b>	<b>Design a Follow-up Experiment Assignment Due April 1 by 11:59 PM</b>
<b>Mar. 27—31</b>	<b>Survey Research</b>	<b>B Ch. 9</b>	<b>Quiz Chapter 9</b>
<b>Apr. 3—7</b>	<b>EXAM II REVIEW, EXAM II (11/11)</b>		<b>EXAM—NO ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS</b>
<b>Apr. 10—14</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>B Ch. 13</b>	<b>Conduct Survey Research Assignment Due April 15 by 11:59 PM</b>
<b>Apr. 17—21</b>	<b>Field Research</b>	<b>B Ch. 10</b>	<b>Quiz Chapter 10</b>
<b>Apr. 24—28</b>	<b>Impact of Social Science Research</b>	<b>B Ch. 14</b>	<b>Conduct Qualitative Analysis Assignment Due April 29 by 11:59 PM</b>
<b>FINAL EXAM WEEK May 1—5</b>			<b>EXAM—NO ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS</b>

**Note:** This course may be taken as a Soc/Anthro departmental honors course—SOC 3692. Students who elect to take this as an honors course will complete the same work, but in lieu of quizzes they will turn in detailed article summaries over the topics from those weeks. These summaries will be held to very high standards for clarity and precision.

**Note:** January 23 is the deadline to drop this course without charges, and the deadline to drop the course with a “W” is April 7.