

SOC 320: Introduction to Social Research || Fall 2017

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COURSE INFORMATION

Class Meetings

Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays: 1:10pm to 2:00pm in Bryan Hall 404

Office Hours

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays by appointment

Please send me an email or talk to be before or after class to schedule a meeting. I am typically available between 9:00am and 5:00pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Please give me at least a day's notice to schedule a meeting, so I can make sure I am on campus and available. If you would like me to prepare anything for our meeting (e.g. grades, assignments to return, lectures to review), please let me know ahead of time.

Communication

The primary mode of communication outside of class is email. I expect you to check your email regularly. You are expected to regularly check the **Blackboard** course page as well. I check my email fairly regularly between 9am and 5pm, Monday through Friday. If you email me during those times, I will usually respond within 24 hours. Outside of those hours, I will try to respond within 48 hours.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at The Bookie)

Jeffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, Jr., & Bruce C. Straits. 2016. *The Process of Social Research*. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199946754

NOTES: This textbook has an extensive (free) student companion website: www.oup.com/us/dixon. Available in print or online (at www.vitalsource.com).

*Additional course readings and materials that may be required will be distributed via **Blackboard**.

COURSE OVERVIEW

From the Course Catalog

Methods of collecting data; surveys, experiments, field observations; organization and interpretation of data; reading social research findings.

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None

From your Instructor

Systematic, organized observation is central to all science, whether social or natural. For social scientists, the collection and analysis of the patterning of "social facts" is central to understanding our social world and processes of social change. This class will introduce you to the basic elements (e.g. project design, measurement, sampling) and terms (such as generalizability, bias, frequency distribution) of social science data collection. You will also be introduced to well-established social science research methods for data collection (observation, surveys, experiments, and interviewing).

The study of social research methods will sharpen your powers of critical thinking and evaluation and enable you to become a more intelligent gatherer and judge of information. One goal of this course is to develop your critical decision-making powers. Many social programs are shaped and evaluated by social research, and

businesses constantly rely on social research for decision-making. This course will help you understand the logic and limitations of social research so that you can evaluate such research more effectively.

A clear understanding of the techniques necessary to develop sometimes vague ideas and hunches into relevant and testable hypotheses and questions is essential for all serious students of social science. Methods are available that permit social scientists to formulate testable questions and compile or collect information to answer such questions and to determine and assess the quality of the results. These methods—their invention, implementation, and interpretation—are the focus of this course. In addition to learning how to theorize, conceptualize, and operationalize ideas and hypotheses and to evaluate results, we will also concentrate on communicating those results in a convincing and competent manner.

Social research does not take place in a vacuum. Real people engage in social research, and they do so in a social and historical context that can affect their actions. The producers and consumers of social research need to reflect on how larger contexts shapes research activities and how the knowledge created can, in turn, affect social and political relations. A second and related concern is that social researchers need to be on guard against ethnocentric perspectives or being confined by the assumptions, values, and beliefs of their own particular society. New, creative ways to do social research lie in exploring the interplay between perspectives and research techniques that can apply to only one culture and those that are more universal. With greater global communication and contact, students should become more sensitive to how and when the activity of social research crosses borders. Finally, students must appreciate that not only are both quantitative and qualitative styles of social research of value, but that the greatest benefit lies in combining them.

OBJECTIVES

Washington State University's *Seven Learning Goals of the Baccalaureate* identify core skills and knowledge that students should develop through their undergraduate studies. Several of these learning goals are fundamental to the development of this course. Along with the Department of Sociology's aim to develop student skills in critical thinking, quantitative and symbolic reasoning, research methods, information literacy, communication and life-long learning, this course has specific learning outcomes that aim to equip students to succeed after graduation.

Student Learning Outcomes

The specific Student Learning Outcomes for this course are included in the table below, followed by the relevant WSU Learning Goal(s). Also listed are the course topics and assignments that connect to these learning outcomes.

At the end of this course, students should be able to:	Course topics (and dates) that address these learning outcomes:	This objective will be evaluated primarily by:
1. understand the implications for thinking of humans as "subjects" and "participants" in the research process and the ethical and political issues surrounding social research (<i>WSU Goal: Critical and Creative Thinking, Information Literacy</i>)	The Ethics and Politics of Research & IRB (Week 2); Ethics Videos and Discussions (Week 2)	In-class Assignment (Aug 30); Quizzes & Exams
2. implement well-designed search strategies for finding quality research (<i>WSU Goals: Information Literacy, Scientific Literacy</i>)	Locating and Reading Social Research (Week 4); Writing in Social Research (Week 12)	In-class Assignment (Sept 11); Group Research Project (Lit. Review, Paper)
3. integrate and synthesize knowledge from multiple sources into a literature review (<i>WSU Goals: Critical and Creative Thinking, Information Literacy</i>)	Locating and Reading Social Research (Week 4); Writing in Social Research (Week 12)	Group Research Project (Lit. Review, Paper)

4. understand the process, procedures, and philosophy of collecting social research data using both qualitative and quantitative methods and the strengths and weaknesses of each method (<i>WSU Goal: Critical and Creative Thinking</i>)	Experiments (Week 6); Surveys (Week 7); Field Research and In-Depth Interviews (Week 7-8); Guest Speaker on Surveys and Interviews (Week 8)	In-class Assignment (Oct 11); Group Research Project (Assignments, Paper); Quizzes & Exams
5. develop appropriate research designs and instruments to answer sociological questions (<i>WSU Goal: Goal: Critical and Creative Thinking, Information Literacy</i>)	Research Design (Weeks 2-3); Measurement (Week 4); Sampling (Week 5-6); Surveys & Field Research and Interviews (Weeks 7-8)	In-class Assignments (Sept 6, 15, 25; Oct 11); Group Research Project (Assignments, Paper)
6. make linkages between empirical data and theoretical concepts (<i>WSU Goal: Critical and Creative Thinking, Information Literacy</i>)	Research Design (Weeks 2-3); Data Analysis (Weeks 11-12); Writing in Social Research (Week 12)	Group Research Project (Paper)
7. apply appropriate techniques to the analysis and presentation of data (<i>WSU Goal: Scientific Literacy, Communication</i>)	Data Analysis (Weeks 11-12); Writing in Social Research (Week 12)	Group Research Project (Paper and Presentation)
8. communicate in writing and speech the relevance of research findings with precision and style (<i>WSU Goal: Communication</i>)	Data Analysis (Weeks 11-12); Writing in Social Research (Week 12)	Group Research Project (Paper and Presentation)
9. follow social norms for individual and small group interactions, such as listening actively, compromise, communication, and reliability (<i>WSU Goal: Communication, Diversity</i>)	Group Work Days on various topics (Weeks 5, 8, 13, 15)	Group Research Project

SUMMARY OF COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Readings

Each week there will be readings assigned from the textbook. Readings are listed in the course schedule found on this syllabus. They will be listed on the course website as well. Supplemental readings from academic journals or news articles and occasional videos may be required as well; these will be included on the course website. You are expected to have completed all of the readings before the class for which they are listed.

Attendance, Participation, and Classroom Behavior

You are expected to attend all class meetings, as it is vital to receive the information given out in lectures. When in class, you are expected to be engaged in class and participating in any class discussions and group work. In addition, behavior that is detrimental to the classroom will not be tolerated. This includes comments that are disrespectful to fellow students, instructors, or other members of society. Furthermore, **use of electronic devices should remain relevant to the course.** To avoid the temptation, I recommend turning off or silencing phones and limiting use of tablets and laptops to taking notes.

Group Research Project (200 points; 40% of final grade)

Throughout the course, you will work on a group research project. It will conclude in an empirical research paper (due in Week 16) and a presentation to the class (during Week 16). In addition, you will need to complete a handful of group assignments during the course that relate to the research process. You are expected to complete a detailed outline of the group research paper as well (due in Week 13). Several days of the course will be dedicated Group Work Days. On these days the class period will be spent working on the group research project. You are expected to be in attendance on these days to contribute to your group. These days are marked on the course schedule. **Please note that for these days an unexcused absence can result in a deduction of 10 points from your grade.**

The Group Research Project is done in a group, but your grades will be individual. Thus, the starting point for your grade on the Group Research Project will be the same for all members of the group, but this will be

adjusted based on actual contributions to the project, which will be based on attendance and peer reviews of your work by your groupmates at the conclusion of the course. You will be assigned to groups in Week 3. At that time, I will provide you with more information on the Group Research Project.

A brief overview of the components of the project is included below:

Assignments (50 points; 10% of final grade)

The Group Research Project will involve some group assignments that are relevant to the research your group will conduct. This will include writing a literature review and completing some important steps in planning your group research. These assignments are expected to be completed as a group, meaning all members of the group should contribute to every assignment. These assignments are due to the **Blackboard dropbox** at the start of class on the day listed, with the exception of any "in-class" assignments, for which class time will be used to complete the assignment. The in-class assignment will be due on **Blackboard** at the end of class. See the calendar for a list of the due dates for these assignments. Information about the specifics of each assignment will be provided later.

Paper Outline (20 points; 4% of final grade)

Toward the end of the course, you will complete a detailed outline for the Group Research Paper that will serve as the first step in writing a full research paper. This will be due at the start of class on Friday, November 17. On that day, I will check in with each group to see that they are prepared to begin writing the paper. More information on the outline will be provided later.

Presentation (30 points; 6% of final grade)

Each group will be required to give a 15-minute presentation of their research project, which will include an explanation of the design, methods, data, and findings. This is expected to be similar to a presentation that would be given at a professional conference. After each group presentation, there will be five to ten minutes for questions from the class. Presentations will happen during the final week of the course, with two presentations per class period. The order of presentations will be determined at a later date. On presentation days, it is expected that everyone in the class will attend to support their classmates. **An unexcused absence on these days will result in a deduction of 10 points from the individual project grade.**

Paper (100 points; 20% of final grade)

The Group Research Project will conclude with a formally written research paper based on the research design, methods, data, and findings. The expected length for the paper is 15 to 20 double-spaced pages. Information about the specific content expectations of the paper will be provided later, but it is expected that many of the smaller components of the Group Research Project will contribute to the research paper. The paper will be due electronically on December 8 by 5pm PST. It will be submitted via **Blackboard**.

In-Class Assignments (75 points; 15% of final grade [up to 15 extra credit points available])

Throughout the course, there will be eleven (11) in-class assignments worth 8 points each (2 free points will be given to equal 90 available). These short assignments will serve as attendance and participation points. These short assignments will connect to the day's lecture, activity, guest speaker, or discussion. In order to receive these points, you will need to be in class on these days (see the **course schedule** for the list of days with in-class assignments). You can receive up to 90 points for these in-class assignments, meaning you can earn 15 extra credit points for the course.

Points for in-class assignments cannot be made up. If you miss class on these days for any reason, you will forfeit the opportunity to earn these points.

Depending on the resources of the students in the class, in-class assignments will be completed electronically or on paper. Regardless of the method of completion for these assignments, you will not be required to purchase any technology. In an effort to keep course costs down any technology used for student-instructor interaction will be free and open source.

Quizzes (50 points; 10% of final grade)

The course is divided into six Units. Near the end of each Unit there will be a brief 10-point quiz that covers the readings and lecture material for that Unit. There are a total of six quizzes, but only your best five scores will be counted toward your grade. You are strongly encouraged to attend on these days (see the **course schedule**) and take all six quizzes. Quizzes can be made up only with approved documentation and you need to inform me as soon as you can about the need to make up a quiz.

Exams (75 and 100 points; 15% and 20% of final grade)

There will be two exams for this course: a 75-point mid-term exam and a 100-point final exam. Each will consist of multiple choice questions and essays. The second exam is not cumulative, though it will naturally require you to demonstrate your understanding of concepts explored in the first half of the course as they provide the groundwork for later topics. Exams can be made up only with approved documentation.

GENERAL GRADING CRITERIA AND POLICIES

Grade Breakdown

In-Class Assignments	75 points	15%
Group Project		
Assignments	50 points	10%
Paper Outline	20 points	4%
Paper	100 points	20%
Presentation	30 points	6%
Quizzes (5 @ 10 points each)	50 points	10 %
Mid-Term Exam	75 points	15 %
Final Exam	100 points	20 %
Total	500 points	100 %

Grading Scale

465 – 500 points	A	400 – 419 points	B-	335 – 349 points	D+
450 – 464 points	A-	385 – 399 points	C+	300 – 334 points	D
435 – 449 points	B+	370 – 384 points	C	0 – 299 points	F
420 – 434 points	B	350 – 369 points	C-		

Timely Submission of Assignments

Specific due dates for each assignment are noted on the course calendar. **Late work will not be accepted.** All assignments are due at the beginning of class on their respective due dates, with the exception of “in-class assignments”, which will be due at the end of class on the days listed.

UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES

WSU Reasonable Accommodation Statement

Students with Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities or chronic medical conditions. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Access Center website to follow published procedures to request accommodations: <http://www.accesscenter.wsu.edu>. Students may also either call or visit the Access Center in person to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. Location: Washington Building 217; Phone: 509-335-3417. All disability related accommodations MUST be approved through the Access Center. Students with approved accommodations are strongly encouraged to visit with instructors early in the semester during office hours to discuss logistics.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of higher education. As such, all members of the university community share responsibility for maintaining and promoting the principles of integrity in all activities, including academic integrity and honest scholarship. Academic integrity will be strongly enforced in this course. Students who violate WSU's Academic Integrity Policy (identified in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 504-26-010(3) and -404) will receive academic sanctions appropriate to the severity of the violation, will not have the option to withdraw from the course pending an appeal, and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration as defined in the Standards of Conduct for Students, WAC 504-26-010(3). You need to read and understand all of the definitions of cheating: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=504-26-010>. If you have any questions about what is and is not allowed in this course, you should ask course instructors before proceeding.

If you wish to appeal a faculty member's decision relating to academic integrity, please use the form available at conduct.wsu.edu.

Respect for Others

This course is supposed to spark lively conversation on a diverse set of viewpoints and practices. Everyone in the course is expected to respect each other's thoughts in class by not cutting anyone off and not belittling *anyone* for a comment. If a hurtful or inappropriate comment is made, *the instructor will handle it according to class, departmental, and university policy*. Also, students cannot begin packing up while someone is talking or finishing a point before the end of class, as doing so is extremely disrespectful, annoying, and disruptive to the class. Likewise, students must turn off or silence all modes of electronic communication—for example, cell phones, pagers, and e-mail—prior to coming to class. If one of these or another mode of electronic communication in possession of a student rings or otherwise disrupts class, then that student may be asked to leave the class session immediately and not to return until the next class session.

Attendance Policy

Students who have not attended class meetings during the first week of the semester may be dropped from the course by the Sociology Department; students should not assume that they have been dropped without verification from the Sociology Department or Registrar's office. Students must submit an assignment prior to missing class. Student should not e-mail the instructor to ask whether they have missed something important from class during an absence, as everything covered in class will be important. If a student is absent, it is incumbent upon that student to find out from a classmate what he or she may have missed in class.

Adding or Dropping the Class

Students are encouraged to contact the Registrar's office for guidance on adding or dropping the class this semester. The Registrar can be contacted at 509- 335-5346 or registrar@wsu.edu.

Safety and Emergency Notification:

Classroom and campus safety are of paramount importance at Washington State University, and are the shared responsibility of the entire campus population. WSU urges students to follow the "Alert, Assess, Act," protocol for all types of emergencies and the "[Run, Hide, Fight](#)" response for an active shooter incident. Remain ALERT (through direct observation or emergency notification), ASSESS your specific situation, and ACT in the most appropriate way to assure your own safety (and the safety of others if you are able).

Please sign up for emergency alerts on your account at MyWSU. For more information on this subject, campus safety, and related topics, please view the [FBI's Run, Hide, Fight video](#) and visit the [WSU safety portal](#).

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Note: Calendar may change throughout the semester. You will be notified of any changes.

Unit	Date	Topic/Agenda	Readings	Quiz, Exam, & Assignment dates	Code	
	Week 1					
	Mon, Aug 21	Syllabus, Introductions, and Expectations				
Unit One: Background to Social Research	Wed, Aug 23	Introduction	Dixon 1 (p 1-13)			
	Fri, Aug 25	Science and Social Research	Dixon 2 (p 14-37)	In-class assignment	ICA	
	Week 2					
	Mon, Aug 28	The Ethics and Politics of Research & IRB		Dixon 3 (p 38-72)		
	Wed, Aug 30	Ethics Videos and Discussion			In-class assignment	
	Fri, Sept 1	Research Designs		Dixon 4 (p 73-102)		
	Week 3					
	Mon, Sept 4	NO CLASS (Labor Day)				
	Wed, Sept 6	Research Questions			In-class assignment	ICA
Fri, Sept 8	Research Designs/Questions			Quiz #1 (Unit 1)	Q	
	Week 4					
Unit Two: First Steps in the Research Process	Mon, Sept 11	Locating and Reading Social Research		Dixon 14 (p 428-35)	In-class assignment	
	Wed, Sept 13	Measurement		Dixon 5 (p 103-36)		
	Fri, Sept 15	Measurement			In-class assignment	ICA
	Week 5					
	Mon, Sept 18	Group Work Day: Research Designs*				Research Design assignment due
	Wed, Sept 20	Sampling		Dixon 6 (p 137-72)		
	Fri, Sept 22	Sampling			Quiz #2 (Unit 2)	Q
	Week 6					
	Mon, Sept 25	Sampling Activity			In-class assignment	ICA
Wed, Sept 27	Experiments		Dixon 7 (p 173-203)			
Fri, Sept 29	NO CLASS (WSU vs. USC football game)					
Unit Three: Common Methods of Social Research	Week 7					
	Mon, Oct 2	Surveys		Dixon 8 (p 204-41)	Literature Review due	
	Wed, Oct 4	Surveys				
	Fri, Oct 6	Field Research and In-Depth Interviews		Dixon 9 (p 242-87)		
	Week 8					
	Mon, Oct 9	Field Research and In-Depth Interviews			Quiz #3 (Unit 3)	Q
	Wed, Oct 11	Guest Speaker on Surveys and Interviews			In-class assignment	ICA
	Fri, Oct 13	Group Work Day: Decide on Method and Plan*			Data Collection Plan in-class assignment	GRP

	Week 9				
Unit Four: Other Methods of Social Research	Mon, Oct 16 Mid-term Exam		Exam #1	E	
	Wed, Oct 18 Existing Data Analysis	Dixon 10 (p 282-327)			
	Fri, Oct 20 Existing Data Analysis		Data Collection Procedure assignment due	GRP	
	Week 10				
	Mon, Oct 23 Multiple Methods	Dixon 11 (p 328-51)			
	Wed, Oct 25 Multiple Methods				
	Fri, Oct 27 Multiple Methods		Quiz #4 (Unit 4)	Q	
Unit Five: Data Analysis	Week 11				
	Mon, Oct 30 Quantitative Data Analysis	Dixon 12 (p 352-94)			
	Wed, Nov 1 Quantitative Data Analysis		In-class assignment	ICA	
	Fri, Nov 3 Qualitative Data Analysis	Dixon 13 (p 395-427)			
	Week 12				
	Mon, Nov 6 Qualitative Data Analysis		In-class assignment	ICA	
	Wed, Nov 8 Writing in Social Research	Dixon 14 (p 435-46)	Quiz #5 (Unit 5)	Q	
	Fri, Nov 10 NO CLASS (Veterans Day)				
Unit Six: Special Topics in Social Research Methods	Week 13				
	Mon, Nov 13 Special Topic	TBD			
	Wed, Nov 15 Special Topic	TBD		ICA	
	Fri, Nov 17 Group Work Day: Paper*		Research Paper Outline due	GRP	
	Week 14				
	Nov 20-24 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)				
	Week 15				
	Mon, Nov 27 Special Topic	TBD		In-class assignment	ICA
	Wed, Nov 29 Special Topic	TBD		Quiz #6 (Unit 6)	Q
	Fri, Dec 1 Group Work Day: Presentation*				GRP
Week 16					
	Mon, Dec 4 Group Presentations*			GRP	
	Wed, Dec 6 Group Presentations*			GRP	
	Fri, Dec 8 Group Presentations*		Research Paper due at 5pm	GRP	
	Thurs, Dec 14 FINAL EXAM at 12:10pm		Exam #2	E	

Notes: *10 points deducted from individual Group Research Project grade for unexcused absence on these days

ICA: In-Class Assignment; **GRP:** Group Research Project; **Q:** Quiz; **E:** Exam