
Soc 304: Research Methods

Fall 2011
MW 3:30-4:25
Johnson 208

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Welcome to Sociological Research Methods

CLASS DESCRIPTION

What would the world be like if all questions were answered and all problems solved, it would be a world without scope for the imagination or depth for the soul.

– Barbara Michaels

Other classes you have taken, both in Sociology and other disciplines, had the goal of teaching you *what we know*. In this class, you will learn *how we know* what we know. We will look at the ways sociologists collect information about social phenomena with a special emphasis on what can be done to yield information that is trustworthy and useful for our theoretical understanding of social life. It assumes no background in research methods or statistics. We will talk about the scientific method, the complexities of applying methods to social research, ethics and bias, and research design. You will also learn about major "quantitative" and "qualitative" methodologies and have opportunities to try out these methods.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Attendance/Participation/Pop Quizzes:	100	25
Exploring Your Idea:	20	10
Literature Review Segments:		
Search Plan	20	10
"Hole" in Literature	20	10
Research Question	20	10
Draft of Literature Review	40	20
Methodology:		
Sample	20	10
Ethics	20	10
Operationalization	20	10
Research Instrument	20	10
Final Research Proposal:	100	25
Total	400	100

REQUIRED READING

Textbook. *Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation* by Daniel Chambliss and Russell Schutt. Available at the Occidental College Bookstore.

Course Reader. The course reader can be accessed through Moodle (<http://moodle.oxy.edu/>).

COURSE POLICIES

- *Office Hours:* I encourage you to make an appointment outside of office hours or come by my office anytime. I am happy to discuss class concepts, college more generally, musings about majors, future planning, or graduate school.
- *Feedback:* I love getting feedback on my teaching and how the class is going. I value your input and I am willing to make changes to the class according to your preferences. Please share with me any comments, suggestions, and ideas you may have, and help me make this a great class. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can type and print out a note and drop it in my mailbox in South Swan Trailer D.
- *Class Demeanor:* As a student at Occidental and as a member of this class you must hold yourself and your peers to the highest standards of civil engagement and discourse. Chatting with your neighbor is frowned upon when I am lecturing, and it is absolutely impermissible when other students are trying to participate. While we may find ourselves disagreeing, we must do so with respect, a commitment to hearing what others have to say, and a willingness to think and rethink our own positions. Personal insults have no place in the college classroom.
- *Special Accommodations/Learning Differences:* If you require some special assistance for classes/exams, please let me know as soon as possible. Responsibility for alerting me to the disability and making the proper arrangements are your responsibility, but I will do whatever I can to help. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes a learning disability, I encourage you to contact the friendly folks over at the Center for Academic Excellence (-2849).
- *Accessibility:* I want my course to be as accessible to as many different people as possible. If there is any reason why the standard approach to college classrooms or coursework is difficult for you to accomplish, please come talk to me about it. This includes those of you with a learning or physical disability (as discussed above), those of you who have other emotional or psychological challenges, those of you who have had past experiences that make discussing gender anxiety-producing (and you may be surprised as the course continues), those of you whose parents did not go to college (and can't help you understand the system as well as other parents might), those of you who are too shy to actively participate, those of you who have more responsibility than the typical college student (such as dependent parents, children, or an especially heavy work-load outside of school), and other situations I can't anticipate. The earlier you come to see me, the more I can do to try to work with you to alleviate the unique disadvantages you might face. I prefer that you come in the first two weeks but, if you do not and you decide you would like to, please do not hesitate to come to me at any time.

COURSE POLICIES (CONTINUED)

- *Grading Inquires*: All inquires/disagreements regarding grades will be handled during my office hours or at another mutually agreeable time.
- *Make-up Exams*: Make-up exams will generally not be given without appropriate official documentation excusing the absence. Bring documentation with you to my office when you inquire about a make-up. For those students with an excused absence, a research paper may be assigned in place of the exam.
- *Assignments*: All Papers/assignments must be handed in at the scheduled time and by the assigned mode. Late assignments are docked ½ grade per day. Computer and printing problems are not a good excuse for missing a deadline; make sure to print your papers early to avoid any such problems. Keep a paper and electronic copy of everything you hand in until you receive your course grade.
- *Academic Integrity*: Academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, will be taken very seriously. If you are not sure about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please see me as soon as possible. A description of Occidental's academic ethics policies is available in the Student Handbook and on the following webpage: <http://departments.oxy.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/academic.policies/>
- *Flexibility*: This syllabus only provides an approximate schedule for the course. I will discuss changes to the syllabus in class. It is your responsibility to keep up to date on class events and requirements. In addition, I reserve the right to give in-class quizzes on the readings if necessary (and re-calculate the distribution of graded material in accordance with this change).

LETTER GRADES

Letter grades in this class have the following meaning:

- A *Outstanding performance*. You have demonstrated very thorough knowledge and understanding of all the material, truly superior critical thinking, and expressed insightful and original thoughts clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been among the best in the class.
- B *Good performance*. You have demonstrated solid knowledge and understanding of the material and good critical thinking. You have also shown the ability to express your ideas clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been of good quality.
- C *Satisfactory performance*. You have demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of the major concepts taught in the class and some critical thinking. You have completed all or most of the required assignments and they have routinely been free of significant problems.
- D *Deficient performance*. You have only acquired a limited understanding of the class material. You have failed to complete all the required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.
- F *Failure*. You have failed to learn a sufficient proportion of the basic concepts and ideas taught in the class. You have failed to complete many required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, Aug. 31st – Introduction

No readings.

Monday, Sept. 5th – No Class

Wednesday, Sept. 7th – What is Sociology?

- Group 1: Wade, *The Social Control of Mothers*
Group 2: Sharp and Wade, *What is “Indian Art”?*
Group 3: Wade and Sharp, *Skull Face and the Self-Fulfilling Stereotype*
Group 4: Sharp and Wade, *Social Struggle and the American Mustang*
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Monday, Sept. 12th – What are Sociological Research Methods?

- All: C&S, *Chapter 1: Science, Society, and Social Research* (all)
C&S, *Chapter 2: The Process and Problems of Social Research* (pp. 21-31)
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Methods Workshop

Wednesday, Sept. 14th – Content Analysis

- All: Neuendorf, *Defining Content Analysis*
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Monday, Sept. 19th – Content Analysis

- All: Wade, *Defining Gendered Oppression*
Group 1: Zurbriggen & Sherman, *Race and Gender in the 2008 US Presidential Election*
Group 2: Pruitt & Krull, *Escort Advertisements and Male Patronage of Prostitutes*
Group 3: Malone et al., *Science in the News*
Group 4: Kuperberg & Stone, *The Media Depiction of Women Who Opt Out*
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Wednesday, Sept. 21st – Content Analysis

- All: C&S, *Chapter 4: Conceptualization and Measurement* (pp. 73-79)
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Monday, Sept. 26th – Surveys

- Guest Lecture: Jeffrey Sacha
All: C&S, *Chapter 4: Conceptualization and Measurement* (pp. 79-101)
C&S, *Chapter 5: Sampling* (all)
C&S, *Chapter 7: Survey Research* (all)
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Wednesday, Sept. 28th – Surveys

- All: Wade, *The Incidental Orgasm*
Group 1: Tuch & Hughes, *Whites' Racial Policy Attitudes in the Twenty-First Century*
Group 2: Freese et al., *Rebel without a Cause or Effect*
Group 3: Hannon, *Race, Victim Precipitated Homicide, and the Subculture of Violence Thesis*
Group 4: Ellison et al., *Gender, Marital Status, and Alcohol Behavior*
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Monday, Oct. 3rd – Surveys

- Homework: TBA
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Wednesday, Oct. 5th – Interviews

Guest Lecture: Danielle Dirks, PhD

All: C&S, *Chapter 9: Qualitative Methods* (pp. 221-223, 235-244)

Monday, Oct. 10th – Interviews

All: Wade, *The Politics of Acculturation*

Group 1: Eck, *Nudity and Framing*

Group 2: Edin, *What Do Low-Income Single Mothers Say about Marriage?*

Group 3: Wilkins, *Puerto Rican Wannabes*

Group 4: Weinberg & Williams, *Fecal Matters*

Wednesday, Oct. 12th – Interviews

Homework: TBA

Monday, Oct. 17th – No Class

Wednesday, Oct. 19th – Participant Observation

Guest Lecture: Richard Mora, PhD

All: C&S, *Chapter 9: Qualitative Methods* (pp. 223-235)

Monday, Oct. 24th – Participant Observation

All: Wade, *The Emancipatory Promise of the Habitus*

Group 1: Desmond, *Becoming a Firefighter*

Group 2: Salzinger, *Manufacturing Sexual Subjects*

Group 3: Warren, *Pride, Shame and Stigma in Private Spaces*

Group 4: Dordick, *More than a Refuge*

Wednesday, Oct. 26th – No Class

Monday, Oct. 31st – Participant Observation

Homework: TBA

Writing A Research Proposal

Wednesday, Nov. 2nd – Picking a Research Question

All: Graff & Birkenstein, *Introduction*

Graff & Birkenstein, *“They Say”*

Monday, Nov. 7th – Reviewing the Literature

Guest Lecture: Krystale Littlejohn

All: C&S, *Chapter 12: Reviewing, Proposing, and Reporting Research* (pp. 312-325)

C&S, *Appendix A: Finding Information* (all)

DUE: ♦ EXPLORING YOUR IDEA and SEARCH PLAN

Wednesday, Nov. 9th – Reviewing the Literature

No class; individual meetings in office hours.

Monday, Nov. 14th – Reviewing the Literature

No readings.

DUE: ♦ “HOLE” IN THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Wednesday, Nov. 16th – Reviewing the Literature

No class; individual meetings in office hours.

Monday, Nov. 21st – Designing the Methodology

All: *C&S, Chapter 3: Ethics in Research (all)*
 ASA Code of Ethics

Optional: *C&S, Chapter 8: Elementary Quantitative Data Analysis*
 C&S, Chapter 10: Qualitative Data Analysis
 C&S, Appendix B: Secondary Data Sources

DUE: ♦ DRAFT OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Wednesday, Nov. 23rd – No Class

No readings.

DUE: ♦ SAMPLE

Monday, Nov. 28th – Designing the Methodology

No readings.

DUE: ♦ ETHICS

Wednesday, Nov. 30th – Designing the Methodology

No readings.

DUE: ♦ OPERATIONALIZATION

Monday, Dec. 5th – Designing the Methodology

No class; individual meetings in office hours.

Wednesday, Dec. 7th – Closing Thoughts

No readings.

DUE: ♦ RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

TBA – Final Exam Hour

NOTE: ♦ FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL (AT START OF THE FINAL EXAM PERIOD)

PLAGIARISM PRIMER¹

Introduction

Plagiarism is a form of cheating that constitutes the academic equivalent of theft. A student who plagiarizes a paper is no different from one who looks at a fellow student's answer during an exam or who copies homework answers from a classmate.

Exactly What IS Plagiarism?

The definition below is taken from *Avoiding Plagiarism—A Guide for Students* on the University of Oregon website:

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes or parenthetical citations that lead to complete references at the end of the paper... On written assignments, verbatim statements from other sources must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented block quotes [such as this one], and full credit must be given via citation. Failure to follow these guidelines constitutes plagiarism (University of Oregon 2006).

Even if all sources in the paper are properly quoted, paraphrased, cited and referenced, the following actions still constitute plagiarism:

- Copying an entire paper or sections of a paper from internet sites providing pre-written assignments, either for purchase or for free
- Copying sections from internet sources and inserting them into an assignment, unless the source is clearly cited (see the example above)
- Borrowing or stealing a paper written by someone else for a current or previous course
- Hiring someone else to complete an assignment and then putting your name on it
- Submitting an assignment completed by someone else, for any reason
- Completing an assignment for someone else for that person to turn in as his or her own

Types of Plagiarism

In *The Art of Public Speaking* Stephen E. Lucas (2004) identifies three distinct types of plagiarism:

- Global plagiarism: stealing an entire paper word-for-word from another source and passes it off as his or her own. Lucas calls this “the most blatant—and unforgivable—kind of plagiarism” and refers to it as “grossly unethical” (p. 43).
- Patchwork plagiarism: copying sections of a paper word-for-word from several sources and then fitting them together into a whole paper. Lucas describes this as “essentially a cut-and-paste job of ideas and words that are not your own” (p. 45). This is cheating.

- Incremental plagiarism: failing to give credit for specific parts or “increments” of the paper that were borrowed from other sources. A fair amount of plagiarism among college students falls into this category. You will save yourself a lot of trouble if you remember that any time you quote or paraphrase a source, you are obliged to credit the original source.

Does That Mean I Should Include a Citation for Every Single Fact in My Paper?

No, it doesn't. Citation is not required for information that is considered common knowledge. Common knowledge has been defined as “facts, dates, events, information, and concepts that belong generally to an educated public. No individual owns the facts about history, physics, social behavior, geography, current events, popular culture, and so on” (Hairston and Ruszkiewicz 1993: 614).

Regarding common knowledge, an article titled *Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It* on Indiana University's website provides two examples. Here's the first:

John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.

This information is considered general knowledge; it is not necessary to document this fact. However, facts not generally known and ideas or opinions that interpret facts must always be cited. Here's the second example:

According to the American Family Leave Coalition's new book, *Family Issues and Congress*, President Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation (p. 6).

This idea that Bush's “relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation” is **not** a fact. It is an opinion, and the source of this opinion must be cited (Indiana University 2006).

How Can I Avoid Plagiarism?

Students tend to run into problems with plagiarism when they fail to quote sources properly. When you use someone else's words, you quote that person. Any use of someone else's exact words must be placed inside quotation marks or indented in a block quote (see examples above). The source of the quote must be clearly documented with a citation in the text (including page number of the quote in the original) and a full reference of the source in either a footnote or a references page at the end of the paper. *Failure to cite a direct quote, both in the text and in a reference page (or footnote) is plagiarism.*

Let's look at an example of correct documentation. Here is an original source:

Buddhadasa's conception of human beings as active controllers of their own material and spiritual progress is most clearly presented in his view of

work as integrating both social and spiritual activity. –Peter Jackson, *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*, p. 200.

Here is how a student properly cited this source when used in a paper:

Jackson (1988) wrote, “Buddhadasa’s conception of human beings as active controllers of their own material and spiritual progress is most clearly presented in his view of work as integrating both social and spiritual activity” (p. 200).

To avoid plagiarism when quoting a source, you must do four things:

- Accurately quote the original author’s words (that is, be sure you have not changed any words or left out words without using ellipses—the three periods that indicate missing text)
- Enclose the quotation within quotation marks or indent the quotation into a block quote
- Follow each quotation with a citation of the page number, like this: (p. 200)
- Provide a full reference of all citations either in a footnote or a references page at the end of the paper

Students also often encounter problems when they fail to paraphrase sources properly. Whenever you use someone else’s ideas but put them into your own words you are paraphrasing that source. Although the words are yours, the ideas come from another source—that is, you did not think of them on your own—and that source must be documented with an in-text citation in parentheses and a reference in the bibliography at the end of the paper. *Failure to do so is plagiarism.*

Let’s look at an example of correct paraphrasing and citation. The following is the original source:

If the existence of a signing ape was unsettling for linguists, it was also startling news for animal behaviorists. –Flora Davis, *Eloquent Animals: A Study in Animal Communication*, p. 26.

Here is how a student correctly paraphrased and cited the original:

According to Flora Davis (1988), linguists and animal behaviorists were unprepared for the news that an ape could communicate with its trainers through sign language (p. 26).

To avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing you must do three things:

- Create a distinct sentence structure that is appreciably different from the original work (paraphrasing does **not** mean merely changing a couple of words from the original text)
- Check the paraphrasing carefully against the original text, making sure the same words or phrases have not been used inadvertently

- Acknowledge the source through correct in-text citation and a reference in the bibliography

Examples: Is It Plagiarism?

Here is a passage from a master's thesis by Diane Rousseau:

Tobacco use is a costly destructive behaviour in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs. Thus, many non-profit groups and government agencies world-wide have turned to social marketing to try to reduce the incidence of smoking. Social marketing has been viewed as a force for change and is defined as “the application of the logic of marketing to societal goals” (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971, p. 3). Governments have actively tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette advertising, by providing legislation to control smoking and by issuing public service advertisements. –Rousseau, Diane. 1996. *Effectiveness of Fear Appeals in Anti-Smoking Advertisements*. Unpublished master's thesis. Concordia University, Montreal.

Compare that passage to the paragraph below, submitted by a student as part of a research paper:

Tobacco use is a costly destructive behavior in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs. This is the reason many non-profit groups (such as the “Truth” campaign) have turned to social marketing to try to reduce smoking. Governments have tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette ads, banning smoking in public buildings, and by issuing public service announcements.

Is this plagiarism? Absolutely. Other than making a few superficial changes (such as changing the spelling of “behaviour” to the American spelling and substituting “announcements” for “advertisements” in the last sentence) and adding a small aside about the “Truth” campaign, the student copied Rousseau's exact words without giving her credit. This is one of the most egregious forms of plagiarism: theft of someone else's words and ideas without making it clear whose they are.

Some students mistakenly think they can use a source's exact words without quotation marks as long as they provide some type of credit at the beginning or end of the paragraph. Suppose, for example, the plagiarist above had written the following:

Rousseau (1996) said tobacco use is a costly destructive behavior in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs.

Is that plagiarism? Yes. Although the student gave proper credit to the source at the beginning of the passage, the exact words of the source were not enclosed in quotation marks. *This is plagiarism.*

What if the student included a citation in parentheses at the end of the passage, like this:

Governments have tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette ads, banning smoking in public buildings, and by issuing public service advertisements (Rousseau 1996).

Is that plagiarism? Yes, it is. Again, though credit is given to the author, the exact words are still not enclosed in quotation marks. *This is plagiarism.*

Providing References

Purdue University (2006) cautions students to cite a source whenever they do any of the following:

- Use quotation marks around another persons exact words, whether spoken or written
- Use another person’s words as the basis for their own words (paraphrasing)
- Build their ideas around another person’s ideas, opinions, or theories
- Refer to facts, statistics, graphs, or information not considered common knowledge

Plagiarism and the Internet

Indiana University (2006) recognizes that the internet has made plagiarism easier for students who would rather take the easy way out or who don’t know any better. The IU website acknowledges that the web “has become a more popular source of information for student papers, and many questions have arisen about how to avoid plagiarizing these sources.” The rule is simple: If you would cite material taken from a book, journal, or other source, you must cite the same material when it is taken from an internet source.

Selecting vast sections of text from one or more websites, pasting them into a document, and then slapping a title and your name on the top is beyond a doubt plagiarism—and the worst kind, global plagiarism. It is also extremely easy for professors to catch. Don’t take the risk.

What Will Happen to Me If I Plagiarize and Get Caught?

All suspected cases of plagiarism are reported to the Committee on Academic Standing and Student Conduct. At this stage, the Judicial Examiner takes over investigation of the charge. If the student is found guilty, the student will receive a mandatory penalty.

There is no discretion (i.e. leniency for special circumstances) on the part of the professor, the Judicial Examiner, or the committee. These can be found here:

<http://departments.oxy.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/academic.policies/sanctions.html>

¹ Modified from “A Primer on Plagiarism” (unpublished manuscript) by Paul Husselbee, Department of Communications at Southern Utah University, with permission of the author.

Syllabus Acknowledgement Contract

For: Sociological Research Methods with Lisa Wade, PhD

- I have read and understand the requirements for completion of this course.
- I know the test and/or assignment dates specified in the syllabus and understand that a documented medical emergency or prior consent of the instructor are the only reasons I may be allowed to make up for a missed deadline.
- I have read and understand the course policies.
 - I promise not to engage in academic misconduct of any sort.
 - I have read and understand the Plagiarism Primer.
- I know that I should contact the instructor for all course-related concerns.

Name (Print):

Date: _____

Signature:
