

**Sociology 365
Research Methods**

Fall 2020

Tuesdays and Thursdays, remotely

SOC 365: 1-2:15 pm

Zoom link: <https://olemiss.zoom.us/j/94461455355>

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Student/office hours: by appointment (via Zoom, phone, walking)

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Welcome to remote pandemic learning. The pandemic is creating new challenges for all of us. These are difficult times. Remote learning may not be everyone's choice, especially now, and especially when it comes to learning methods. Given that we find ourselves in this situation, we will do our best to make your learning possible and enjoyable. As this is new to all of us, think of it as an experiment. Its successful outcome depends on us communicating well. Do not hesitate to reach out to me or to the TA by email if issues arise. You are welcome to schedule individual meetings with one of us via Zoom, phone, or in person outdoors while walking. As a class, we will use GroupMe too.

Zoom appears to be the technological savior of the day. We will have regular class meetings via Zoom. This means that you will need and reliable internet access. People can attend Zoom meetings by phone too if needed on occasion.

Blackboard will become our new best friend. Assignment and homework submission will take place on Blackboard. We will have a Blackboard discussion board too for additional questions or comments. Announcements will be posted on Blackboard. Copies of announcements should be sent to you by email too. Make sure to regularly check Blackboard and familiarize yourself with its functionality.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

After completing this course, students should: 1) be knowledgeable about the diverse goals and strategies of social research, 2) understand fundamentals of how to formulate, conduct, present, and write up their own social research, and 3) develop knowledge of ethical reasoning and standards in the social sciences.

Required Text:

Dixon, Jeffrey C., Royce A. Singleton, and Bruce C. Straits. 2016. *The Process of Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-994675-4 [a.k.a, "DSS"]

*Additional readings will be available as PDF on Blackboard.

Assignments:

- ▶ **Attendance/Homework/Participation (20%)**
- ▶ **Exam 1 (20%)**
- ▶ **Field Report (20%)**
- ▶ **Exam 2 (20%)**
- ▶ **Comparative Study (20%)**

Class **attendance, homework, and participation** are more important than the 20% they count toward your grade. Students who come to class regularly, who keep up with the readings, complete homework assignments, and who take an active part in their learning by contributing questions, comments, and observations to class discussions tend to know the course material better, and therefore tend to get better grades on assignments. In the remote learning plan, attendance and participation will consist of joining synchronous Zoom meetings and contributing to discussions. We will also have a Blackboard discussion board, contributions to which will count as participation too. Homework will be collected through Blackboard as well.

The **two exams** will feature short answer and/or essay questions. In these exams I will be looking for evidence that you recognize and understand key concepts from the readings, lectures, and in-class discussions. Exam questions will cover material from in-class activities as well as all assigned readings. *Tips: Don't wait for the last minute to catch up on reading. Taking notes on readings is better than just highlighting text. The study site for the DSS book also has helpful materials: <http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199946754/>* The exams will be administered on Blackboard. Students will have 90 minutes to complete each exam. The exam-taking window will be open for 48 hours.

The **field report** will include fieldnotes based on your own observations of a familiar field site you have access to that may have been affected by the current pandemic, the coding of these fieldnotes, and analysis of themes emerging from your observations. For the **comparative study**, you will write a research question, find citations to relevant research, find and analyze data, and write up your results. Students will give presentations of the preliminary results of their research during a mini-conference at the end of the semester. For both of these papers, we will have in-class workshop sessions and other intermediate goals and assignments that lead up to the completed papers. These intermediate assignments will be included as part of the overall grade for the papers. *Tips: Plan ahead so you have time to revise your papers, as this will improve your writing and your grade. A well-written paper should also "read" well, aloud.*

Format for written work:

Both papers have a standard **format**: typed in 12-point standard black font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Papers should be submitted through Blackboard. Page length will be specified in the assignment. Save your work early and often to avoid losing your research.

Other required assignments:

There are also three non-graded yet required assignments for this course: 1) successful completion of the **online training program** in research ethics, and 2) and 3) successful completion of **Student Class Project Applications (IRB forms)** for Human Subjects protection, to be approved by the course instructor for each research assignment. More information will be given in class.

Grading:

100%-93: A	82-80: B-	69-67: D+
92-90: A-	79-77: C+	66-63: D
89-87: B+	76-73: C	62-0: F
86-83: B	72-70: C-	

Course Policies

Academic integrity:

The University of Mississippi Creed affirms the values of “personal and professional integrity” as well as “academic honesty.” In the context of a class, this refers most specifically to an injunction against cheating and plagiarism. **Plagiarism** involves taking someone else’s written work (any portion of it) and turning it in as your own. This includes taking text from course readings without proper citation. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please talk to me so I can help clarify this for you. If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing there will be consequences, up to and including failing the course and being reported to the Dean for disciplinary action.

Accommodations:

If you have a disability and would like an accommodation, please let me know so I can help you. Accommodations must be verified by the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) before they can be provided, so it is a good idea to start the process early in the semester. The SDS website is <http://sds.olemiss.edu>. They can be reached at (662) 915-7128. Their office is in 234 Martindale.

Course Schedule

(Note: The schedule might change. If it does, I will give you an update.)

Week 1

T 8/25 Introductions

Th 8/27 What is Social Research?

Required readings:

DSS, Ch. 1, pp. 1-13 (13).

* Ragin, Charles, *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method*, Northwestern University, Pine Forge, Thousand Oaks, 1994, pp. 31-54. (PDF on Blackboard).

► **Exercise 1, p. 13 in DSS is due.**

Week 2

T 9/1 The Process of Social Research

Required readings:

DSS, Ch. 2, pp. 14-37 (23).

► **Exercise 1, p. 36-7 in DSS is due.**

Th 9/3 Causality and Experiments

Required readings:

DSS, Ch. 7, pp. 173-203 (30).

► **Exercise 1 and 3, p. 201-2 in DSS is due.**

► **Justification for research site for field study is due.**

Week 3

T 9/8 Research Design

Required readings:

DSS, Ch. 4, pp. 73-102 (29).

► **Exercise 3 (a) or (b), p. 101-2 in DSS is due.**

► **Visit the library website, follow all the links, and come up with a question or two to ask a librarian.**

Th 9/10 Reading and Writing Social Research

Required readings:

DSS, Ch. 14, pp. 428-446 (18).

► **Review questions 2, 3, and 6, p. 445-6 in DSS is due.**

► **Research topic, question, and justification for comparative study are due.**

Week 4

T 9/15 Measurement

Required readings:

DSS, Ch. 5, pp. 103-136 (33).

► **Annotated bibliography for comparative study, part 1 (3 references), is due.**

Th 9/17 Research Ethics

Required readings:

DSS, Ch. 3, pp. 38-72 (34).

► **Online ethics training is due: take a snapshot of the screen indicating you passed the test.**

Week 5

T 9/22 **Exam 1**

Th 9/24 Field Research

DSS, Ch. 9, pp. 242-6, 257-263, 266-274, 287(#3) (21).

► **IRB for field research is due.**

Week 6

T 9/29 Qualitative Research

DSS, rest of Ch. 9, pp. 247-256, 263-5, 274-287 (27).

► **Exercise 2, p. 286-7 in DSS is due (involves reading another article!).**

Th 10/1 Qualitative Data Analysis

DSS, Ch. 13, pp. 395-427 (32).

► **Exercise: Box 13.2, p.414-5 in DSS is due (involves reading another article!).**

► **Bring your fieldnotes, part 1.**

► **Download and install qualitative analysis software before class.**

Week 7

T 10/6 Workshop Day

► **Bring your fieldnotes, part 2.**

Th 10/8 Peer-Review Session

► **Field report is due.**

Week 8

T 10/13 Survey Research

DSS, Ch. 8, pp. 204-241 (37).

► **Annotated bibliography for comparative study, part 2 (3 additional references), is due.**

Th 10/15 Sampling and Populations
DSS, Ch. 6, pp. 137-172 (35).

▶ **Exercise 2, p.170-1 in DSS is due.**

Week 9

T 10/20 Comparative Methods
DSS, Ch. 10, pp. 288-327 (39).

▶ **Review question 1, p.325 in DSS is due.**

Th 10/22 Multiple Methods
DSS, Ch. 11, pp. 328-351 (23).

▶ **Exercise 3, p.350-1 in DSS is due.**

Week 10

T 10/27 **Exam 2**

T-F 10/27-30 Comparative study outline

*Tilly, Charles. 2004. "Observations of Social Processes and Their Formal Representations."
Sociological Theory, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 595-602.

▶ **Get help from your professor during an individual meeting.**

▶ **IRB for comparative study and comparative study outline (concept map) are due.**

Week 11

T 11/3 Quantitative Data
DSS, Ch. 12, pp. 352-368 (17).

▶ **Problem set is due.**

Th 11/5 Quantitative Data Analysis
DSS, Ch. 12, pp. 369-380 (12).

▶ **Problem set is due.**

Week 12

T 11/10 Multivariate Testing
DSS, Ch. 12, pp. 381-394 (12).

▶ **Problem set is due.**

Th 11/12 Research day

Week 13

T 11/17 Mini-Conference

▶ **Comparative study presentation is due.**

Presentations can be recorded via Zoom, saved on one's computer, and uploaded online (on YouTube, etc.). A link to the presentation should be posted on Blackboard.

Finals week

F 11/20 Comparative study peer review

▶ **Comparative study peer reviews are due.**

T 11/24 Comparative study report (no in-class exam)

▶ **Comparative study is due.**