

## **Sociology 302: Strategies of Social Research**

### **On-Demand Course**

**On-Demand Office Website:** [www.wku.edu/ondemand](http://www.wku.edu/ondemand)

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### **Professor's Contact Information:**

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Office Location: Grise Hall Room 119

Office Hours: By appointment

Technological Problems, Questions, or Issues: please call 270-745-7000

- If you experience any technological problems, please contact the WKU IT-Help-Desk at 270-745-7000. The Help Desk has qualified and talented individuals who can assist you with all of your technologically related questions, issues, or problems.
- If you have specific questions about course content, please send me an e-mail.

### **Course Description:**

This course will expose you to the types of research methods sociologists use to gather and analyze data and the strengths and limitations associated with each method. Similar to traditional research methods classes, we will discuss the following topics: the social research process, measurement, sample design and censuses, association and causation, research design, survey research, qualitative research design, content analysis, evaluation research, historical/comparative research, experimental research, the ethical issues associated with the research process, and the reviewing and reporting of research.

### **Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course students shall be able to:

- Explain the research cycle and discuss how it informs the use of inductive and deductive approaches and the use of qualitative and quantitative methods in the conduct of research
- Distinguish the factors that determine the extent of measurement validity, generalizability, and causality in a research design using quantitative and qualitative methodologists
- Compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of various research methodologies used in sociology and criminology
- Discuss the importance of ethics and professionalism in the research process.

### **Required Textbook:**

Amy Blackstone (2012) *Principles of Sociological Inquiry*. Flat World Knowledge.

- I have selected this online textbook for this course because it is VERY affordable. Most research methods textbooks in the social sciences cost between \$70 and \$149. However, as you will see below, you can access this online textbook for as little as \$24.
  - <https://students.flatworldknowledge.com/course/2433685>
- Students have several options to access the textbook, and you will have to pick the option that fits your needs and your price. I have outlined the different options below, along with the price charged by the publisher. To purchase one of these options, simply click on the link above. \
  - Study Pass (\$24): gives students access to the online textbook. Students may highlight and take notes using the online textbook.

- All Access Pass (\$49): gives students access to the complete textbook in eReader formats and PDF downloads of textbook chapters. The All Access Pass also provides students with access to the online textbook that is available under the Study Pass cited above
- Printed Black & White Copy (\$89): The publisher will mail a black and white, printed copy of the textbook to your home. This option also includes access to the online (Study Pass) and eBooks (listed in the All Access Pass)
- Printed Color Textbook (\$139): The publisher will mail a color, printed copy of the textbook to your home. This option also includes access to the online text (under the Study Pass).

### **Structure of this online course:**

As an online course, you will be expected to do most of the work independently, but not without some guidance and help. The entire course will be administered through WKU's Blackboard System: <http://ecourses.wku.edu>. You will complete 15 lessons in the course. Each lesson will require you to complete some assigned reading the textbook, to watch some video lectures that I have recorded, and to complete a short quiz based on the assigned reading. You will also complete four small projects, three non-cumulative take home examinations, and one cumulative final exam that must be completed in a proctored setting.

### **Grading:**

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

• Take Home Exam # 1:	100 points (10% of final grade)
• Take Home Exam # 2:	100 points (10% of final grade)
• Take Home Exam # 3:	100 points (10% of final grade)
• Four Small Projects:	200 points (20% of final grade; 4 projects - 50 points each)
• Chapter Quizzes:	300 points (30% of final grade; 15 quizzes – 20 points each)
• Proctored Final Exam:	200 points (20% of final grade)
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TOTAL:	1,000 points

The sum of these components will determine your final letter grade:

A = 900-1,000 points

B = 800-899 points

C = 700-799 points

D = 600-699 points

F = Below 600

### **Important Information:**

**Take Home Exams:** There will be three non-cumulative take home multiple choice exams in this course, each worth 10% of your final grade. Students will have one attempt over a period of 70 minutes to complete these take home exams, which will have between 50 and 60 questions. Take home exams will disappear (i.e. become unavailable) on Blackboard based on the dates outlined above. You may use your notes/book to complete these take home exams, but please keep in mind that you will only have only one attempt over 70 minutes to complete each of these exams. Blackboard will only show you your final score after you complete the exam; you will NOT have access to the questions and answers after you complete your attempt.

**Proctored Final Exam:** Since this is an online course, students must complete at least one exam in a "proctored" setting so they may demonstrate that they know the required material. Therefore, students will complete one cumulative final exam in the course that will be worth 200 points (20% of your final grade). ***Students MUST earn a passing grade on the final exam in order to pass the course – regardless of the total number of points earned.*** Students will have two hours to complete this exam in a proctored setting – and must earn a minimum of 120 points (60%) in order to pass this course. If a student earns the minimum 120 points – then the total number of points received in the course will be

used to determine the student's final letter grade in the course per the rubric provided above. The exam will be based on all of the information covered in the course, and it will be structured in a format that is similar to the take home examinations. However, the final exam will have a larger number of questions due to its comprehensive nature.

Students will take this final exam at an authorized testing center. Instructions will be provided on the Blackboard course site for scheduling your final exam at an authorized testing center.

**Lessons:** There are 15 lessons in this course. Each lessons focuses on one chapter from the textbook. Most of the lesson folders contain links to my video lecture recordings and a chapter quiz which is based on the assigned reading in the textbook. You may watch my video lectures by simply clicking on the links contained in each of the lesson folders. These lecture recordings will provide you with an overview of the material covered in each chapter of the textbook as well as some information that supplements the assigned reading. Some of you may find it helpful to watch the recordings before completing the assigned reading in the textbook. If you are experiencing any problems or issues streaming the lectures over the internet, please contact the WKU Help Desk so they can help resolve the issue. If the problem is a result of a slow internet connection, please contact me so I can have a DVD mailed to your home which will contain the lecture recordings in the course.

**Projects:** Students will complete four small projects in the course - which include (a) evaluating a documentary on science versus public opinion; (b) working with an online sample size calculator; (c) constructing a survey instrument; and (d) conducting a participant observation. Each project submission will be worth 50 points, and collectively they represent 20% of your final grade in the course.

**Chapter Quizzes:** Students will complete 15 multiple choice quizzes on Blackboard. There is one quiz for each lesson in the course. Each quiz will have 10 multiple choice questions – each worth 2 points – for a total of 20 points each. Students will have one attempt over a period of 20 minutes to complete these 10 question quizzes. Collectively, these 15 quizzes (with 20 question each) will be worth 300 points. The quizzes are based entirely on the assigned reading in the textbook.

**Questions:** Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the course material. Email is the best way to reach me.

**Grades:** All of your grades will be posted on Blackboard: <http://ecourses.wku.edu>.

**Notes:** I will post my presentation/lecture slides on Blackboard (as .pdf files).

**Academic Dishonesty:** I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism (especially on your exams and papers). Evidence of any of these behaviors will result in an automatic “F” in the course.

**Special Circumstances:** I realize all of you have busy lives. If anything serious or significant occurs in your life that may hurt your performance in the course, please let me know ASAP.

**The Learning Center (TLC):** A great resource for students who are struggling with any course at WKU. TLC provides individual and group peer tutoring for WKU Students. Located in DUC A330; Phone: (270) 745-6254; Email: [tlc@wku.edu](mailto:tlc@wku.edu)

**From the Office for Student Disability Services:** In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in DUC A-200 of the Student Success Center in Downing University Center. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Lesson 1: Introduction**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 1
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 1 quiz

### **Lesson 2: Linking Methods with Theory**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 2
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 2 quiz

### **Lesson 3: Research Ethics**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 3
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 3 quiz

### **Lesson 4: Beginning a Research Project**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 4
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 4 quiz

### **Lesson 5: Research Design**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 5
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 5 quiz
- Project # 1: Reflection paper based on documentary

Complete Take Home Exam # 1 = which is based on Lessons 1-5

### **Lesson 6: Defining and Measuring Concepts**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 6
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 6 quiz

### **Lesson 7: Sampling**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 7
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 7 quiz
- Project # 2: Using a sample size calculator

### **Lesson 8: Survey Research – A Quantitative Technique**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 8
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 8 quiz
- Project # 3: Survey design experience

Complete Take Home Exam # 2 = which is based on Lessons 6-8

### **Lesson 9: Interviews – Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 9
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 9 quiz

### **Lesson 10: Field Research: A Qualitative Technique**

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 10

- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 10 quiz
- Project # 4: Field research experience

#### Lesson 11: Unobtrusive Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 11
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 11 quiz

#### Lesson 12: Other Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 12
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 12 quiz

#### Lesson 13: Sharing your Work

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 13
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 13 quiz

#### Lesson 14: Reading and Understanding Social Research

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 14
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 14 quiz

#### Lesson 15: Research Methods in the Real World

- Read Blackstone: Chapter 15
- Watch lecture recordings
- Complete Chapter 15 quiz

Complete Take Home Exam # 3 = which is based on Lessons 9-15

#### **Proctored Final Exam**

Please don't forget to schedule your final exam in a proctored setting. You will find instructions for scheduling your final exam on the Socl 302 Blackboard course site.