

THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

LAS 2400: SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS

Spring Quarter 2008: Saturday afternoon, 1:30-5:30 p.m.

March 29, April 5, 19, 26, May 10, 17, 31

Instructor: Linda Cobb-Reiley, Ph.D.

Contact Information: 303.871.6472 lcobb@du.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment (Chambers Center 211-D)

Prerequisites: *MATC 1100 Analytical Inquiry, ENGG 1122 Argument & Research, COMP 1670 Introduction to Computing or BUS 1045 Strategic Advantage of Technology*

Students are responsible for completing course prerequisites before registering for a class.

Students may be removed from a course for which they have not fulfilled the prerequisite course work.

Course Description

The news media and other information sources confront us regularly with the results of social science research into human behavior. The results of that research – from the findings of large surveys of public opinion to the more narrow revelations of human action in areas dealing with crime, healthcare, Internet use, etc. – have significant impact on the formation of public perceptions, of our laws and policies and of attitudes and beliefs that guide the conduct of our lives.

This course introduces students to the basic research theories, methodologies and techniques employed in social science research. An important goal of the course is to demystify the notion of research methods. You need not be a theoretician or statistician to make sense of and feel comfortable with research design and methodology and with evaluating and using research results. The course covers research design, sampling methods, questionnaires and surveys, structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation, experimentation, data analysis and qualitative research methods. Particular emphasis is given to reading research reports critically, to understanding validity and reliability, and to recognizing the political and ethical issues related to, and arising from, social science research.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the principles underlying the design, process and analysis of a range of social research
- identify appropriate research methods for particular research questions and settings
- relate different research methods to theoretical perspectives
- critically read and evaluate a range of research reports
- show an awareness and sensitivity to the ethical and political issues of research
- create a thoughtful and thorough research proposal in an area of personal interest

Course Requirements & Grading

Class Preparation and Participation: This course will cover much material and it is essential that you come to class prepared – by doing the assigned reading and completing other assignments before each session. Moreover, the most valuable learning occurs through the sharing of ideas and insights. In fact, you will learn more from each other than from me. Thus, this will not be a “lecture” class where I rehash the assigned reading. Rather, we will spend most (not all) of our time in discussion of the readings and assignments and in working in groups on various exercises and problems. Class preparation and participation, which counts for 20% of your final grade, includes evaluation of the following:

- attendance
- preparation for and participation in class – regular and substantive contributions in class that reflect you have done the assigned reading and considered it thoughtfully
- preparation for and meaningful participation in class group work

Assignments: For class sessions where Research Proposal drafts are not due, you will be expected to turn in short papers and/or exercises from our two texts. These assignments will be evaluated on the basis of 1) timeliness – whether they are turned in at the appropriate time; completeness – whether all parts of the assignment are addressed thoroughly; and thoughtfulness – whether the assignment reflects insightful and deep application of the class readings and discussions.

Research Proposal Drafts: You will – over the course of the quarter – prepare a proposal for a research project exploring a relevant social issue of your choice. Drafts of parts of the proposal are due on April 19 and May 10. Complete instructions for the drafts are posted on Blackboard. I will provide feedback on them that should be incorporated into the final draft, due at our last class session. The drafts will be evaluated on the basis of their timeliness, completeness, and thoughtfulness (as described above).

Research Proposal Final Draft: This is due at the final class session and must reflect revisions based on my feedback on earlier drafts. Complete instructions for the final drafts are posted on Blackboard and will be discussed in our first class session and throughout the quarter. Final proposals will be evaluated on the basis of their timeliness, completeness and thoughtfulness (as described above).

Research Proposal Presentation: During the final class session, each student will give an oral presentation of her individual research proposal. Instructions and evaluation criteria for these presentations are posted on Blackboard.

Quizzes: Two quizzes will be given during the quarter, on April 26 and May 17. The quizzes will be a mix of short answer and short essay questions. A study guide with sample questions will be posted on Blackboard before each quiz.

Final Course Grades will be determined as follows:

Class Preparation & Participation	20%
Assignments	15%
Research Proposal Drafts	15%
Quizzes (two @ 10% each)	20%
Research Proposal Presentation	10%
Research Proposal Final Draft	20%

	100%

Course Policies

First and foremost: If you ever have any questions about the course or are having difficulties with your assignments or the reading, *please* do not hesitate to contact me by email or to set up an appointment. I look forward to getting to know each of you and assisting in your learning process in any way I can.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and any absence will substantially impact the class preparation and participation portion of your grade as well as grades on assignments that may be due. If an emergency involving circumstances *beyond your control* arises, it is your responsibility to contact me by email or phone before your absence and to contact another student for missed class work and assignments. I will assist you in any way in such an emergency, but you must take the initiative.

Blackboard: This course has a Blackboard presence and you will have automatic access to it when you register for the class. Details expanding on the information in this paper syllabus as well as updates to the course schedule of readings and due dates will be posted on our Blackboard site. Therefore, it is imperative that you access the site regularly and frequently. If you need assistance accessing the Blackboard site, contact me.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted for full credit and no assignment will be accepted more than 48 hours after the due date.

Decorum: You are expected to conduct yourself professionally in class. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off during class time. Computers may only be turned on and used for class and group work. You should exhibit general courtesy toward your classmates and instructor, and you are entitled to the same in return. All ideas are welcome in this class and will be respected by everyone in the class.

Incompletes: A grade of incomplete will be granted only if, for reasons beyond the student's control, she is unable to complete the work required for the course, and will not be automatically granted for absenteeism.

Academic Integrity: The Women's College fully endorses the University of Denver's Honor Code and the procedures put forth by the Office of Citizenship and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty – including plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data and research – is in violation of the Code and will result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course. As

student members of a community committed to academic integrity and honesty, it is your responsibility to become familiar with the DU Honor Code and its procedures (www.du.edu/honorcode).

Course Texts

*There are two **required** texts for this class and both are available at the DU Bookstore.*

Daniel F. Chambliss and Russell K. Schutt, Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation, 2nd edition (Pine Forge Press, 2006) *NOTE: There is a CD ROM included with this book – be sure to bring it with you to the first class.*

Turner C. Lomand, Editor, Social Science Research: A Cross Section of Journal Articles for Discussion and Evaluation, 4th Edition (Pyrzczak Publishing, 2005)

COURSE SCHEDULE

*****Except for the first class session**, the readings and other assignments on this schedule are subject to change. All changes will be posted on our Blackboard website – so check it regularly.***

Session 1 3/29 **Basics of Social Science Research: Goals, Process, Theories, Ethics**
Chambliss & Schutt: Preface (xix-xxii), Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-48)
***Visit Blackboard site for additional online required readings*

Assignments Due (NOTE – it is essential that you do the assigned reading before completing these assignments.)

- 1) Write a 1 ½ -2 page paper in which you answer questions **1 and 2** under “Doing Research” at the bottom of page 20 of Chambliss & Schutt. Give careful thought to this paper, which will serve as the basis for the Research Proposal you will work on all quarter. **Email the paper to me (lcobb@du.edu) no later than 5 p.m. Thursday, March 27.**
- 2) Bring to class one article from a newspaper or magazine that is an example of recent social science research into human behavior that might have significant impact on public opinion, controversies over law or policy, etc. ****These should be reports on the results of research, not opinion pieces.** Be prepared to discuss your example.

Session 2 4/5 **Evaluating Social Science Research Design: Measurement and Sampling**
Chambliss & Schutt: Chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 51-80 and 85-103)
Lomand: Introduction (v-vi); Appendix A “Reading Research Reports: A Brief Introduction” (pp. 169-172); Article #3, “Most Working Women Deny Gender Discrimination in Their Pay” (pp. 11-13); Article #5, “Client Gender As a Process Variable in Marriage and Family Therapy” (pp. 21-23); Article #18, “Late Adolescents’ Perspective on Marital Rape” (pp. 75-79)

Assignments Due
Assignment To Be Announced (TBA)

Session 3 4/19 **Experiments and Justifying Causal Relationships**
Chambliss & Schutt: Chapter 5 (pp. 106-133)
Lomand: Article 13, “The Role of Peer Conformity in the Decision to Ride with an Intoxicated Driver” (pp. 58-60); Article #16 “The Effects of Family Conflict Resolution on Children’s Classroom Behavior” (pp. 67-69)

Assignment Due

Research Proposal, Draft I: Introduction, Literature Review & Specific Research Questions

Session 4 4/26 **QUIZ #1 (FIRST 45 MINUTES OF CLASS)**

Survey Research and Methods of Analysis

Chambliss & Schutt: Chapters 6 and 9 (pp. 136-139 and 228-254)
Lomand: Article #2, “Homelessness in a Small Southern City” (pp. 4-8)

Assignments Due

Assignment TBA

Session 5 5/10 **Qualitative Research Methods**
Chambliss & Schutt: Chapter 7 (pp. 161-189)
Lomand: Article #22, Virtual Corporeality: Adolescent Girls and Their Bodies in Cyberspace” (pp. 93-101); Article #9, “Poverty As We Know It: Media Portrayals of the Poor” (pp. 36-39)

Assignment Due

Research Proposal, Draft II: Methodology

Session 6 5/17 **QUIZ #2 (FIRST 45 MINUTES OF CLASS)**

Reading TBA

Assignments Due

Assignment TBA

Session 7 5/31 **Oral Presentation of Research Proposals**

Assignment Due

Research Proposal Final Draft