

Department of Sociology and Criminology & Law, University of Florida
Prof. Tanya Koropecjy-Cox

Spring 2024

SYA 7933: Research Design

Tuesday, periods 7-9 (1:55 – 4:55 pm) – Turlington Hall, room 2346

3227 Turlington Hall
352-294-7177

tkcox@ufl.edu ** best way to reach me

office hours: Monday 1:00-3:30 pm,
Tuesday 10:30 am - 1:00 pm,
and by appointment – email me!

COURSE WEBSITE: <http://elearning.ufl.edu>

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Required course for first-year graduate students in Sociology. The course covers the major social science research designs and techniques for conducting empirical inquiry into social phenomena. It is useful for more advanced sociology graduate students, and graduate students in other social science programs, for development of a research agenda or development of a dissertation or thesis proposal.

PURPOSE OF COURSE: The purpose of this course is to orient students toward the core research designs and techniques of social science, including contemporary debates and emergent techniques. The emphasis in the course is practical – developing the critical skills to evaluate completed research and prepare to conduct original empirical research. We will also discuss broader questions about how to make choices about research topics, construct research questions, choose appropriate methods of data collection and analysis, and understand the connections between methods, epistemology, and paradigms in the social sciences. By practicing critical evaluation of methodological choices, the course will prepare students to become critical reviewers, users, and creators of sociological knowledge. Course themes include the nature of social relationships, selecting observations, and conceptualization-measurement. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are covered.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Goals:

- (1) Demonstrate broad understanding and application of empirical sociological research methods and analytical techniques
- (2) Demonstrate competencies in designing independent empirical research with scientific integrity
- (3) Demonstrate competencies in applying substantive sociological knowledge in critical thinking, analysis, and communication

Student Learning Objectives:

Describe, explain, and compare-contrast multiple major research designs and analytical techniques

Engage in weekly discussions of key concepts, issues, and techniques in prominent and emergent research designs used by social scientists

Present an emergent research technique not covered in the course

Lead class discussion of a research design, covering the primary readings and exemplar

Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of specific research designs used in current empirical sociological research

Construct a portfolio of research activities that lead to a detailed research proposal that incorporates multiple (or mixed) methods

Develop an overarching conceptual frame based on a literature review of the topic which provides the basis for integrating multiple methods to investigate a single research topic.

Précis: write 3 précis that outline 3 empirical projects using at least 2 different research designs and techniques

Research Proposal: write a detailed proposal of a research project/agenda built from the conceptual frame assignment and the 3 précis

COURSE MATERIALS: There are **two required textbooks** for the course:

- John W. Creswell & J. David Creswell. 2018 or 2022. *Research Design, 5th or 6th edition*. Sage.
- Kristin Luker. 2010. *Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences*. Harvard University Press.

The following two books are recommended as helpful resources but are not required:

- Jessica M. Calarco. 2020. *A Field Guide to Graduate School*. Princeton University Press.
- Howard S. Becker. 2007. *Writing for Social Scientists, 2nd edition*. University of California Press.

All other materials will be available online on Canvas (elearning.ufl.edu).

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Approach this seminar (and all seminars) professionally. Career professionals attend all meetings, arrive on time, complete all work conscientiously and punctually, and arrive to meetings prepared to engage mindfully and civilly with colleagues. In a small graduate seminar, both your individual success and the value of the course for the group are strongly based on the weekly discussion that occurs in the classroom. Maintaining an open, respectful environment in which students feel comfortable participating and contributing to the class discussion is an important part of the course.

You are expected to complete the assigned readings for each week and come prepared to discuss the readings. Everyone gets 1 absence, with no questions asked. Additional absences must be approved; absences will be excused in the case of serious illness or other circumstance beyond the student's control (see UF policy: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>). Attendance at academic conferences will be excused, but you must inform me at least 2 weeks in advance (earlier if possible). I reserve the right to apply a 5% grade penalty (final grade) for each unexcused absence.

It is the student's responsibility to get the notes and announcements from the instructor and classmates for any missed class.

COMMUNICATION: Email is usually the best and quickest way to reach me, either directly or through the Canvas system. If I do not respond to your email within 48 hours, please resend it, as it might not have gotten to me. All email and other communication in the course should be respectful, civil, and professional – see [Netiquette Guidelines](#).

Office hours will be held each week – you do not need an appointment, just drop by. If you need to schedule an alternative time, please email me so we can arrange a meeting. If my office door is open, feel free to drop in to say hello or for quick questions; for longer conversations, I encourage you to use office hours or arrange a meeting.

Canvas - Course announcements will be sent out through Canvas. Please check your Canvas email regularly, and make sure to adjust your settings in Canvas so that you get notifications of announcements and emails to your UF email address. This is particularly important if you are emailing through the Canvas system.

OTHER POLICIES: Details on course assignments will be provided online in Canvas. Assignments should be completed on time and according to specifications. Feel free to

talk with me if you have any questions about participation or other grades; any concerns with regard to specific point assessments must be resolved within 2 weeks of the grade being posted.

UF POLICIES:

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Counseling and Mental Health Resources

Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the Counseling and Wellness Center (352-392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>).

Other Supports

The University of Florida Division of Student Affairs has created “U Matter We Care” to provide supports for students who are dealing with challenges or stressors. Information on available resources and supports is available here: <https://umatter.ufl.edu/>

On-Line Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments	Due date	% of final Course grade
Engagement		44
Class participation – demonstrate preparation through critical reading of assigned material and actively contribute to class discussion, 4%	[weekly]	
Reflection and commentary essays (weeks 2 and 3; 1-2 pages each), 3% each, 6% total	1/17, 1/24	
Participation in online discussion before and after class, 6 separate weeks, 2% each, 10% total (drop lowest score)	1/31 – 4/10	
Discussion leader (solo or duo): prepare outline of the day's topic and readings and lead class discussion, 10%	2/14 – 4/10	
Evaluation of exemplar articles (~3 pages each), 2 exemplars, 3% each, 6% total	2/7 – 4/10	
Presentation of an additional design or technique (prepare outline/handout and present in class), 8%	2/21 – 4/4	
Application		56
Conceptual framework essay (significance, prior work/literature review, conceptual framework and research questions), 9%	2/16 5:00 pm	
3 précis (3 distinct research plans to address the research questions, including discussion of methods for collecting and analyzing data and evaluation of strengths and limitations), 9% each, 27% total	1: 3/8 5:00 pm 2: 3/29 5:00 pm 3: 4/12 5:00 pm	
Final research proposal (full proposal, reflecting revisions of prior work on proposal components), 20%	4/30 5:00 pm	

GRADING SCALE: A 93-100%, A- 90-92%, B+ 87-89%, B 83-86%, B- 80-82%, C 75-79%, E 0-74%

COURSE SCHEDULE: [TENTATIVE – ORDER OF TOPICS MAY CHANGE]

- Jan. 10 Introductions, Syllabus, Objectives, Plans
- Jan. 17 Epistemology, Causation, and Sampling
- Reflection and commentary on a selected research study -- Choose an example of an empirical article or book that you find interesting or compelling from a major sociological source (peer-reviewed journal or academic press; check with me if you're unsure). Write a 1-2 page commentary that discusses the following: (a) Briefly summarize the research questions, methods, and main findings of the study; (b) Discuss why you chose this reading – what specifically do you find important or compelling about this article? Why do you think it is important or striking? (c) What do you see as its weaknesses or limitations? Due 9:00 am on Wednesday, Jan. 17.
- Jan. 24 Epistemology, Causation, and Sampling
- Self-reflection – Think about what motivates you as a scholar and your career goals and plans. Write a 1-2 page commentary that discusses the following: (a) What has inspired or motivated you to go to graduate school? Describe any courses, experiences, professors, or others that have inspired you in your current path. (b) What are your plans or goals with regard to your career? What would you like to get out of graduate school so that you can pursue that career? What is the role of research in your overall career plan? (c) Review the syllabus for this course and identify 2-3 course topics that you find most interesting or relevant and briefly explain why. Due 9:00 am on Wednesday, Jan. 24.
- Jan. 31 More on Paradigms, Epistemology, and Methodology
- Feb. 7 More on Sampling, Operationalization, and Measurement
+ Mixed Methods
- Feb. 14 Experimental Designs and Surveys
- Conceptual framework due 5:00 pm, Friday, Feb. 16
- Feb. 21 Survey Designs – cross-sectional, comparative, longitudinal
- Feb. 28 Concepts to Questions to Variables: Designing Surveys, Writing Questions

- Mar. 6 Ethnography, Interviews, and Evaluating Qualitative Research
- Precis 1 due 5:00 pm, Friday, Mar. 8
- Mar. 13 SPRING BREAK
- Mar. 20 Administrative and Demographic Data
- Mar. 27 Case Study
- Precis 2 due 5:00 am, Friday, Mar. 29
- Apr. 3 Computational Sociology, Big Data, and Data Science
- Apr. 10 Historical Methods and Content Analysis
- Precis 3 due 5:00 pm, Friday, Apr. 12
- Apr. 17 Professional Writing, Research Funding,
- Apr. 24 Future Plans, Job Market
- Final proposal due 5:00 pm, Tuesday, April 30

Details on assigned readings and writing assignments (including the discussion board for each class, discussion leading, presentations on additional techniques, and the course project) will be provided in the first week of class and will be posted on Canvas.

Disclaimer: This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity, including changes in specific class topics and their sequence or inclusion of guest speakers. Such changes will be communicated clearly and at least a week in advance.