SYA4300: METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH
Spring 2015

Instructors
Dr. Rob White, Turlington 3356 (rwhite@ufl.edu)
Office hours: Tuesday 10:30-12:00, Thursday 10:30-12:00 and by appointment.
Teaching Assistants: Heather Covington (covingtn@ufl.edu) Petta-Gay Hannah (gatornfl@ufl.edu)
and Wally Wojciechowski (wojci1tw@ufl.edu)

Meeting Times

Lectures: Tues 2nd and 3rd periods (8:30-10:25). Thurs 3rd period (9:35-10:25).
Lab: Section 5816 with Heather. W 3rd period ARCH 0116
Section 6490 with Heather. W 4th period ARCH 0116
Section 6958 with Wally. W 6th period WEIL 0408A
Section 9081 with Petta-Gay. W 7th period WEIL 0408A

Final Exam: Friday May 1, 7:30am-9:30am. Turlington L011.

Please note that there are four lab sections to this course. Please attend only the lab in which you are
registered. Since there are a limited number of computers available in each lab you are not permitted to
attend a section for which you are not registered. Your instructor will be required to gently ease you to the
door if you try to attend a lab other than your assigned lab.

Course Description

This course is about the craft of sociology. We will study many different methods that are used in sociology
for conducting research about the social world. These include case studies, ethnography, experiments, focus
groups and empirical methods for analyzing survey data. For each method, we will review the underlying
logic that makes the method a useful approach for studying the social world.

This course is also about acquiring new skills. We will learn practical guidelines for implementing each of
these methods with an emphasis on the relative strengths and limitations of competing approaches for
making inferences about the social world. Weekly computer lab sessions will also provide an opportunity for
learning to describe and analyze data. These sessions complement our study of the larger theoretical
considerations in research design by offering hands-on opportunities to implement basic empirical analysis.
The lab sessions are essential for understanding the challenges in testing hypotheses about our social world.
They also offer a unique opportunity to acquire a highly marketable technical skill that is valued by many of
your future employers.

Expectations

I expect you to read this syllabus and understand all course policies. This is really important in order to
understand what lays in store for us during the semester and avoid needless heartache. You will find most of
your questions during the semester can be answered by reviewing the syllabus. Please consult it regularly.

I expect that you will attend every class. Class lectures cover the assigned readings, provide countless
illustrative examples and introduce additional material in order to emphasize the most important points in the
readings. You will not be able to identify the most important points in the readings or lecture notes without
attending class. Students who miss classes in my course do not perform well in class assignments or exams.

I expect that you arrive to class on-time. This is really important. Basic decorum in human relations involves
displays of respect, if not refraining from needless displays of disrespect. I ask that you show up on-time for
class and will interpret late arrivals as a display of disrespect to the course material, to me and to your classmates. Remember, few of us are happy about the early start time to this class. If you were to arrive late, it would be disrespectful to those in the class who find it extraordinarily difficult to wake up in the morning yet still manage to make it to class on-time. I understand that things like police officers, romantic partners and pets often get in the way of timely arrivals to class. However if you are more than a few minutes late, you will miss the chance to sign in to class and you will be recorded as absent for that day’s class. You will not be allowed to sign in at any later time. Unfortunately, I cannot make any exceptions to this policy.

I expect you to complete each class meeting’s reading assignment before coming to class. Many of the concepts we cover will be very new to you and may be challenging to understand the first time you consider them. Repetition is essential! For this reason, it is critical for you to read before coming to class and then again after lecture before later again preparing for exams. Repetition is also essential for identifying the areas in which you may wish to devote extra time for fully appreciating the nuances of research methods. Class lecture notes are no substitute for the assigned readings. Treating them as a substitute will lead to confusion, doubt and misery. Do not allow yourself to get left behind in the reading – students who do so in this class do not perform well.

At the end of this class, completing all the course requirements will have taught you how to:

1. describe the main elements of the most widely used methods in sociology;
2. critically assess the links between theory, hypotheses and method in any social science publication;
3. describe any dataset using SPSS;
4. develop and test hypotheses concerning multivariate relationships with continuous dependent variables using SPSS;
5. identify the limitations of researching human behavior.

Textbook and Equipment

1. The required textbook is available for purchase at the university bookstore.

   The international edition and the more recent edition may also be used. Older and newer editions are not recommended. Two copies of this text are on reserve for 2 hour checkout at Library West.

2. Required journal articles and book chapters are denoted in the syllabus by the author’s name and an abbreviated title and are available for download via the “Resources” tab on the class website.

3. You will need a USB flash drive to store course data sets and your work when participating in computer lab sessions. Almost any drive that you currently own should have adequate capacity for the needs of this course. Bring your flash drive to the lab sessions.

Learning SPSS

The labs in this course use a statistical software called SPSS. Your lab instructor will teach you everything you need to know about SPSS in order to complete the assignments for this course. You do not need to have any prior experience analyzing data or working with any statistical software to succeed in lab assignments. Should you need additional support in learning SPSS, you may visit the course Teaching Assistants during their office hours. There are also extensive support materials for learning SPSS available on the course website under the resources folder. SPSS will be used in our course exclusively for completing the required lab assignments.

You do not need to buy SPSS or load it onto your own computer. SPSS is available in the computer labs designated for our lab sessions. It is also available for use via the UF cloud. Learn how to access SPSS in the UF cloud by visiting http://info.apples.ufl.edu/. Your technology fee paid for this extraordinary new service.
Grades

Grades will be based on 1000 points, allocated as follows:

- Three exams. 200 points for each exam with a total possible = 600 points.
- Five lab assignments. Variable points for each assignment with a total possible = 270 points.
- Online ethics course certificate. 50 points.
- Class attendance. 80 points.

These are all the assignments for our class. There are no opportunities for earning extra credit in this course.

Letter grades will be determined by the following:

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UF policies for assigning grade points may be found at https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Exams (600 points)

There are three exams worth 200 points each. Each exam will follow the same format and will consist of multiple choice, short answer questions and an essay. The exams are not cumulative.

Exam 1 (200pts): Tuesday, February 10
Exam 2 (200pts): Tuesday, March 31
Exam 3 (200pts): Friday, May 1, 7:30am-9:30am (This designated time cannot be changed.)

Lab Assignments (270 points)

Five lab assignments will teach you how to describe and analyze empirical data using SPSS. The assignments will work with nationally representative data of public opinion in the United States which remain among the most popular data sources for academics, journalists and government officials trying to keep their finger on the pulse of America. All of the requirements for each lab assignment will be covered in lab sessions prior to the lab assignment’s due date.

Completing the assignments requires attending every lab. Do not expect to complete the assignments during lab periods. You will need to spend time working with SPSS outside of the lab period in order to complete the lab assignments. You should also expect to spend ample time at home interpreting your analysis and writing up your results.

You are free to work in groups in the computer lab to complete the steps required for the empirical analysis. By all means, if you are stuck with a procedure, ask a classmate to help. While you are also welcome to discuss the questions with your classmates, you must independently complete the written assignment. This means that all of the writing and interpretation in your assignment must be your own. You may not copy the steps in another student’s Session Journal nor copy any text from another student’s homework. Please consult the course policies at the end of the syllabus for a refresher about the definition of plagiarism. If you have questions about how to safely collaborate with your classmates at any time during the semester, please ask the teaching assistants or your faithful instructor. Asking is the best insurance against making any error.
When completing lab assignments, please ensure the following:

1. That you have saved a copy of your assignment somewhere secure (flash drive, email etc.)
2. That you allow adequate time before the deadline to upload your submission. If you wait until the last minute before the due date to submit your assignment you will very likely have a technical problem and your submission will be late and penalized accordingly. Note that internet delays, crashed servers and technical complications in uploading your assignment are unacceptable excuses for late submissions.
3. That you have successfully uploaded your assignment to the course website. After you upload your assignment, refresh your screen to ensure that your assignment successfully uploaded.

Lab assignments will be submitted to the course website by midnight on the specified due date. That is, by 11:59:59PM on the specified due date. A late assignment will be penalized 25% of the assignment’s grade per day. This means that assignments submitted more than 72 hours after the time due receive 0 points. Note that the lab assignments are worth variable points depending on the demands of the lab assignment.

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<td>Due Date</td>
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*Online Ethics Course Completion (50 points)*

We will complete the United States government National Institute of Health’s online training course on ethical use of human subjects available on the web at [http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php](http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php). This course is completed online and will take about three hours to complete. We will begin the course together in class. At the end of class, we will log out of the course. You will log back into the course outside of class time to complete the training. To complete the course, you must pass a short quiz at the end of each section. You must complete the online course and be awarded the certificate which indicates that you have passed the training. To receive credit for this assignment, you must submit your certificate by uploading it to its designated assignment on the course website.

Certificate due date: Friday, April 24 (midnight).

*Class attendance. (80 points)*

Class attendance is required and will be recorded at the start of each class. Students arriving late after the door has been shut will not be allowed into class and will be counted as absent for that class period. Note that the double period Thursday class is counted as 2 classes. Excusable class absences are limited to the circumstances warranting an exam absence as outlined in the policies described at the end of this syllabus.

*Weekly Readings*

Our classroom experience will be excellent if everyone comes to class prepared to discuss the readings. Participation in class discussion is also critical for both your own and your classmates’ success in the course. Please come to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss your reactions, questions and concerns. Below are the course topics covered each week and the required readings for each class. Readings that are not in our assigned textbook are noted by their titles and are available for download from the course website by following the “Files” link to the readings folder.
Course Policies

Academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes: plagiarism; giving or receiving assistance during an exam; falsification, forgery or alteration of academic records or documentation. Any academic dishonesty detected in this course will result, at the very least, in the student(s) receiving a zero on that assignment or exam. Academic dishonesty may also result in dismissal from this course and disciplinary action.

Plagiarism. The University of Florida Academic Honesty Guidelines description of plagiarism:

The attempt to represent the work of another as the product of one’s own thought, whether the other’s work is published or unpublished, or simply the work of a fellow student. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, quoting oral or written materials without citation on an exam, term paper, homework, or other written materials or oral presentations for an academic requirement; submitting a paper which was purchased from a term paper service as your own work; submitting anyone else’s paper as your own work.

If you’re concerned in a lab assignment whether you might be plagiarizing, simply ask the Teaching Assistants or your instructor for clarification about the acceptable guidelines for collaboration. The University of Florida’s regulations concerning plagiarism are outlined in http://regulations.ufl.edu/chapter4/4041.pdf

Accommodation. Students with disabilities who require classroom accommodation must register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean’s Office will determine the accommodation required. This process must be completed at least one week in advance of the needed accommodation. See http://www.dso.ufl.edu/ for more information.

Make-up exams. Students who do not attend a regularly scheduled examination are not entitled to take the examination at another time. Make-up exams are allowable only when a student demonstrates to the instructor’s satisfaction that he or she has an excusable reason (detailed next) for missing an exam. Note that our final exam time cannot be changed. It is determined by the university registrar’s office.

Excusable absences. While there are some health and family obligations which constitute reasonable excuses for missing a class or exam, the standard is whether a motivated student would reasonably place the personal consideration before the academic obligation. If such a situation arises, students should consult with me at the earliest possible time before the class or exam. In situations that arise at the last minute, students should e-mail me. Do not phone me. Sending an email before the scheduled event does not by itself grant a student an excusable absence and/or entitlement to a later examination. In the absence of prior notification, the student must demonstrate that prior notification was not reasonably possible. Make-up exams are never given in advance of the class exam.

Incomplete grades. No "Incomplete" grades will be given in this course. Exceptions to this rule are granted only in the most compelling circumstances. If such a situation arises, students should consult with the instructor at the earliest time. Incomplete grades require a standard written contract establishing conditions for completion of the course and a date by which all requirements must be completed.

Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

Contacting me. If you need to email me, please email me directly. Do not email me through the course website. I do not check that email. Always put SYA4300 in the subject line of your message. If you neglect to do this, I will not receive your email. I normally check and respond to email once daily during normal working hours, Monday through Friday. E-mail is best suited for discussion of simple matters. Please come to office hours if you have a complex question.