Introduction

The goal of this course is plain and simple: to teach you how to do rigorous social scientific research. That’s a big goal given we only have 14 weeks to accomplish it, but I can almost guarantee you that your ability to do research will have advanced by leaps and bounds by the end of this course. A few points to ponder:

--Our emphasis in this class will be on the practical (e.g., how to get an interview, how to come up with an idea for a project) without ignoring the theoretical (e.g., how I know what I know, how can I “prove” one thing caused another).

--For the length of this course we will be (or pretend to be) methodological pluralists. That is, we will not privilege one method of research over another. Our only bias is in favor of well conceived and well executed research—something that can be accomplished using almost any research method.

--I’m not a scholar of criminal justice, and so few of my examples will be derived from that field. Nonetheless, criminal justice students should rest assured knowing that the logic of social inquiry spans disciplinary boundaries. In fact, we will even read a piece or two by sociologists and (gasp!) psychologists.

Readings

There are two books available for purchase:


There will also be several other readings that I will place in the 7th floor computer lab file cabinets. Please do not remove them from the building.

Grading
Your final grade in this course will depend on your success in five areas:

1. Four response papers (20%). You will write 4 response papers for this course, each in the range of 3-4 double-spaced pages in length. Pick any four weeks. Each paper should express your reaction to the readings for the week. These papers should NOT simply be a summary of the readings. Instead, you might raise questions provoked by the readings, compare the arguments of different authors, critique the authors’ methodologies, or propose alternative explanations for the authors’ findings. These papers are due to me by 12 noon the day of class. You may submit them to me at my office or send them to me via email.

2. A literature review (15%). You will select a research question (we will talk about how to do this in week 2) and then write an approximately 8-10 page paper that reviews the literature that speaks to the topic you have chosen. You should use at least 20 sources, and they should be academic sources (i.e., books that can be found in the library or articles from scholarly journals such as the American Political Science Review or American Journal of Sociology). This literature review will serve as a basis for your research design. DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13, 5 p.m.

3. A research design (30%). You will propose a research project (possibly a future conference paper, your master’s thesis or dissertation) on an important question in your area of interest. About 15-20 pages is a good length for this assignment. Your proposal should include a statement of your research question, a review of the literature on the topic, a discussion of your theory and the hypotheses you derived from it and a plan for how you will answer your question. I will give you a detailed handout describing how to write a research design, and we will discuss this in depth during week 6 of class. DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 5 p.m.

4. A midterm exam (15%). This will be a relatively short in-class exam on which I will ask you to answer a few short questions and define some terms that we will encounter during the first half of class. This exam will be October 26.

5. Class participation and attendance (20%). Class participation and attendance are required. Notify me beforehand if you must be absent from class. I also expect that everyone will make contributions to our class discussions.

Other information

If there are things I talk about in class that you do not understand, do not hesitate to talk to me about them. I am here to help you learn the course material. And if there are other matters that you think should be brought to my attention, let me know.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS. Assignments must be at my office by 5 p.m. on the date they are due or they will be considered late. For each day an assignment is late, I will subtract 10 percent of the assignment’s total point value from your score.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT. I do not tolerate plagiarizing or cheating of any kind. Such
behavior will result in failing the course and other disciplinary action. Please see the Student Handbook at the Division of Student Affairs website at www.studentaffairs.wsu.edu for a full description of the types of academic misconduct. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, see me immediately.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION. Students with Disabilities: I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. Please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC) during the first two weeks of every semester to seek information or to qualify for accommodations. All accommodations MUST be approved through the DRC (Admin Annex Bldg, Rooms 205). Call (509) 335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability counselor.

Course Outline

I. Introduction

Prisoners of silence [videorecording]—in class

II. Designing Research

Finding and Developing Ideas: Theory, Theories, and Hypotheses


Neuman. Chapter 1, 2.


Concepts and Indicators


Neuman. Chapter 5.

**Data Issues**


Neuman. Ch. 6.


**Units and Levels of Analysis**


Writing a Research Design, Journal Article, Book or Funding Proposal

Bem, Daryl J. “Writing the Empirical Journal Article.”

Fuller, Frank. “A Short Guide to Preparing Proposals For Theses and Research Projects.”
http://www.education.nsula.edu/adult/Resources/Proposal.htm


Neuman. Chapter 4, 14.

III. Research Methods

Surveys

Asher. All

Neuman. Chapter 7.

Experiments

Cook, Thomas D. and Donald T. Campbell. Quasi-Experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings. Ch. 1, 3.


Neuman. Ch. 8

Participant and Non-Participant Observation


Neuman. Ch. 11.


**Interviews and Focus Groups**


**Case Studies and Comparative Social Inquiry**


Neuman. Ch. 12.

**Historical Analysis**


Game Theory


IV. Wrapping Up

Qualitative v. Quantitative Inquiry


Research Ethics


Obedience [videorecording] / Stanley Milgram (in class)

WSU Human Subjects Research Guidelines