

Quantitative Research methods:
The Practice of Social Research (AS 262 Fall 1999)

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Course Statement

The goal of this course is to provide you with a comprehensive grounding in social science research methods. It is designed to meet the basic methodological needs of social science majors regardless of their particular disciplinary focus. We will begin by reading Peter Winch's classic monograph *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*. Winch problematizes the theoretical (philosophical) assumptions underlying "social science" - the systematic practice of applying the scientific method to the study of ourselves, others and the structures we have collectively created.

Following Winch's meta-analysis of social science we will engage in a close reading of Earl Babbie's *The Practice of Social Research*. Babbie's text is widely considered to be the standard to which other social science methods texts are compared. The text is thorough, comprehensive, yet highly readable. We will study the logic of scientific inquiry, the relationship between theory and research, conceptualization, operationalization, sampling, and statistical interpretation. We will also examine ethical considerations, including the issues surrounding the "use" of human subjects and the ideological dimensions of social research.

A second course goal is to awaken in you an appreciation for the *possibilities* presented by social research. My professional research focuses on *applied research*, the design of projects, programs and/or interventions which make a *real* (observable) difference in the lives of individuals and institutions. This work involves all of the key elements of social research, as well as the articulation of a project design and research plan in the form of a grant proposal. During the second part of the semester we will work together to design original, applied, research projects in response to *real* (identified) social needs. You will identify a topical interest related to a social problem or need, identify and collect a number of requests for proposals (RFP's) from various funding organizations, conceptualize and design an applied research project, and write a proposal to receive funding in order to implement the project. My hope is that by semester's end you will have developed a project and a proposal that you will follow-up on in one capacity or another in the future.

Grading

Grading will be based on attendance, two mini-projects (10% each), the grant/project proposal (25%), a midterm exam (25%), and a final exam (30%). You are expected to have near-perfect

attendance (more than three unexcused absences is grounds for failure).

Th	8/26	Course overview Read for Tu pp. ix-65 in Winch
Tu	8/31	The philosophical underbelly of social science Read for Tu pp. 66-136 in Winch
Th	9/2	Seminar does not meet - complete assignment
Tu	9/7	Human Inquiry and Science Read for Th pp. xix-13 and Chapter 1 in Babbie
Th	9/9	Theory and Research Read for Tu Chapters 2 & 3 in Babbie
Tu	9/14	If a tree falls in the forest ... Read for Th Chapter 4 in Babbie
Th	9/16	Research Design Read for Tu Chapter 5 in Babbie
Tu	9/21	Conceptualization and Measurement Read for Th article by McGowan
Th	9/23	Conceptual specification and validity Read for Tu Ch. 6 in Babbie and article by McGowan
Tu	9/28	Operationalization Read for Th Chapter 7 in Babbie
Th	9/30	Indexes, Scales and Typologies Begin mini-project #1
Tu	10/5	Discussion of mini-project Read for Th Chapter 8 in Babbie/complete project
Th	10/7	Mini-project #1 is due/ bring to class The logic of sampling
Tu	10/12	Review for Midterm
Th	10/14	Midterm exam
Tu	10/19	Fall break
Th	10/21	Seminar does not meet/Dr.McGowan on field trip to Chaco Canyon
Tu	10/26	Why social research? Read for Th Ch. 9 in Babbie and article by McGowan Begin proposal project
Th	10/28	Experiments

		Read for Tu Chapter 10 in Babbie
Tu	11/2	Survey Research Begin mini-project #2
Th	11/4	Discussion of mini-project
Tu	11/9	Mini-project #2 is due/ bring to class
Th	11/11	Discussion of proposal project Read for Th Chapter 11
Tu	11/16	Field Research Read for Th Chapter 12 in Babbie
Th	11/18	Unobtrusive Research Read for Tu Chapter 13 in Babbie
Tu	11/23	Evaluation research Read for Th Chapters 14 and 15 in Babbie
Th	11/25	Thanksgiving Recess
Tu	11/30	Quantifying Data and Elementary Analyses Read for Tu Chapters 16 and 17 in Babbie
Th	12/2	The Elaboration Model and Social Statistics
Tu	12/7	Review for final