

Sociology 280—001
Research Methods
Class 10:00 am - 10:50 am MWF Dane Smith Hall 333

GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructor: Colin Olson
Office: Social Science Building 1094
Email: colino@unm.edu
Office Hours: W. 1:00-2:00 and by appointment
Class Website: vista.unm.edu

Course Goals:

This class is designed to help you answer the following questions:

1. What is social research and what are the various methods social researchers employ?
2. What are researchable questions?
3. How does one read published research?
4. How do sociologists write research proposals?

It is the goal of this class to train you in developing a sophisticated understanding of the various research methods employed by social scientists. By the end of this course, you should be able to conceptualize a research problem and develop a number of complementary designs, measurements, and data collection approaches to various problems. You should be able (and will try) to prepare a research proposal. You also should be able and critically evaluate the quality of evidence in published social research.

In this class you will develop an understanding of social research methods. The format of the class will be around class lectures as roughly outlined below, in-class and out of class assignments, and the development of a research proposal. There are two formal exams, a series of research article write-ups, and periodic out-of-class assignments. These periodic assignments will be announced in class and *it is your responsibility to complete them on time.*

Texts: There are two texts for this class:

1. Nicholas Walliman. 2005. ***Your Research Project***. 2nd Edition. Sage Publications.
2. Carl E. Pope, Rick Lovell, & Steven G. Brandl. 2001. ***Voices from the field: Readings in Criminal Justice Research***. Wadsworth.

Vista.unm.edu (WebCT) will be used this semester for submitting work and posting grades, the syllabus, and notes. I will try to post discussion topics in the discussion section when the need arises. You will need to submit papers through WebCT by the date and time specified by me throughout the semester. I will not accept papers submitted via email, turned in during class, or left in my mailbox in the Sociology Department. If you are not sure how WebCT works, then ask questions and figure it out before the semester gets too old. Some dates and times for assignments will be up on WebCT well in advance of their due date, so check them out and plan your work accordingly. Other assignments will be discussed in class as we move through the material then posted to WebCT, so watch out and come to class.

Course Requirements:

Reading: Complete all readings. Readings should be completed before the discussion of them in class. Be sure to take good notes while you are reading. Highlight what is confusing, interesting, inconsistent with what you think, etc. These notes should help you try to integrate what you are reading with what you already know. *It is not unusual to be called by name to respond to the readings, so stay up on them.*

In addition to the Walliman text, which form the backbone for the lectures, we will be reading out of a crime research reader—***Voices from the Field***. The purpose of the reader is to see the various techniques, ethical issues, and research concepts put to use. The reader is broken down into six methods of investigation, including experimental research, survey research, field research, analysis of existing records, secondary data analysis, and “other methods.” Each of these sections has three example research projects. Over the course of the semester you will be expected to *read* all 18 of these research articles.

Grading:

All grades are final grades are final, unless a calculation error was made.

Your grade will be based on the following five components:

1. **Mid-term Exam # 1** (15%)
2. **Mid-term Exam # 2** (15%)
3. **Writing Assignments** (20%): The writing assignments are divided up into two sections: (1) *Voices from the Field* articles and (2) research proposal assignments.
 1. You are required to answer a series of questions for one article from the 3 articles in each of the six sections—6 write-ups in all. Attached to this syllabus is a list of these questions. Your answers must be typed and double-spaced. Your name, Soc. 280, “Voices” and article number must also be typed and placed at the top of the first page. Your answers should not exceed three pages. These are to be submitted via vista.unm.edu by the assigned date. Please do not include a cover page. These will be graded so take them seriously. Each will be worth 5 points. These are designed to make sure you are reading and to help you contribute to class discussions. These will be 10% of your final grade in the class.
 2. There will also be a series of writing assignments designed to help you prepare your research proposal. These will be distributed in class and are worth 5 points each. They will also make up 10 % of your final grade. These assignments are designed to help you pull together your final research proposal. You will be required to research your topic using the university library system. I don’t want you to find your research articles from Google or anywhere else on the web. I really want you to learn to use our library resources. You can expect 6 to 10 of these (depending on time). On the top of these assignments type “Proposal Homework” and the number of the assignment.
4. **Research Proposal** (30%): Total of 6-8 pages in length. Attached to this syllabus is an outline of what your proposal should include. The proposal will be due through Vista.unm.edu by our final exam date. Click the link in the assignments section that says final project. Part of your proposal grade includes a meeting with me during class time. This will be a nice opportunity for you to discuss what your research idea is and how you would research it. We can clear up a lot of confusion and questions that you might have then. Look on the schedule below to see when this meeting will be. An Important Note: *your research proposal is only a proposal for research, not carrying out original research.*

5. **Presentations (10% research articles/10% final presentation):** (1) You are required to present the theory, method, and findings of a research article from the *Voices from the Field* reader during the semester. Your presentation will be fairly informal (no PowerPoint or handouts required). You will be required, however, to come prepared to lead class discussion about the article, being sure the class touches on the key points. Students are required to read all of the articles. (2) You will also be required to give a brief presentation of your proposal to the class during the last week of the semester. Be prepared to use PowerPoint. This presentation is not intended to be the last word on your proposal. It is hoped that you will use the feedback to improve your proposal before you submit it through vista.unm.edu.

Policy Issues:

- **Attendance:** Although I do not take attendance, it is *strongly* recommended that you come to class. Modifications to the syllabus are likely and it is your responsibility to be on top of changes. You are responsible for any missed work.
- **Exams:** You should take the exams on the days/times scheduled. If this is not possible, you must speak with me *prior* to the exam. Arrangements for makeup-exams must be made with me prior to the scheduled exam.
- **Class Notes:** If you miss class, please obtain the notes from another student and/or see me during my office hours.
- **Policy on Academic Dishonesty** from *The Pathfinder*: The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or who otherwise fails to meet the expected standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; or hindering the academic work of other students
- **Student Support Services**
Any student who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodation for individual learning needs. For further information, contact the Accessibility Resource Center at 277-3506. Also, please inform me as soon possible of any needs.
- **Special Circumstances:** I realize all of you have busy lives. If anything happens to you that could potentially hurt your performance in the class – please let me know ASAP.

Voices from the field articles presentation list (will be filled out first week of class)

Voices from the Field Articles	Student Presenters
1. "Inmate adjustment and Change During Shock Incarceration" Layton MacKenzie & Shaw (pp. 21-43)	
2. "Evaluating the Use of Social Skills Training and Employment with Delinquent Youth" Leiber & Mawhorr (pp. 44-65)	
3. "General Deterrent Effects of Police Patrol in Crime 'Hot Spots'" Sherman & Weisburd (pp. 66-89)	
4. "Reassessing the Impact of Race on Citizens' Attitudes Toward the Police" Frank, et al. (pp. 95-108)	
5. "Heavy Metal Music Preference, Delinquent Friends, Social Control, and Delinquency" Singer et al. (pp. 109-121)	
6. "My Wife Is Married and So Is My Girlfriend" Decker & Rosenfeld (pp. 122-138)	
7. "Fear of Victimization and the Interactional Construction of Harassment in a Latino Neighborhood" Vander Ven (pp. 141-159)	
8. "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence" Decker (pp. 160-181)	
9. "Ambivalent Actions: Prison Strategies of First-Time, Short-Term Inmates" Schmid & Jones (pp. 182-196)	
10. "Analytical and Aggregation Biases in Analysis of Imprisonment" Crutchfield et al. (pp.207-224)	
11. "On Preventing Drunk Driving Recidivism" Taxman & Piquero (pp. 225-247)	
12. "In the Line of Duty: A descriptive Analysis of Police Assaults and Accidents" Brandl (pp. 248-261)	
13. "Juvenile Victimization: Covergent Validation of Alternative Measurements" Wells & Rankin (pp. 267-287)	
14. "Racial Prejudice and Support for the Death Penalty by Whites" Barkan & Cohn (pp. 288-296)	
15. "A Badge and a Caccalaureate: Policies, Hypotheses, and Further Evidence" Worden (pp. 297-323)	
16. "You Can Lead a Horse to Water...:A Case Study of a Police Department's Response to Stricter Drunk-Driving Laws" Mastrofski & Ritti (pp. 327-352)	
17. "Images of Crime and Justice: Murder and the "True Crime" Genre" Durham III et al. (pp. 353-368)	
18. "Further Exploration of the Filight from Discretion: The Role of Risk/Need Insrumetns in Probation Supervision Decisions" Schneider et al. (369-388)	

August 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
23	24 Course Introduction	25	26 Walliman: Ch. 1	27	28 Walliman: Ch. 1	29
30	31 Walliman: Ch. 2 Voices: Ch.1					

September 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Walliman Ch. 2 Voices Ch. 2.	3	4 Walliman Ch. 2 Voices Ch. 3	5
6	7 Labor Day	8	9 Walliman Ch. 3 Voices assignment 3 over articles 1, 2, and 3	10	11 Walliman Ch. 3 Voices Ch. 4	12
13	14 Walliman Ch. 3 Voices Ch. 5	15	16 Walliman Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Voices Ch. 6	17	18 Walliman Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Voices Assignment 2 over articles 4, 5, and 6 due.	19
20	21 Walliman Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Voices Ch. 7	22	23 Walliman Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Voices Ch. 8	24	25 Voices Ch. 9	26
27	28 Review for 1 st exam Voices Assignment 3 over articles 7, 8, and 9 due through vista.unm.edu	29	30 <u>Exam 1. over Voices chapter 1-9 & Walliman</u>			

October 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 10	3
4 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 11	5	6	7 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 12	8	9 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Assignment 4 over articles 10, 11, and 12 due on vista.unm.edu	10
11 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 13	12	13	14 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 14	15	16 Fall Break—No Class	17
18 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 15	19	20	21 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Assignment 5 over articles 13, 14, and 15 due on vista.unm.edu	22	23 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 16	24
25 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 17	26	27	28 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Ch. 18	29	30 Walliman Ch. 7 Voices Assignment 6 over articles 16, 17, and 18 due on vista.unm.edu	31

November 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6 Walliman Ch. 7	7
8 Walliman Ch. 7	9	10	11 Walliman Ch. 7	12	13 Walliman Ch.7	14
15 Walliman Ch.7	16	17	18 Walliman Ch.7	19	20 Review for Exam 2	21
22 Exam 2 over Walliman Ch. 4 through 9 and Voices 10-18	23	24	25 *Open*	26	27 Thanksgiving—No Class	28
29 Student Meetings	30					

December 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Student Meetings	3	4 Student Presentations	5
6	7 Student Presentations	8	9 Student Presentations	10	11 Proposal Due	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Voices from the Field: Readings in Criminal Justice Research Quantitative Articles

[*Directions:* What follows is a **12-step outline to understand a quantitative research report**. For each article that is **quantitative**, record notes in only enough detail to support recall in the absence of the original document, Except for Step 1, use abbreviations, diagrams, shorthand, and a careful selection of no more than what is absolutely essential to the study. Work on this sheet along (except for Step 6), and do not be tempted to run onto additional pages.]

1. **CITATION.** What study report is this? Record a complete reference citation.
2. **PURPOSE AND GENERAL RATIONALE.** In broad terms, what was the purpose of the study, and how did the author(s) make a case for its general importance?
3. **FIT AND SPECIFIC RATIONALE.** How does the topic of the study fit into the existing research literature, and how is that provenance (where something originated or was nurtured in its early existence) used to make a specific case for the investigation?
4. **PARTICIPANTS.** Describe who was studied (give number and characteristics) and how they were selected.
5. **CONTEXT.** Where did the study take place? Describe important characteristics.
6. **STEPS IN SEQUENCE.** In the order performed, what were the main procedural steps in the study? Describe or diagram in a flowchart, showing order and any important relationships among the steps.
7. **DATA.** What constituted data (e.g., test scores, questionnaire responses, frequency counts, homicides), how was it collected, and what was the role of the investigator(s) in that process?
8. **ANALYSIS.** What form of data analysis was used, and what specific questions was it designed to answer? What (if any) statistical operations and computer programs were employed?
9. **RESULTS.** What did the author(s) identify as the primary results (products or findings produced by the analysis of data)?

10. **CONCLUSIONS.** What did the author(s) assert about how the results in Step 9 responded to the purpose(s) established in Step 2, and how did the events and experiences of the entire study contribute to that conclusion?

11. **CAUTIONS.** What cautions does the author(s) raise about the study itself or about interpreting the results? Add here any of your own reservations.

12. **DISCUSSION.** What interesting facts or ideas did you learn from reading the report? Include here anything that was of value, including: results, research designs and methods, references, instruments, history, useful arguments, or personal inspiration.

Voices from the Field: Readings in Criminal Justice Research Qualitative Articles

[*Directions:* What follows is a **12-step outline to understand a qualitative research report**. For each article that is **qualitative**, record notes in only enough detail to support recall in the absence of the original document, Except for Step 1, use abbreviations, diagrams, shorthand, and a careful selection of no more than what is absolutely essential to the study. Work on this sheet along (except for Step 6), and do not be tempted to run onto additional pages.]

1. **CITATION.** What study report is this? Record a complete reference citation.
2. **PURPOSE AND GENERAL RATIONALE.** In broad terms, what was the purpose of the study, and how did the author(s) make a case for its general importance?
3. **FIT AND SPECIFIC RATIONALE.** How does the topic of the study fit into the existing research literature, and how is that provenance (where something originated or was nurtured in its early existence) used to make a specific case for the investigation?
4. **PARTICIPANTS.** Who was/were the author(s) (important characteristics only), and how was he or she relate to the purpose, participants, and study site? Describe who was studied (give number and characteristics) and how they were selected.
5. **CONTEXT.** Where did the study take place? Describe important characteristics.
6. **STEPS IN SEQUENCE.** In the order performed, what were the main procedural steps in the study? Describe or diagram in a flowchart, showing order and any important relationships among the steps.
7. **DATA.** What constituted data (e.g., field notes, interview transcripts, photographs, diaries), how was it collected, and what was the role of the investigator(s) in that process?
8. **ANALYSIS.** What form of data analysis was used, and what was it designed to reveal? What computer program was used (if any)?
9. **RESULTS.** What did the author(s) identify as the primary results (products or findings produced by the analysis of data)? In general, “What was going on there?”

10. **CONCLUSIONS.** What did the author(s) assert about how the results in Step 9 responded to the purpose(s) established in Step 2, and how did the events and experiences of the entire study contribute to that conclusion?

11. **CAUTIONS.** What cautions does the author(s) raise about the study itself or about interpreting the results? Add here any of your own reservations, particularly those related to methods used to enhance credibility (trustworthiness and believability).

12. **DISCUSSION.** What interesting facts or ideas did you learn from reading the report? Include here anything that was of value, including: results, research designs and methods, references, instruments, history, useful arguments, or personal inspiration.

Guidelines for Research Proposal

Your proposals must be typed, double-spaced, and written out in a professional style (no bullets or outlines, but paragraphs). The following are the guidelines for writing up the proposal. Note that I will deduct points if some sections are left out or are not done properly. You will also lose points if your writing style gets in the way of the content. You will notice that the format follows closely the format of a journal article. You can pick any topic that interests you and you may work in groups of no more than 3 if you wish. (100 points/30%)

I. The Title

- Encapsulates the essence of the research.
- Important to include the all or many of the key concepts of your study

II. Aims of Research

- An introduction to the heart of the research.
- You should be able to capture the aims of the research in 2 or 3 sentences.

III. Background

- What is the context from which your research problem emerges?
- Can you demonstrate that you are aware of the major factors which surround your problem, and the significant literature which relates to it?
- Do not assume that the audience knows anything about your topic.

IV. Research Problem

- Must be the focus of the proposal.
- The culmination of the background work and the initiator of the specific research tasks.
- Clearly identify the nature of the problem, how it was identified, and why it is a significant problem which needs to be researched.

V. Outline of Methods

- What you are going to do to carry out the research, based on your chosen research approach.
- Be sure to include a review of the relevant literature to your research topic.
- Include both a discussion of your method for data collection (questionnaires, interviews, study of documents, observations etc.) and your method for data analysis (qualitative, quantitative, both).
- Identify the research population(s) or situations.
- Include your sampling design (if relevant)—size of sample(s), locations of sample(s), and number of case studies...
- How will you get access to the information you need (if this applies to you)?
- Indicate the range of methods required for your project and the general scale of the procedures and why you are using those methods: which method, how will you carry it out, and why?

VI. Possible Outcomes

- Try to precisely state the nature and scope of the outcomes and as to who might benefit from the information.
- Make sure the outcomes directly relate to the aims of the research.

VII. Selected Bibliography

Guidelines for Final Presentation

Below is the suggested way to format your final presentation. You certainly are welcome to customize it as you see fit, but be sure to at least cover these areas.

1. Title
Researcher
Name(s)

2. Research
Question

3. Theoretical
Background

4. Hypotheses

5. Methodology

6. Ethics/
Limitations