

## SOC403/603: Techniques of Social Research

SPRING 2019

Tu/Th 1:00-2:15; LAB Th 2:30-3:45

BEH 212

<i>Instructor:</i>	Professor Elizabeth Lawrence	<i>Office:</i> CBC-B 243
<i>Email:</i>	Elizabeth.lawrence@unlv.edu	<i>Office Hours:</i> W 2-4 or by appointment
<i>TA:</i>	Torisha Stone	<i>Office:</i> CBC-B 209
<i>Email:</i>	stonet5@unlv.nevada.edu	<i>Office Hours:</i> M 11-12 or by appointment

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\*\*\*Please note that the LAB accompanying this course will have its own syllabus\*\*\*

This course provides students with an introduction and training in sociological research methods. During the semester we will broadly cover various dimensions of social research: research design, conceptualization and measurement, survey research, secondary data analysis, content analysis, interviewing, ethnographic research, and social experiments. We will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of various research designs and their application to various types of research questions. The main objectives of this course are twofold:

**(1) To provide students with an opportunity to develop the critical thinking and inquiry skills needed to design and conduct social research.**

**(2) To help students become more informed consumers and communicators of sociological research, research reports, and research presented in the popular media and elsewhere.**

Upon completion of this course, you can become knowledgeable practitioners, consumers, and evaluators of the social scientific research you encounter on a daily basis (e.g. news reports, advertisers, research results, etc.). To help achieve this goal, you will be required and encouraged to be a participant rather than a spectator through a variety of class assignments. In this class, you will have the opportunity to gain hands-on, real world research experience on various sociological topics.

### Course Learning Objectives

#### *Critical Thinking and Inquiry:*

- Students should be able to identify the skills necessary to design a research study from its inception to its report.
- Students should be familiar with ethical issues in social science research and demonstrate the ability to protect human subjects in research settings.
- Students should recognize the primary characteristics of quantitative research and qualitative research.
- Students should identify the various types of sampling methods and be able to apply to research questions.
- Students should know the types of qualitative data typically collected in a qualitative study and be able to describe why qualitative data analysis is considered to be “interpretive.”
- Students will uncover patterns of data and evaluate data trends by reporting on conclusions.
- Students will analyze and explain emergent themes from research data.

*Communication:*

- a. Students will demonstrate general academic literacy on research methods and be able to verbally articulate the skills necessary to design a research study from its inception to its report.
- b. Students will be familiarized to the writing style of social research and learn to effectively write using sociological research content and common genres.
- c. Students will collaborate with classmates in solving research-based analytic problems.
- d. Students will use peer-to-peer assessment techniques to evaluate their classmates work in class lab settings

*Milestone Experience Learning Days:*

Milestone Experience Day 1: Current News on the Profession. This course day uses the most current publication from the American Sociological Association, the professional organization dedicated to advancing sociology as a scientific discipline and profession serving the public good.

Milestone Experience Day 2: Careers in Sociology. This workshop style class period is devoted to careers in sociology. The class will include resume building, interview skills, discussion of current employment ads, and how to sell oneself as sociology major on the job market.

**Course Materials**

*Required Text:*

Chambliss, Daniel F. and Russell K. Schutt. 2015. *Making Sense of the Social World*. Sage Publications. 5th Edition, Thomson Wadsworth.

*Required Readings:*

In addition to the required text, this course will utilize other readings from sociological journals, textbooks, and other sources. All of these readings will be placed on WebCampus prior to the reading deadline. It is important that you keep up with the readings and come prepared to discuss the daily assigned readings.

**Course Contacts**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email/phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email/phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Course Participation (10%).** Attendance at all class sessions is essential and expected. Most class sessions will involve discussion of the readings and/or course requirement information. Course participation will be comprised of: attendance, completion of in-class activities, contribution to whole class discussions, and participation in small group discussions. During most class days, I will ask that you submit some written component of an activity that will count towards your participation grade. These submissions may occur anytime during the class period, and may ask that you reflect on the required readings (especially the articles posted on WebCampus).

Students receiving low participation grades will: have poor attendance, does not pay attention/take notes, does not contribute to discussions/activities, is unprepared for class, is physically but not mentally present in class, does not do the readings prior to class, may distract other students, uses phone during class. Students receiving high participation grades will demonstrate: punctual, regular class attendance, comes to class prepared for the day's materials including having read the materials, is curious and ask questions, takes notes, pays attention to the instructor and classmates, contributes to whole class and small group discussions. If you are uncomfortable about speaking in class, please email me to discuss strategies or alternative arrangements.

2. **Course Homework (45%).** There will be 3 course homework assignments that will involve the analysis and write-up of various methodological issues. Each homework is worth 15%. Details of these assignments will be posted online and discussed in class at least three weeks prior to each deadline.
3. **Research Lab (15%).** During the semester, you will work on many projects in the research lab. These projects are aimed to incorporate the course material and real-world research experience. Attendance at lab is essential and imperative for successfully completing this course. Please see the syllabus for the lab for details on grading. Please note that in-lab activities may ask that you reflect on the required readings.
4. **Quizzes (30%).** There will be 3 short quizzes in class during the semester. These quizzes are designed to measure your course progress and dedication to the class readings. They will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. Each quiz is worth 10% of your grade, for a combined total of 30% of your final grade.

**Grading structure (totals to 100%)**

Course Participation 10%  
 Course Homework 45%  
 Research Lab 15%  
 Quizzes 30%

**Grading Philosophy:** Below is the standard for the level of assessment of written assignments and overall evaluation for course grades. These standards may be higher than those you may have encountered previously. The distribution of final grades will meet the standards for fair and rigorous evaluation.

Letter Grade	Percentage Grade	Description
A	90-100	<i>Exceptional:</i> Exceeds all required elements of the assignment, and the quality of the work is considerably higher than what was required. The quality of the work is considerably above the class average and impressive to the evaluator.
B	80-89	<i>Good:</i> Meets all required elements of the assignment, and the quality of the work is better than what is required.
C	70-79	<i>Average:</i> Meets all required elements of an assignment, not more, not less. Quality of assignment is satisfactory for college level work.
D	60-69	<i>Below average:</i> Does not meet all the required elements of the assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is considerably lower than satisfactory.

<b>F</b>	<b>59 and below</b>	<i>Failing:</i> Few of the requirements of the assignment are met and/or the quality of the assignment is well below basic standards of writing, comprehension, and/or ability to follow instructions.
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The following table shows the course grading system and final letter grade.

	Percent		Percent
A	93-100	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	D	63-66
B+	87-89	D-	60-62
B	83-86	F	<60
B-	80-82		
C+	77-79		
C	73-76		
C-	70-72		

All course assignments will be completed and handed in on the assigned date. There will be no make-up quizzes or activities and no exceptions to this policy. All course assignments are due on the assigned due date. The following deductions will be taken if your assignment is late:

1 day late (including the same day but after class)	10 point deduction
2 days late	20 point deduction
3 days late	30 point deduction
4 <sup>th</sup> day and beyond	WILL NOT ACCEPT (“0” points)

**Course Policies:**

- Getting to class late, sleeping, talking out of turn, reading, using your phone for calls, internet use, or text messaging, or otherwise being distracted and distracting, are not acceptable classroom activities.
- I encourage you to not use your laptop/tablet in class, as it is usually more of a distraction than a helpful tool (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/>), but the decision is yours. Any technology use that distracts other students is not permissible.
- Please let me know immediately if you have a health problem or disability that necessitates leaving the room during class time, or if you have a conflict that regularly prevents you from getting to class on time.
- If you miss a class, please get notes from a classmate. **You are responsible for all information communicated in class, whether or not you are in attendance.** Information on scheduling changes, assigned work, and announcements may be emailed to students, so you should check your email regularly.
- All assignments must be handed in as **hard copies at the beginning of class** on the stated due date. Emailed copies will be deducted 10 points. Written work must be spell-checked, grammar-checked, and proofread. The quality of your writing will affect your grade.
- I will not give incompletes in this course except under extremely unusual, well-documented circumstances.
- Make-up quizzes will not be given except under unusual, well-documented circumstances.

8. I want you to do well in this class! If you become concerned about your grade, please see me immediately. Do not wait until the end of the semester when you have less work to complete that can raise your grade.
9. When I return written work to you with a grade, take some time to read the comments. I will not discuss your grade until 24 hours after you have received your returned work. If you have concerns, make an appointment with me during office hours and bring your specific questions or comments.

Office hours/Getting Help: No appointment is needed during office hours. I am happy to talk with you about academic issues that are unrelated to course material, such as deciding whether to major in sociology, graduate school, etc. I will also answer questions over email and will check class emails once a day on weekdays. Please write professionally in all emails (e.g., use a greeting such as Dear Dr. Lawrence, use complete sentences, and a closing/signature such as Sincerely, Jane/John Doe). Here are a few websites that can help with professional emails: <https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087>; <https://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>; <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay>

Email/Web Page: Important information will be communicated over email, so make sure that you regularly check the email address listed for you in the university administrative system. The syllabus, schedule, readings, handouts, assignments, and other information will be posted on the course website. The most recent course information will be available here, as information that is on this syllabus may be changed over the course of the semester. Email updates will be sent out when important material is posted on the website. You must regularly log into the course website so that this important information can reach you.

For policies regarding classroom behavior, discrimination and harassment, honor code, religious holidays, and students with disabilities, see end of the syllabus.

**SCHEDULE (reading assignment is due before the first listed class):**

Please be aware that some course requirements or assigned readings may change during the semester. However, the overall workload will remain the same if changes are made.

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>	<b>Lab</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b>				
Jan. 22	Course introduction	Course syllabus		
Jan. 24	Human inquiry & science	C&S Chapter 1		
<b>WEEK 2</b>				
Jan 29	Dialectics of social research	C&S Chapter 2		
Jan 31	Social science paradigms	C&S Chapter 2		
<b>WEEK 3</b>				
Feb 5	Ethics of social research	C&S Chapter 3		
Feb 7	Research design	WC reading #1 (under "Pages") – Lubet critique		
<b>WEEK 4</b>				
Feb 12	Research process	WC reading #2		
Feb 14	Conceptualization	C&S Chapter 4 pp.65-79		Library visit
<b>WEEK 5</b>				
Feb 19	Operationalization/measures/indexes	C&S Chapter 4 p.80-84		
Feb 21			<b>Quiz #1</b>	Milestone Experience
<b>WEEK 6</b>				
Feb 26	Sampling	C&S Chapter 5		
Feb 28	Sampling designs	WC reading #3		
<b>WEEK 7</b>				
March 5	Survey research	C&S Chapter 7	<b>HW #1 due</b>	
March 7	Survey research designs <i>Guest speaker Richard Reeves</i>	WC reading #4		
<b>WEEK 8</b>				
March 12	Quantitative data analysis	C&S Chapter 8		
March 14	Quantitative data analysis	WC reading #5		Intro to Career Services
<b>WEEK 9</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>			
<b>WEEK 10</b>				
March 26	Experimental designs	C&S Chapter 6		
March 28	Experimental designs	WC reading #6		
<b>WEEK 11</b>				
April 2			<b>Quiz #2</b>	
April 4	Ethnography <i>Guest speaker Korey Tillman</i>	C&S Chapter 9		Milestone Experience

<b>WEEK 12</b>				
April 9	Ethnography, continued	WC reading #7		
April 11	Unobtrusive research	C&S Chapter 11		
<b>WEEK 13</b>				
April 16	Content analysis	WC reading #8	<b>HW#2 due</b>	
April 18	Oral history interview <i>Guest speaker Claytee White</i>			
<b>WEEK 14</b>				
April 23	Qualitative Data Analysis	C&S Chapter 10		
April 25	Evaluation research	C&S Chapter 12		
<b>WEEK 15</b>				
April 30	Evaluation research	WC reading #9		
May 2	Mixed methods	WC reading #10		
<b>WEEK 16</b>				
May 7	Reviewing research	C&S Ch. 13 pp.315-320	<b>HW#3 Due</b>	
May 9	Study week day			Review
<b>WEEK 17</b>				
FINALS WEEK	Quiz #3 Tuesday 5/14 1:00 PM		<b>Quiz #3</b>	

C&S= Chambliss, Daniel F. and Russell K. Schutt. 2015. *Making Sense of the Social World*. Sage Publications. 5th Edition, Thomson Wadsworth.

WC reading = Webcampus PDF readings posted on the course website in the “Readings” folder, except Reading #1, which is a weblink.

## OFFICIAL POLICIES

**Academic Misconduct**—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV’s function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Academic Misconduct Policy (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

**Classroom Conduct**—Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in class and in the libraries in ways that do not interfere with the rights of other students to learn or of instructors to teach. Use of electronic devices such as pagers, cellular phones, or recording devices, or potentially disruptive devices or activities, are permitted only with the prior explicit consent of the instructor. The instructor may rescind permission at any time during the class. If a student does not comply with established requirements or obstructs the functioning of the class, the instructor may initiate an administrative drop.

**Classroom Surveillance**—Nevada Revised Statutes (State Law) 396.970 Surreptitious electronic surveillance on campus; exceptions. [Effective January 1, 2017.]

1. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 2, it is unlawful for a person to engage in any kind of surreptitious electronic surveillance on a campus of the System without the knowledge of the person being observed.

2. Subsection 1 does not apply to any electronic surveillance:

(a) Authorized by a court order issued to a public officer, based upon a showing of probable cause to believe that criminal activity is occurring on the property under surveillance;

(b) By a law enforcement agency pursuant to a criminal investigation;

(c) By a peace officer pursuant to NRS 289.830;

(d) By a uniformed peace officer of the Nevada Highway Patrol Division of the Department of Public Safety pursuant to NRS 480.365;

(e) Which is necessary as part of a system of security used to protect and ensure the safety of persons on the campus; or

(f) Of a class or laboratory when authorized by the teacher of the class or laboratory.

(Added to NRS by 1993, 2138; A 2015, 575, 3668, effective January 1, 2017)

**Copyright**—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you, nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as

disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at:  
<http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)**—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Incomplete Grades**—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student’s control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving “P” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

**Library Resources**—Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. Subject librarians for various classes can be found here: [https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians\\_by\\_subject](https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students’ access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

**Religious Holidays Policy**—Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Transparency in Learning and Teaching**—The University encourages students to use a transparency template to discuss with their instructors how assignments and course activities benefit student success: [https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page\\_files/27/TILT-Framework-Students.pdf](https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/TILT-Framework-Students.pdf).

**Tutoring and Coaching**—The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit

<http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC A (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TBE second floor.

**UNLV Writing Center**—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.