

## **SOCIOLOGY 300.1 --- Sociological Research Methods**

Instructor: Noel Byrne, Ph.D.

Fall 2009, Contact Information: [noel.byrne@sonoma.edu](mailto:noel.byrne@sonoma.edu); telephone: 707-664-2517

**Prerequisites:** Sociology Major/Minor, Human Development Major, or instructor consent

**GE:** No

### **Catalog Description**

Consideration of the ways in which sociological questions are formulated and answered. Examination of and practice in conceptualization, theory construction, deductive and inductive reasoning, and other elements of sociological analysis, with an emphasis upon sociological research methods. Required for majors.

### **Course Objectives**

- To understand the nature of sociological analysis and research design.
- To become familiar with the range of research methodologies that are employed in the production of sociological knowledge.
- To acquire skills in research design, the collection of data, the analysis of data, and the presentation of findings.
- To become capable of developing a complete research proposal (including literature review).

### **Course Format**

While I will be prepared to systematically address each of the topics introduced in this class, we will not be limited to only the lecture format. Our approach to the subject matter will include group exercises, field projects, and individual or group presentations of ongoing research development and outcomes. By the end of the semester, each student will have completed a research proposal addressing a research topic of his or her choice; this formal research proposal will include a statement of the research problem, a survey of relevant literature, a specification of the investigation's research design (including, where appropriate, a copy of the data gathering instrument) and a description of the kind of data analysis to be done.

### **Course Content**

In broad terms, we will be concerned with both **theory testing** and **theory generation**. Distinctive kinds of research methodologies tend to be associated with each of these contrasting approaches to sociological investigation. (The former often takes the form of *hypothesis testing*, refers to the *experimental method* as a basic frame of reference, and bears a considerable sympathy for *quantitative data*. The latter often strives to increase the likelihood of a *new understandings unfettered by preconceived expectations or extant theory*, is *fundamentally exploratory in spirit*, and is highly receptive to the use of *qualitative data*.)

### **Grading Factors**

Attendance at 90% of class meetings as a precondition of course grade of "C" or better; midterm and final exams; term research project; exercises/reaction papers; discussions.

### **Required Readings**

Please see the course syllabus.