

Research Methods (SYA 3300)

Instructor: Katie Rainwater (krainwat@fiu.edu)

Virtual Office Hours, Wednesdays, 3 – 4pm or by appointment

Zoom: <https://fiu.zoom.us/j/5456764451>

Course Description and Purpose

Welcome to Research Methods! Together we will learn basic principles of social research and use them to explore *working during the Great Resignation*.

This course is divided into three modules. First, we will explore the foundations of social research. (What is it? What makes research valid?) Second, we will consider and try our hand at methods of data collection and analysis. Finally, we will reflect upon the ethics and purpose of social research.

Course materials include models of exemplary research, how-to-guides on the nuts and bolts of research, and a textbook. Much of the exemplary research will be drawn from literature on work and labor given this semester's theme of working during the Great Resignation.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the goals and limitations of social research
- Identify and apply principles of social research design
- Use two different research methods to collect social data
- Analyze social research data
- Report the findings, importance, and limitations of social research data
- Identify and apply principles of social research ethics

How to Succeed in this Course

Learning social research methods is incredibly rewarding. A firm understanding of research methods will enable you to better evaluate social research. Social research skills are applicable in many contexts beyond the university such as in community organizations, government offices, and for-profit companies.

Many students find social research methods difficult. You may find it helpful to designate a regular time to do the readings and coursework for this class (e.g. Mondays and Fridays from 10am – noon). Keeping up with the material as we progress is essential – it is simply too much material to try to learn the week before the exam.

Pedagogy experts speak of two general categories of assessments: *formative* and *summative*. *Formative assessments* help me monitor how you are learning. The reading response questions are formative assessments that require you to familiarize yourself with the material before accessing the lectures and enable me to understand how well you are comprehending the reading.

As explained below, to earn a passing grade on the reading responses it is not necessary to totally understand the material. Similarly, I assess the memo grade formatively. Your memo grade is not totally determined by the extent to which you demonstrate mastery of the material but by the extent to which you demonstrate engagement with the course content.

On the other hand, the Module 1 and Module 2 exams are *summative assessments*. By the time we reach the end of each module, I expect you to have learned the content. These exams will assess your knowledge of the content. Because of the different standards for grading the two types of assignments, it is possible to perform relatively well on formative assessments but to perform poorly on summative assessments.

How can you ensure that you perform well on summative assessments? My advice would be to take the formative assessments seriously. Read closely, consider the reading response questions carefully, and ask questions when you don't understand. In addition, at the beginning of each module, I provide a study guide with the concepts that I expect you to understand and be able to apply from each module. I recommend consulting this study guide throughout the course and not just right before an exam.

Finally, for online lectures in Module One, there is an extra credit opportunity designed to encourage careful engage with the recorded lecture. If you take and submit notes on the lecture (as described on the extra credit page), I will award you 15 bonus points on the reading response associated with that lecture.

Policies

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

- [Policies](#)
- [Netiquette \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- [Technical Requirements and Skills](#)
- [Accessibility and Accommodation](#)
- [Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Statement](#)
- [Inclusivity Statement](#)

Religious Holidays

The University's policy on religious holy days as stated in the University Catalog and Student Handbook will be followed in this class. Any student may request to be excused from class to observe a religious holy day of his or her faith.

Statement on Academic Freedom from UFF-FIU Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Administration:

Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of the University. The principles of academic freedom are integral to the conception of the University as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and the communication of knowledge in an

atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. The University serves the common good through teaching, research, scholarship/creative activities, and service. The fulfillment of these functions rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of teaching, expression, research, and debate. The University and UFF affirm that academic freedom is a right protected by this Agreement in addition to a faculty member's constitutionally protected freedom of expression and is fundamental to the faculty member's responsibility to seek and to state truth as he/she sees it.

Academic Honesty Statement

FIU defines academic misconduct in the Student Conduct and Honor Code (Code) as, "any act or omission by a Student, which violates the concept of academic integrity and undermines the academic mission of the University in violation of the Code." Code violations include, but are not limited to: academic dishonesty, bribery, cheating, commercial use, complicity, falsification, and plagiarism. The Code is available here: <https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/get-support/student-conduct-and-academic-integrity/student-conduct-and-honor-code/index.php> (Links to an external site.)

A Note on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense. **Don't do it.** The minimum penalty for plagiarism will be a zero on the assignment. I will pursue the case with the Office of Academic Integrity. The reason I take this so seriously is that plagiarism completely undermines our educational aims. You are expected to think for yourself in this class and passing off someone else's work as your own is the worst way to fail at this.

Not knowing what plagiarism is does not count as an excuse. Even quoting someone's definition of a term can count as plagiarism. Whenever you use someone else's wording, *you must put it in quotation marks and cite the source.* Do not use someone else's words as if they were your own.

If you are unsure, you should familiarize with the definition and the university's policy. Here is a list of things that count as plagiarism (the list is not exhaustive):

1. Using someone else's words without attribution (even for something as small as a definition). You are welcome to use someone else's words. Quoting other people is fine. Just put those words in quotation marks and *cite the source.*
2. Paraphrasing someone else's words. This even applies to assigned readings. Do not simply paraphrase something or replace words with synonyms. That's plagiarism.
3. Using someone else's ideas and arguments. Let's say you consult a secondary source. You do not steal their words or paraphrase them (so you are not breaking the rules mentioned above). But you take the structure of their argument and their ideas and you present them as your own. That's plagiarism.

Avoiding plagiarism is not hard. All you have to do is give credit to the source. Be very careful about consulting outside materials. If you do decide to use an outside source you **must** tell me about it by citing the source.

Disability Services

FIU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who require course accommodations are required to register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) by the beginning of the semester and to follow the DRC's procedures. Contact information:

- MMC, Graham Center 190, (305) 348-3532, email: drcupgl@fiu.edu
- BBC, Wolfe University Center 131, (305) 919-5345, email: drcbbc@fiu.edu

Textbook and Course Materials

Chambliss and Schutt, *Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation*, 5th or 6th ed. (Sage Publications). [Note, if you purchase the 6th edition it may be expensive. Used, inexpensive copies of the 5th edition may be found for purchase or rent online].

Other readings are available via Canvas under the Module tab in the "Readings and Overview" section for each module.

Course Communication

I regularly post announcements and feedback on the announcements section of Canvas. I expect all student to check canvas announcements regularly and to read all announcements.

I am happy to answer short questions about assignments and grading over email (krainwat@fiu.edu). However, if you have a question requiring extended discussion, please come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss over zoom.

Office Hours

- Email: krainwat@fiu.edu
- Virtual office hours Wednesdays, 3pm – 4pm via Zoom: <https://fiu.zoom.us/j/5456764451>)
- OR by appointment

Office hours are not only for students who are struggling with the material. (However, if you are having difficulties, please reach out sooner rather than later). I'm also here to help you engage more deeply with the readings, to recommend further readings, or to talk about applications of course material beyond school. So please stop by!

Assignments

Reading Responses (20%)

For each unit, you will be required to respond to one or more questions that demonstrates your engagement with the assigned readings. For the reading response, I will require you to write a short (about 4 sentences, please do not exceed this length unless I indicate otherwise) response to a question. Sometimes you may choose a question from among several questions. Reading responses are graded according to the following rubric:

Reading Responses Grading Scale

100	Demonstrates excellent engagement with the reading. Answers all parts of the question.
85	Demonstrates good engagement with the reading. Answers all parts of the question.
50	Demonstrates minimal engagement with the reading. AND/OR answers only part of the question.
0	Response post is not submitted, plagiarized, or demonstrates NO engagement with the reading.

Some notes on the grading of reading responses:

- Observe that if you *both* demonstrate evidence of having read *and* answer the reading response question in its entirety, then you will receive an 85. This means that to earn an 85 you do not need to have answered the question correctly or to have understood the material perfectly.
- If your response does not reveal evidence of having read or demonstrates evidence of superficial reading/skimming, then the maximum that you can score is a 50.
- For the reading responses to have their intended pedagogical purpose (i.e. to encourage you to engage thoughtfully with the course readings), I must grade reading response posts strictly. If your response is ambiguous or leaves doubt in my mind as to whether you have read, then the highest you will receive is a 50.
- 100s are reserved for students who demonstrate evidence of exceptionally close reading or exceptionally thoughtful engagement with the material.

Given the number of students and response posts, I will not provide detailed individual feedback on each reading response. However, I will provide feedback on your first several reading responses so that you understand my expectations. I will be available to discuss your response posts with you if you come to office hours or set up an appointment.

Memos (20%)

“Memos” are short assignments that give you the opportunity to apply a course concept or skill. The idea of memos is to offer a low-stakes way of developing your understanding of the course material. These will generally be completed individually and submitted to the instructor on Sunday evenings. You should expect to complete between 12 - 15 memos this semester. Open-

ended memos are graded on the same scale as reading responses.

Participation (15%)

Interaction among learners is positively associated with good learning outcomes in online courses. This course will have a group work component. With your group, you will submit a total of 5 group work activities this semester (2 for Module 1, 2 for Module 2, and 1 for Module 3). Groupwork will be assigned at least 2 weeks in advance of the due date giving you plenty of time to figure out a time to meet virtually or figuring out a plan for working asynchronously. Groups can have 2-4 people. If you would like to create your own group, please email me with the name of your group members and CC all the group members. If you have not emailed me by August 27 then I will assign you to a group. Each groupwork activity will be worth 3% of your grade for a total of 15% for the 5 activities.

Interview Assignment (15%)

The interview assignment is designed to give you experience carrying out qualitative social research. It is divided into three parts. It is due on Sunday, December 3rd.

1. Interview Assignment 1: Interview Audio & Transcript (5%)
2. Interview Assignment 2: Coded Transcript (5%)
3. Interview Assignment 3: Memo & Debrief (5%)

Exams (30%)

Exams will be assigned at the end of Module One (covering the material from Module One) and at the end of Module Three (covering the material from Modules Two and Three). Exams will consist of multiple-choice and short essay questions. Study guides are available at the beginning of each module and prompts are given in advance.

You have the option of opting out (being excused from) *either* the interview assignment or the Module 2 Exam. Or you can choose to do both.

The due dates for the Exams are as follows:

1. Module One: Feb 26 11:59pm
2. Module Two & Three: April 30 11:59pm

Career Connections Seminar

I will be offering a Career Connections Seminar Series this semester that allow students the opportunity to consider how social research methods may be used in careers. As explained on Canvas, you can earn extra credit by attending these virtual seminars and writing an essay.

Grading

Late Assignments

Reading responses and memos are not accepted late. I understand that sometimes your internet connection fails, you get sick, you have an important work or caregiving responsibility. To account for how life sometimes gets in the way of deadlines, I will drop your two lowest reading response grades and your two lowest memo grades.

If something major happens (illness etc.) which is going to prevent you from being able to submit **multiple** reading response posts and/or memos on time, then please get in touch with me **before** the deadline of the response posts to see if we can work out an alternate deadline/arrangement. If you contact me after the fact, I will not be able to accept your assignments.

Exams and participation are accepted late but with a penalty. (I deduct 5% when submitted within 24-hours of the due date; 10% when submitted within two weeks of the due date; 15% when the assignment is submitted more than two weeks after the due date.)

The interview assignment is due at the end of the semester and it cannot be accepted.

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%	Letter	Range%
A	92.5 or above	B	82.5 - 87.4	C	70 - 77.4
A-	90 - 92.4	B-	80 - 82.4	D	60 - 69
B+	87.5 - 89	C+	77.5 - 79	F	59 or less

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Weight
Reading Responses	20%
Participation	15%
Interview Assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignment 1: Interview Audio & Transcript (5%)• Assignment 2: Coded Transcript (5%)• Assignment 3: Memo & Debrief (5%)	15%
Memos	20%
Exam <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exam 1: Intro to Social Research and Research Design (15%)• Exam 2: Data Collection and Analysis (15%)	30%
Total	100%