Syllabus* Spring 2020 SYA3300

Research Methods

Instructor Information
Prof. Sarah J. Mahler, AKA "Dr. M"
- Email: Use email in Canvas; (use mahlers@fiu.edu only for emergencies)
- Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-4:30 PM
- Office location: SIPA 309

Course Description and Purpose
Social Science Research Methods is a required foundational methods course for GSS (anthropology, geography, & sociology) majors. Students gain a solid understanding and hands-on experience of how social scientists plan for and do research. You will also learn to find, read, interpret, theorize and evaluate information about patterns in people’s behavior and thoughts whether collected by you or by others. Expect to work very hard in this course but if you do, you will graduate from FIU with skills that will make you marketable for many jobs in community organizations, industries, and government.

There are no statistics in this course nor does it presume any previous research methods courses although both are a plus. You will be exposed to some statistical concepts and learn about graphing data but you will not use statistical tests.

Course Objectives
Upon completing this course, students will be able to:
- understand what social science is and the relationship of research to social science.
- recognize and accurately apply professional standards for protecting human subjects in research.
- understand and accurately apply principles of good research design and data collection
- demonstrate the relationship between theory and methods
- accurately apply good principles for designing data collection
- accurately analyze data collected
- present research findings in accurate and easy-to-understand visual and written formats

Textbook and Course Materials: There is no required textbook for this course. All course materials needed can be found in their corresponding module(s) in Canvas.

Course Communication
Communication in this course will take place via Canvas email. Check out the Canvas Conversations Tutorial or Canvas Guide to learn how to communicate with your instructor and peers using Announcements, Discussions, and the Inbox.

Only if/when you (1) encounter an obvious instructor-generated problem (such as a malfunctioning link in a module or a misspelling, etc.), or (2) need an immediate response (less
than 24 hours) should you email me using my FIU email: (mahlers@fiu.edu). So, please use that email to notify me of any broken links, missing info, etc.

**Policies**

Before starting this course, please review FIU's policies regarding Netiquette, Accessibility and Accommodation, Academic Conduct, etc.

**Plagiarism/Academic Honesty:** As an FIU student, you are always expected to abide by the university’s policies particularly those governing academic honesty and plagiarism as they appear in the FIU Student Handbook. **You cannot share the quiz questions, quiz responses, etc., or any other assessment information with anyone unless expressly permitted by the instructor in writing.** If you are not familiar with how to avoid plagiarism, consult FIU library tutorials. Additionally, should anything you produce cite any data, research or information that you have not generated and which is not general knowledge then you **must** cite it appropriately following the conventions of your discipline (anthropology, sociology, geography, etc.) and/or a particular journal. If you do not cite others’ work adequately you can be accused of plagiarism and FIU takes these accusations very seriously. The program Turnitin will be used for many assignments to ensure that you abide by these rules regarding proper citation and plagiarism prevention. You can check to make sure that you have not submitted work that plagiarizes and your instructor will as well.

**Exam & Quiz Policy**

There are no exams in this course. Quizzes appear in several modules during the first half of the course. They are open-book, online and you may take them twice. They disappear after their deadline, however. Each question answered correctly earns a point; your grade is the higher score. Note: **You cannot share the quiz questions, quiz responses, etc., or any other assessment information with anyone unless expressly permitted by the instructor in writing.**

**Assignments & Grading Rubric:** *(Read carefully as this is not your typical grading rubric!)*

A typical module includes one to several graded assignments -- written, quiz, discussion, etc. All of these have different point values as indicated in the Module in which they occur. Unless otherwise noted, each is due by classtime for the week/module in which it is assigned. Your grades will be recorded in Canvas and your cumulative performance will be available to you on a typical scale (100%). See below for how FIU determines your grade on the A-F letter grade system based translated from your percentage.

**Evaluation:** Except for quizzes, assignments are evaluated using a standard, criterion-based rubric. Assignments and discussions all indicate which criteria from the rubric are being used to evaluate your performance. The rubric is NOT based on the classic A-F system. Rather, you are expected to achieve a minimal standard of performance--set at the B-level--for each criterion. **Your work either meets the standard and receives a B, exceeds the standard and receives an A, or fails to meet the standard and receives an F (zero).** Each criterion is measured
on these 3 options. Your score for an assignment or discussion post is thus the average of the
criteria used for this assignment/discussion translated into its equivalent in points. (That is, you
might score an A on two of three criteria but not meet the minimum on the third criterion.) Why
does Dr. M use this type of rubric? Simply put, you are nearing the end of your degree and you
must perform well-enough to achieve our standards, just as you would need to perform in a
job. If you do mediocre work in a job you might be fired. If you under-perform in this course,
you will not learn the skills necessary for your next methods class and for careers. These are
very marketable skills. That's why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Unacceptable (0.0/F)</th>
<th>Good (3.0/B)</th>
<th>Excellent (4.0/A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity to Rules/Completion</td>
<td>Work does not follow all instructions and/or is incomplete in 2 or more areas.</td>
<td>Work follows instructions but is partially incomplete in only one area (even minor).</td>
<td>Work follows instructions completely and is accomplished in its entirety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Work has more than two inaccuracies that should be avoidable.</td>
<td>Work is overwhelmingly accurate, but 1-2 inaccuracies that should be addressed.</td>
<td>No evidence of inaccuracies in work submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis; Comprehension of Material</td>
<td>Work has evidence of a lack of understanding of key material, concepts, analytical tools.</td>
<td>Work exhibits strong understanding most material, concepts, analytical tools but deficient in at least one area.</td>
<td>Work exhibits full, even advanced understanding of material, concepts and analytical tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantiation, Explanation</td>
<td>Work submitted includes some substantiation (examples, explanations, references to course content), but insufficient for assignment.</td>
<td>Work submitted includes good substantiation but could include more in some areas. Does not quite meet standards.</td>
<td>Work submitted provides more than adequate substantiations and meets or nearly meets professional standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Work submitted evidences little to no insight beyond the bare minimum for the assignment.</td>
<td>Work submitted attempts at making connections beyond the assignment and/or bringing in insightful ideas. Could be strengthened.</td>
<td>Work submitted shows thoughtful consideration beyond merely fulfilling assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Space</td>
<td>Too much underutilized space and/or exceeds limitations on length</td>
<td>Good use of space but choices between text, visuals and white space could be improved.</td>
<td>Excellent use of space with engaging visuals well balanced against text and white spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing: grammar, spelling, etc.</td>
<td>Many unnecessary errors. Was not spell-checked and grammar checked enough. Writing level unacceptable for university writing.</td>
<td>Some errors in spelling, grammar, etc. but writing is clear overall and shows evidence that performed spelling and grammar check.</td>
<td>Very few if any errors in spelling, grammar and clarity of writing.</td>
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FIU Letter Grade and Numeric Equivalent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Range %</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Range %</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Range %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 or above</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 - 86</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 - 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 - 93</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 - 82</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 - 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 - 89</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 - 79</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 or less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tardiness**

Personally, I absolutely hate getting assignments late. It screws my schedule up! But I know FIU students have a lot on your plate so I will accept tardy assignments. You’ll pay a penalty for this privilege, however. If you submit an assignment after it is due but before a week later, you will receive a deduction of ½ grade. If you submit it later than a week after it is due, you will receive a full grade deduction. Since your assignments are in points, that deduction will vary by the possible points. The only exception to this tardiness rule is that students with a bona fide excuse (death in immediate family, major illness, etc.) and substantiate that excuse (obituary, doctor’s note, hospital record, etc.) to the instructor. The instructor will work out arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

**Extra Credit**

To earn extra credit in this course, simply email Dr. M with *constructive criticism* about an aspect of the course. This means, email her about an issue you have and include a suggestion for how to improve it. Examples include but are not limited to; you do not understand a video and find a better one; you find assignment instructions confusing and suggest edits; you discover a broken link or missing file and notify the instructor. Email Dr. M with "Extra Credit" in the subject line and provide your constructive feedback. Each item will receive 0-5 extra credit points at Dr. M's discretion. You may earn up to 25 extra credit points in the term for doing this. There may also be additional extra credit opportunities announced in the course separately, but constructive criticism is ongoing and all term.

If you wish to provide anonymous feedback you may do so through the course link "Feedback Box." I welcome any type of feedback. If you submit through this box, your feedback will be read. However, since it is anonymous I cannot give you any extra credit for it.

**Accessibility and Accommodation**

Those needing special accommodation will be honored. Contact FIU's Disability Resource Center (see link above under FIU policies). Please also notify me, your instructor, at or before the term begins so I can work to accommodate your needs. Often the Center sends me accommodation letters weeks after a term has begun.

**Course Schedule of Topics & Assignments Due**

Refer to the Course Summary (in Canvas) for assignments and their due dates during the term.

*Syllabus Caveat:* The professor reserves the right to change or modify the syllabus at any time during the semester.