

SYA3300: Research Methods

FIU Fall Semester 2024

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Office hours: Wednesdays 5 – 7pm
or by appointment (virtual or in-person)

Course Description and Purpose

Welcome to SYA3300: Research Methods! This course is dedicated to understanding how sociologists, human geographers, anthropologists, and other social science scholars analyze, interpret, and make sense of the social world.

This course is divided into three different sections. First, we will begin with broad questions about knowledge production that underline our approach to any social inquiry. Next, we will then explore the different types of research methods, both qualitative and quantitative. This includes interviews, focus groups, survey research, statistics, and GIS. During the final part of this course, you will be able to apply what we have learned and gain some hands-on experiences.

Ultimately, 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 different research methods to collect social data
- Analyze social research data
- Report the findings, importance, and limitations of social research data

Course Materials

Textbook: No textbook is required. I will be providing PDF copies of book chapters. However, we will be using several chapters from Chambliss and Schutt, *Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation*, 6th ed. (Sage Publications). For your convenience, you may want to purchase or rent this textbook.

Canvas: Any additional readings will be announced and posted online.

Other useful resources for class activities:

- NPR - <http://www.npr.org/sections/news/>
- BBC News - <http://news.bbc.co.uk>
- New York Times - <http://www.nytimes.com> (Go to nytimes.com/FIU for free one-year access)
- U.S. Census Bureau - <https://www.census.gov/>
- Our World in Data (Oxford) <https://ourworldindata.org>

Course Structure

This course is a **hybrid** class. At FIU, hybrid is defined as “a course that has 50% of instruction conducted online and the other 50% conducted in class” (FIU Hybrid Provost Program). Students will be expected to complete readings and activities online, while also attending lectures and discussions once a week in class. This hybrid format will provide students with more flexibility, allowing them to access course materials and complete assignments at their leisure. However, internet access is obviously a requirement and students will need to implement good time management skills. More specifically, students will be responsible for the following:

Canvas: This class uses Canvas as a course webpage. All the readings, class activities, assignment instructions, and the weekly announcements will be posted here. Student must access Canvas on a weekly basis. Students can go to <https://fiu.instructure.com/courses> and log in using your FIU credentials.

Assigned Reading: Students must read the assigned chapter(s) for the week. Additional assigned readings for the course may include news articles, reports, webpages, etc. Links to all of these materials will be announced in class and in the online weekly announcement. Additional readings will complement (not repeat) the lectures, and students are accountable for all assigned readings on the quizzes.

Class Meetings: There will be one 75-minute classes each week (Wednesdays). Students are required to attend ALL of these meetings and will be responsible for the material presented for the module quizzes. There will be group activities include discussion, debate, and problem-solving exercises.

Course Evaluation

<i>Graded Item</i>	<i>% of Grade</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Reading Responses	20%	Short-answer from assigned reading
2. Class Activities	20%	Submitted on Canvas
3. Quizzes	20%	Open-book quizzes online
4. Attendance/participation	10%	Weekly contribution/attendance
5. Hands-on Assignments (2) observation	30%	Survey design, interview, and/or

Reading Responses (20%): For different modules, you will be required to respond to one or more questions that demonstrates your engagement with the assigned readings. For the reading response, you will write a short response (about 5-6 sentences) to a question. For some modules, you may choose one question from among several questions. Reading responses will be graded according to the following rubric:

10/10	Demonstrates an excellent engagement with the reading. Answers all parts of the question.
8.5/10	Demonstrates a good engagement with the reading. Answers all parts of the question.
5/10	Demonstrates minimal engaged with the reading and/or answers only part of the question.
0/10	No submission, plagiarism, A.I. generated, or demonstrates no engagement with the reading.

Class Activities (20%): These are short assignments that give you an opportunity to apply a course concept or skill. The idea being that they offer a low-stakes way to engage with the course materials. Such activities typically consist of individual assignments of various types (reflections, virtual fieldwork, methods exploration, etc.) – specific instructions and due dates will be provided on Canvas and discussed during class.

Quizzes (20%): Throughout the semester, there will be online quizzes. These are to be completed **individually** but are open-note. Quizzes will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. Review questions will be included in the lecture PowerPoints. Detailed instructions will be provided on Canvas and discussed during class before administration.

Attendance/Participation (10%): Student are expected to attend class each week. This is a hybrid course, not a fully online course. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a low of all attendance and participation points. If a class activity takes place during an unexcused missed class, students will receive a zero on that assignment as well. For each module, students will be expected to either participate during class (contribute to class discussion) or online (post on the discussion board). The purpose is to make sure students are engaging with the course materials, critically thinking about what we are learning, and interact with one another.

- There may be mini in-class assignments. This will typically consist of group work that will count towards students' attendance and participation grades. Make-ups will not be offered online.

Hands-On Assignments (30% total; 15% per assignment)

- HOA #1 Interview (15%): The interview assignment is designed to give you experience carrying out qualitative social research. It is divided into three parts.
 - Interview Assignment Part 1 – Interview Audio & Transcript (5%)
 - Interview Assignment Part 2 – Coded Transcript (5%)
 - Interview Assignment Part 3 – Memo & Debrief (5%)

- HOA #2 – Choice of Participant Observation or Survey Design (15%): The second hands-on assignment will be selected by you and your research interest. You have the option of completing participant observation at a location of your choice or you can design a short survey. This assignment will be due at the end of the semester instead of a final exam.
 - *Participant Observation Option*
 - Participant Observation Part 1: Raw field notes
 - Participant Observation Part 2: Extended memo
 - Participant Observation Part 3: Summary write-up
 - Participant Observation Part 4: Analysis and interpretation
 - Participant Observation Part 5: Self-critique and reflection

 - *Survey Design Option*
 - Survey Part 1: Draft your survey
 - Survey Part 2: Create your survey online
 - Survey Part 3: Collect data from 10 respondents
 - Survey Part 4: Analyze and print out your survey results
 - Survey Part 5: Complete a reflection of your survey (minimally 8 paragraphs based on questions provided)

Class Policies

Attendance and assignment

As discussed earlier, it is each student's responsibility to attend all class sessions, read or watch the assigned readings and/or videos, and complete the weekly assignments on time. Attendance is **required**. If a student has 3 or more unexcused absences, he/she/they can lose all participation points for the semester (worth 10% of your total grade). Without an excused absence, late work will only be accepted for three days after the deadline and will have 10% of the total point deduction. Unexpected absences made for serious reasons (i.e., emergency, death of a family member, acute illness) will be excused with documentation.

Communication

Weekly announcements will be posted on Canvas. Important messages will also be sent to each student's email address. If you have any urgent questions or concerns, please send me an email instead of using Canvas messages. All students are asked to please be polite and responsible when communicating with the professor and/or classmates.

Plagiarism and academic misconduct

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether the effort is successful or not. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with severe consequences that range from probation to **expulsion**. If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Academic Integrity Committee.

A.I. Technology can be helpful when brainstorming. However, A.I. generated writing will not be allowed in this class. You are expected to complete all writing assignments and quizzes yourself. Everything you hand in will be run through plagiarism and A.I. detection software. Assignments that are flagged will receive a 0 (if it is the first offense, students will be given the opportunity to re-do the assignment with points deducted).

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me or consult FIU academic misconduct webpage at <https://dasa.fiu.edu/all-departments/student-conduct-and-academic-integrity/>.

Student Resources

Students with Disabilities

Any student who feels he/she/they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Disability Resource Center at 305-348-3532 in GC 190 (<http://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/student-success/disability-resource-center/>) to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services

If you suffer from stress, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, interpersonal concerns or alcohol use that damages your academic performance, you are not alone. Students who have these issues are encouraged to contact the Counseling and Psychological Services at 305-348-2277 in SHC 270 (<http://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/wellness/counseling-and-psychological-services/services/index.php>).

Center for Excellence in Writing

The FIU Center for Excellence in Writing offers various services that will help improve your writing skills. I highly recommend using these resources for you to be successful in this course. Visit their website (<http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/>) to make an appointment.