

# SOC 64-The Process of Social Research

Jennifer R. Myhre, Ph.D.

MTWTH 8:30-9:20am – MLC110

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Dear Students,

**I am here to help you.** If you have outside responsibilities or other potential barriers to completing the work for this course, please come talk to me *as soon as possible*. Don't wait until it's too late to get help.

If you have any disability, either temporary or permanent, which might affect your ability to participate fully in the course, please let me know right away. We can figure out what accommodations will be necessary to provide for equitable participation.

Don't be a stranger! I would like to learn a little bit about all of you, including your names, and it would help enormously if you would feel comfortable enough to come up and introduce yourself to me before or after class, remember to state your name when you participate in class, and visit me during my office hours. Getting to know you is the best part of my job.

I believe that every single one of you can do well in this class. In fact, I expect you to come with your game face on, to try your best, to put as much in to this class as you can and get as much out of this class as you can, to ask me for help when you need it, to ask for and offer help to your classmates, and to work with me to ensure your success.

Finally, I want to stress that ALL students are welcome in my class, regardless of national origin, religious affiliation, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical challenge, socioeconomic status, or cultural background. Let us work to make our classroom an environment marked by kindness and mutual respect for one another. It is our differences, even more than our similarities that offer the richest opportunities for learning.

- *Jen Myhre*

## Contact Information

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**Office Hours:**

M/TH – 9:30-10:20am

T/W – 10:30-11:20am

I am also available by appointment if my regularly scheduled office hours don't work for you.



## GUIDING QUESTIONS OF THE COURSE:

- How do social scientists study the social world?
- How do the kinds of questions we ask about the social world shape the kinds of research strategies we use to answer those questions?
- What considerations do we need to make in the research process in order to increase our confidence that the answers we find capture something true about social reality?

## MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS OF THE COURSE:

- As human beings, we engage in research--asking questions and pursuing strategies to answer those questions—every day.
- If we are thoughtful and careful, we can use the tools of social research to learn real things about the social worlds in which we participate.
- The social sciences are an integral part of the kind of general education that makes us thoughtful and effective human beings. The kind of analysis of the world that sociology provides is useful, valid and worth developing.
- We are not simply individuals with complete autonomy and self-determination, but rather social beings who both shape and are shaped by the social world in which we live.
- Education doesn't have to be painful in order for us to learn. Learning can be fun; in fact, we probably learn best when our minds and bodies are actively engaged in the learning process.

## Student Learning Outcomes

The Sociology Department has two official learning outcomes for SOC64(SOC14):

- *The student will distinguish the sociological perspective from other sciences, including its methods, theories and empathetic standpoint.*
- *The students will responsibly and ethically apply the scientific method to the study of social life.*

I have broken these broad outcomes into a series of more specific goals for your learning. My goals for this course are to help you:

1. Learn the systematic steps of conducting social research from beginning to end.
2. Understand the advantages and limitations of different strategies of social research and the kinds of questions they answer most effectively.
3. Learn to speak the "language" of social research--to understand and apply such terms as design, conceptualization, measurement, operationalization, reliability, validity, sampling, analysis, quantitative and qualitative approaches, etc.
4. Digest and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of actual examples of social research.
5. Learn real and important information about the social world that can be used to improve lives.
6. Learn how to convey effectively the results of your investigations to wider audiences.
7. Bring the sensibility of a social researcher to your everyday lives.
8. Become familiar with a body of knowledge in sociology that will prepare you for transfer or for additional coursework in sociology.
9. Learn how to build convincing arguments using concepts and evidence.
10. Practice taking-the-role-of-the-other, or putting yourselves in other's shoes.

By the end of the term, *you will be researchers*. You will have engaged in the kinds of day-to-day activities that social researchers do, such as research, thinking, talking with your colleagues about sociology, reading, teaching, presenting, and writing. Most importantly, I hope that by the end of the term, you will have learned to ask questions about the social world. It is the asking of questions, rather than the finding of answers, that is the most joyous part of the sociologist's job.

Also, I invite you to approach this class with the goal of *taking-the-role-of-the-other*, an idea developed by an early sociologist named George Herbert Mead. This means trying to put yourself in someone else's shoes to get a sense of how s/he might view or experience social life and using that view to reflect on your own life. When you sit down to do a reading in this class or watch a film or converse with a classmate, I would like you to try to put yourself in the other's shoes. This means developing your empathy muscles. Empathy means to feel or

suffer *with* someone. It is not the same as pity. In part, it involves imagining how you would feel if you were in a similar situation. It involves putting aside our feelings of defensiveness, judgment, or rejection of the other, so that we can learn about another's experience. As sociologists, we are endlessly curious about how life is for others. Role-taking helps us learn.

## What You Need to be Successful in this Course

### Textbook & Readings

There is one textbook for the course and there will be supplemental readings that you will find online in the Readings box on our Catalyst class website. You can purchase used and new copies of the textbook in the Campus Bookstore and there are 2 copies on reserve at the Library (currently located in the Learning Center West on the second floor). The book is NOT optional; you will need it to pass the class. The required textbook is:

- Chambliss, Daniel F. and Russell K. Schutt. 2013. *Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- A dictionary is also recommended.

### An Openness to Participating Fully in Class Activities

I believe that students learn best when presented with a variety of teaching strategies. Not everyone will like every strategy; to paraphrase Lincoln, you can't make everybody happy all of the time. However, given the absolute strangle-hold the lecture format has on college classes, I still think it is valuable to try out a variety of activities in the classroom. As much as is possible given the constraints of time and room setup, classroom activities will be organized with a hands-on approach, asking students to engage in some of the day-to-day activities of sociologists (including reading, writing, discussion, analysis, and empirical research). Research shows that people learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process. In order to facilitate this, you will also be asked to participate in various in- and out-of-class activities and discussion. *If you are usually a talker, then your challenge will be to listen more and talk less. If you are usually quiet or an observer, your challenge will be to take risks and speak up from time to time.*

## Expectation Agreement

### As a student in SOC 64, you are expected to...

- Read and/or re-read the assignments before coming to class. Your success in this class is dependent on reading and digesting the assignment.
- Print out copies of reading material before coming to class.
- Arrive to class on time and prepared with books, paper, writing implements, and preferably a dictionary. Your supplies should be on your desk BEFORE class begins.
- Check your email daily.
- Stay focused and ready to participate in class.
- Participate in civil & respectful class discussions.
- Turn in projects on time.
- Turn cell phones off and put them away before class begins.

### As your instructor, I will...

- Be available for my office hours and by appointment
- Keep our class Catalyst page engaging and up-to-date.
- Assist you with finding additional support should you need it.
- Respond to emails.
- Come to class prepared with activities and lecture materials.

## Attendance and Late Arrivals

I do not count attendance as a separate part of your grade. You have chosen to participate in this class. I want you to come to class because you WANT to come to class. In fact, I want you to make a conscious decision about whether to come to class. I want you to be clear on why you are here and what you hope to get out of class. However, you should also be mindful that when you miss class, you begin to sabotage your own learning. You also deprive your classmates and me of your thoughts and contributions. And I worry about you when you don't show up to class. Part of being in community means showing up for each other and paying attention to who's making it, who needs help, and who's struggling. I will be looking out for you and I'd like you to be watching out for each other. Because it gets harder and harder to catch up when you miss class, *students who have missed 8 class sessions may be dropped from the class.*

Late arrivals are disruptive to the class and to your learning. Please plan to arrive at class on time.

## Assignments, Projects & Exams

Course requirements for your grade will consist of reading journals, participation, course projects, a final reflection, and exams.

REQUIREMENT	DUE DATE	% OF TOTAL GRADE
Projects:		
Content Analysis of Faculty Doors	January 20	15%
Interview Project, Part 1: Interview and Transcription	February 9	15%
Interview Project, Part 2: Analysis of Interviews	March 16	20%
Journal Article Analysis	March 18	10%
Participation	In-class activities On-line activities on Catalyst	10%
Reading Quizzes and Terminology Log	Throughout the quarter	20%
Final exam	March 25 (Wednesday), 7:00am-9:00	10%

**COURSE PROJECTS.** One project will involve collecting data on what full-time faculty members here at De Anza put on their doors and analyzing this data both quantitatively and qualitatively. You will also have a big quarter long project involving in-depth interviews in which you will conduct and transcribe an interview and then also analyze the pool of data that the class as a whole collects from our interviews. One other project will involve comparing the strengths and weaknesses of surveys, interviews and field work by examining three examples of published research.

**PARTICIPATION.** Research shows that people learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process. In order to provide extra encouragement for your active involvement in the course, participation will count for 10% of your final grade. You will be asked to turn in participate in in-class activities during most weeks of the quarter and you will also be asked to participate in on-line discussions, activities and quizzes throughout the quarter. The total of all of these activities will account for your participation grade.

**READING QUIZZES AND TERMINOLOGY LOGS.** For every reading assignment, you will be asked to list and define each of the key terms from the chapters from *Making Sense of the Social World* in your own handwriting. The terminology log will be graded on a pass/fail basis. The number of these logs you turn in will be totaled for the quarter, with one free miss. They are *due at the start of class* on the day the reading is scheduled for; after that, they will be counted as late and can be turned in for half-credit. You may use your

terminology logs on the final exam. In addition, I may also give in-class or on-line quizzes on the readings. Together, the logs and quizzes are worth 20% of your total grade.

**EXAM.** There will be one comprehensive final exam on March 25 (Wednesday) from 7:00am-9:00. **There are no make-up exams. You need to meet with me if you have a documented physical or family emergency that causes you to miss an exam and I will review your case and we'll figure out how to address it.**

## Grades

Grades aren't the only reason to study and work hard in a class—curiosity and the desire to learn are damn good reasons. The fact that no one can take our education away from us is another good reason. However, if grades are one of the things that help motivate you, then here are some things I have learned from watching students about how to sabotage yourself, on the one hand, and how to get high grades, on the other.

To reach your goal of an “A” in the course, if grades are important to you:

- Check your e-mail and Catalyst regularly
- Read the assigned reading each time it is assigned
- Turn in your reading terminology logs on time
- Come to class on time and every day
- Do the on-line activities on time
- Take good notes on your readings and on class lectures and activities
- Build a study group to discuss the readings, work on assignments and prepare for the exam
- Meet with Jen regarding each project BEFORE the project is due
- Meet with Jen with a draft of each project BEFORE it is due
- Meet with Jen before the final to check your understanding

Practices that will make it difficult for you to pass the class, if that is your goal:

- Not doing the reading
- Not turning in your reading terminology logs
- Turning in your reading terminology logs
- Coming to class late
- Not coming to class
- Not checking e-mail or Catalyst
- Not turning in any parts or all of any of the projects
- Coming to class everyday but not doing the assigned work or not turning work in
- Only showing up for the exam thinking that will be enough to pass
- Not showing up for the final

Regardless of your goals regarding grades, let me be clear: my goal for you is for you to gain practice at social research and to begin to see yourself as located within wider social worlds. EVERYONE is capable of thinking like a researcher. I have high expectations of you and would like you to rise to those expectations to do well in this class, but I also have the expectation that, regardless of the grade you are hoping for, you will want to take on the challenge of becoming a social researcher and stretch yourself past your taken-for-granted ways of viewing the world. I double-dog dare you. 😊

The Sociology Department has agreed on our approach to giving feedback on student writing and assignments. We understand that students can interpret the feedback they get from teachers in a lot of different ways and that sometimes it can be difficult to receive critical feedback. We have high expectations for the quality of your work in our classes. We want you to know that when we give feedback, it is because we believe in your ability to reach those expectations. We believe in your intellectual abilities and in your desire to grow as a student. The goal of our feedback is to help you develop your skills.

## Keeping Track of Your Grades

All assignments will be given point scores or letter grades. These scores or grades will be turned into percentages and weighted according to the table above to average your final grades. The final percentage will be assigned a letter grade as follows: 90% or above=A, 87-89%=B plus, 80-86%=B, 77-79%=C plus, 70-76%=C, 67-69%=D plus, 60-66%=D, and below 59%=F. Standard mathematical rounding rules will apply.

ASSIGNMENT	Letter Grade	% (out of 100)	Weight	Multiply % by Weight
Reading quizzes and terminology logs			.20	
Content Analysis			.15	
Interview Project, Pt 1			.15	
Interview Project, Pt 2			.20	
Journal Article Analysis			.10	
Participation			.10	
Exam			.10	
TOTAL GRADE				SUM= %

Note: You will have 13 chapters on which to complete terminology logs, so you can keep track of your score for the logs by totaling the number of points and dividing by 13. Your reading quizzes should be averaged. Similarly, you can keep track of your participation grade by totaling your points on in-class and online activities and dividing by the total number of possible points.

## Plagiarism & Cheating

Frequently asked questions is a great addition to your syllabus. Consider the repetitive questions you hear each quarter...can you answer them here?

**Don't cheat.** It is unethical and, frankly, sad. Don't copy off of the tests of those around you. How do you know they'll do any better than you? If they do score higher than you, why should you get to benefit without effort from their studying? Don't copy from the assignments of others or get others to do your work. Don't give work to others for them to copy. You give up your integrity when you do these things. When you cheat, you cheapen what we are doing here in class, you deprive yourself of learning and growth, you sell yourself short, and you betray the time and effort I devote to teaching the class. It can also have long term consequences, as you will see below.

**Plagiarism will not be tolerated.** I understand that many of you do not fully understand what plagiarism is or how to cite reference materials properly. I am happy to go over this with you. In short, if you use someone else's ideas without giving them credit, if you use someone else's words without putting quotation marks around them and giving them credit, or if you introduce information you learned from a specific source without giving it credit, that is plagiarism. If you didn't make it up from your own mind, you need to provide an in-text citation.

I will offer a half journal of extra credit if you take the tutorial on plagiarism at the following website and bring me the certificate that says you can recognize plagiarism: <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>

Taking text or information or ideas from the internet, or from other sources, **without giving credit** to the person or persons who came up with those ideas and those words is STEALING. IF I CATCH YOU PASSING OFF THE WORK AND IDEAS OF OTHERS AS YOUR OWN, YOU WILL RECEIVE ZERO CREDIT FOR THAT ASSIGNMENT, WITH NO OPPORTUNITY TO RE-DO IT. *In addition, the De Anza Student Handbook specifies that students can be subject to College discipline (including suspension and expulsion) for plagiarism and cheating.*

## Resources

Writing and Reading and Tutorial Skills Center, ATC 309, 864-5840  
Math/Science Tutorial Center, S43, 864-8683  
Counseling Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Student & Community Services Bldg., 864-5400  
Transfer Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Student & Community Services Bldg., 864-8841  
Career Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Student & Community Services Bldg., 864-5711  
Disability Support Services, 1<sup>st</sup> floor Student & Community Services Bldg., 864-8753  
Financial Aid, Baldwin Winery Building, 864-8718  
Health Services, Lower level Campus Center, 864-8732  
Child Development Center, 864-8822  
Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Lower level Campus Center, 864-8950

**Need help?** Meet with tutors and attend workshops in the Student Success Center:  
[www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess](http://www.deanza.edu/studentsuccess). **Can't make it to campus?** Use the free online tutoring available to all De Anza students. Just login to [MyPortal](#), go to the Students tab, and find the Smarthinking link. For more information, go to [deanza.edu/studentsuccess/onlinetutoring/](http://deanza.edu/studentsuccess/onlinetutoring/)

### JEN'S FAVORITE FREE PODCASTS, WITH SOCIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE:

Office Hours  
Radio Lab  
To the Best of Our Knowledge  
Planet Money  
This American Life  
The Moth  
Latino USA  
99% Invisible

These podcasts make great listening and often cover topics relevant to sociology. It would be a great habit to listen to at least one of them during our quarter together, as well as read a newspaper or newsmagazine.