

# Sociology 300: Foundations of Social Inquiry

Summer 2014

MW 1:10pm – 3:20pm, DEN 311

Course Website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/904697>

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Office Hours: Mon. 3:30-5:30pm  
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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The world is full of claims about what is going on in our society. Some say we need gun control and others say we do not. Some say sexism and racism are still major issues, others disagree. Some say we are safer than ever while others say we have never been more at risk.

Politicians, activists, and the media are all examples of the sorts of groups who have major agendas in making you think certain things are happening. But what is really going on in your society? The purpose of this class is to give you the tools you need to sort out the facts from the hype. By the end of this course, not only will you be able to decide for yourself what is going on in society, you will also know how to skillfully back up your own claims with evidence and logic. Along the way, you will learn how to read and interpret academic articles, formulate research hypotheses, develop plans for empirically testing those hypotheses, and learn to distinguish between good and bad social science research.

## COURSE READINGS

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, **readings will be posted to the course website** (<https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/904697>). Refer to the schedule below for reading due dates.

## GRADES

Your grade in this class is based upon 3 exams, in-class exercises, and class participation. The final grade for this course will be broken down as follows:

Participation and In-Class Exercises	10%
Exam 1	30%
Exam 2	30%
Exam 3	30%

Reading Quizzes and Class Participation: Creating a good, enjoyable, and instructive class is a joint effort between the instructor and students. Your primary responsibilities will be completing readings in time for lecture and participating in class discussions. There will also be in-class exercises based on the readings and lecture. Asking questions and providing thoughtful answers (even if they are incorrect!!!) directly contributes to a good grade in this class.

Exams: There will be three exams. They will be composed of a mix of multiple choice questions and a set of short answer questions on the topics which were covered in the preceding weeks.

## **COURSE POLICIES:**

Extra Credit: There will be one major opportunity for extra credit in this course. Starting halfway through the quarter, students may choose to write an optional assigned paper for up to 10% extra on their final grade. Papers will be due \*before\* the final exam.

Make-up Exams: Arrangements for make-up exams must be made as soon as possible. If you know in advance that you will not be able to make an exam date, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as you become aware of the schedule conflict. If you end up being unable to attend the exam due to an emergency, it is your responsibility to contact me within 24 hours. In the interest of fairness, a **failure to notify me and/or inability to provide documentation excusing your absence** may result in your **not being able to make-up the exam** or **additional work**.

Academic Honesty: Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated in this course. Please refer to the following website for definitions of plagiarism and cheating and a description of their consequences: <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf>

The Learning Environment Please be respectful and let me know if there are any problems that distract from your ability to learn or communicate freely. Be aware of resources available to you as a student, including the Sociology Department's Advising Office (tel: 206-543-5396; email: asksoc@u.washington.edu). If you have paperwork from Disabled Resources for Students (telephone: 206-543-8924; email: uwdss@u.washington.edu), please provide it to me as soon as possible so I can make appropriate accommodations.

## **LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE**

6/23 Introduction to course and syllabus overview

### **Section I: Thinking About Society Scientifically**

6/25 *Research Questions and Theory*  
**Readings Due:** "Breadwinner Moms." Pew Research Center. Washington, D.C. (2013).

6/30 *Variables and Relationships*  
**\*\* Readings:** Begin reading **Stark and Roberts Chapter 5**

7/2 **~~NO CLASS~~**  
**\*\* Readings:** Continue **Stark and Roberts Chapter 5**

7/7 *Causal Models*  
**Readings Due:** Pager, Devah. (2003) "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology*, 108, 937-75

**AND**

Stark and Roberts Chapter 5

7/9 *Operationalization and Testing*  
**Readings Due:** Correll, S., Benard S., and Paik, I. (2007) “Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?” *American Journal of Sociology*, 112, 1297 - 1338

7/14 **EXAM 1**

## Section II: Conducting Social Research – from Ideas to Evidence

7/16 *Experiments*  
**Readings Due:** Keizer, K., Lindenberg, S., Steg, L. (2008) “The Spreading of Disorder.” *Science*, 322, 1681 - 1684

7/21 *Statistical Analysis: Populations, Samples, and Estimation*  
**Readings Due: Stark and Roberts 4**

7/23 *Statistical Analysis: Significance and Controls*  
**Readings Due:** Silver, E. VanEseltine, M., Silver, S. (2009) “Tattoo Acquisition: a Prospective Logitudinal Study of Adolescents.” *Deviant Behavior*, 30, 511-538

7/28 *Qualitative Research*  
**Readings Due:** Becker, Howard S. (1953) “Becoming a Marihuna User.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 5, 235 - 242

7/30 **EXAM 2**

## Section III: Social Science Research in the Real World

8/4 *Logic Breakdowns*  
**Readings Due:** No readings!

8/6 *Metaphors and Arguments*  
**Readings Due:** Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago [Chapter Excerpt]

8/11 *Changing People’s Beliefs*  
**Readings Due:** Konnikova, Maria. (2014, May). “I Don’t Want to Be Right.” *The New Yorker*.

8/13

*Ethics of Social Science Research*

**Readings Due:** Milgram, Stanley. (1963) "Behavioral Study of Obedience." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67, 371 - 378

8/18

*Pulling it All Together*

**Readings Due:** No readings!

8/20

**EXAM 3**