

# SSC 251 01: Research Methods for Social Science

Westminster College, Spring 2017

**Instructor:** Kristenne M. Robison

**Room:** PH 208 and The Hub

**Office:** 306 Patterson Hall

**Meeting Times:** TR 9:20-10:50 am

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**Office Hours:** MF 10:30-11:30 am  
W 1-2 pm, by appt.

**Course Description:** This course is intended to familiarize students with the nature of the research process, including the value choices that have to be made when conducting research. Particular attention is given to the basic building blocks of the research process: knowing how to ask questions, how to design and carry out a project, how to collect data, and what kinds of data to use for different kinds of research. By course's end you will have become better able to analyze other people's research and you will know more about how to design your own project, preparing you for your Capstone project.

## Course Learning Objectives:

- ◆develop skills necessary to conduct several different methods of research
- ◆analyze the strengths, weaknesses and assumptions of different methods of social science research
- ◆demonstrate the ability to analyze existing social science research and assess the extent to which the conclusions therein are supported by data
- ◆develop testable hypotheses and identify independent, dependent and intervening variables
- ◆turn a concept into a variable and develop valid and reliable measures for that variable
- ◆link research questions with appropriate research methods to investigate them
- ◆critique both journalistic and scholarly articles in the social sciences
- ◆critique the work of others in designing and carrying out research projects
- ◆create a proposal for your capstone research

**Academic Integrity:** “Central to the purpose and pursuit of any academic community is academic integrity. All members of the Westminster community, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators, are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity, in keeping with the philosophy and mission of the College.” It is expected that students turn in original academic work and cite all sources. If work is plagiarized or students are found to be cheating on an exam they will be assigned a zero on the corresponding assignment and the Academic Dean will be notified. For more details please go to the following website:

[http://www.westminster.edu/staff/corsokf/SPE\\_111/Documents/academic%20integrity\\_student\\_handbook\\_FLO7.pdf](http://www.westminster.edu/staff/corsokf/SPE_111/Documents/academic%20integrity_student_handbook_FLO7.pdf)

If a student is caught cheating on an exam or plagiarizing a paper, the student will receive a zero on that assignment and the instructor will notify the Academic Dean, as per the student handbook policy.

**Individuals with Disabilities:** Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Faith Craig, Director of the Office of Disability Resources, located in 209 Thompson-Clark Hall. phone: 724-946-7192 e-mail: [craigfa@westminster.edu](mailto:craigfa@westminster.edu).

**Available Support Services:** Westminster College has a variety of support services. Some of them are:

- Library Instruction: Reference Librarian, Eloise Stevens (x-7325)
- Learning and Writing Services: Interim Director, Jamie Kohler (x-6703)

**Classroom Expectations & Environment:** It is the expectation of the instructor that students are here to learn, will attend all classes, will complete all assigned readings on time, will contribute to large and small group discussions, and will turn in class assignments on time. I look more favorably on borderline grades when students regularly attend and actively participate in class.

Late assignments will be penalized 5 points per 24 hours and assignments will not be accepted more than a week past the due date. If you need more time on an assignment I encourage you to discuss this with the instructor. She can be reasonable, on occasion.

I am a stickler for time so please arrive on time for class. If you will be late or need to leave class early, notify the instructor beforehand. Please silence your cell phone and refrain from using it during class. I am a Gen Xer. We did not have cell phones or laptops in college. I am from the mindset that if you are here in this room so why not be here fully? Be in the moment.

**Email Policy:** Emails will be responded to in a timely manner, but do not expect email responses over the weekend unless specifically discussed with the instructor. In addition, many questions can be answered by reading over the syllabus or talking with peers. I encourage you to utilize office hours for questions about course work and the research process as depth of response will increase in person.

### **Course Materials:**

American Sociological Association. 2014. *ASA Style Guide, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*.

Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2011. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Seventh Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Libguide: SSC 251: Research Methods for Social Sciences

\*All other course readings can be found online on our course website on D2L. I reserve the right to add or remove readings throughout the semester.

### **Grading Scale:**

A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	0-59
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69		

### **Assignments & Grading:**

**Short Assignments (10%):** Three short assignments are to be completed over the course of the semester. Each assignment is worth 3.33% of your final grade. The assignment will be given to you a minimum of one week in advance of the due date. The assignments are designed to prepare you for your final Capstone proposal. Assignment due dates are February 24th, March 26th, and April 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Draft Literature Review (15%):** The literature review will be accomplished over the course of the semester in stages including a list of sources in ASA style, annotated bibliography, one written subsection, and first draft. This will assist students in developing a quality literature review for your final proposal and eventual Capstone project.

**Exams (40%):** Two exams will be given over the course of the semester. Each exam is worth 20% of your final grade. Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and

essay questions. Students will be provided study guides to assist in your study efforts. Exam dates are March 7<sup>th</sup> and April 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Final Proposal & Presentation (25%):** Every student is required to complete a final proposal that will prepare you for data collection in SOC 601. The paper specifications will be discussed over the course of the semester. Short, mandatory presentations will be given during our final exam period on Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 8 am. See guidelines for the final proposal and presentation at the end of the syllabus.

**Class Participation and Attendance (10%):** Welcome to the pinnacle of your major course work. This course will be run as a seminar, which means that I will lecture for short periods of time as well as incorporate lots of class discussion and group work. I highly value class participation. This can take many forms including but not limited to: participating in large and small group discussions, emailing me questions and comments that you either did not think of in class or did not feel comfortable saying/asking, visiting me in office hours to discuss the course material and the research process, and making connections between our course materials and the outside world. Be certain to ground participation in our course readings/material. Students are expected to attend all classes. For every class you miss there will be a **2% reduction** in your class participation grade.

### Course Reading Schedule:

Tues., January 17<sup>th</sup> Introduction to Course

#### Foundations

##### Choosing a Research Topic and Why Do Research?

Thurs., January 19<sup>th</sup> Neuman, Chapter 1, p. 1-24

##### What are the Major Types of Research?

Tues., January 24<sup>th</sup> Neuman, Chapter 2, p. 25-54

Out of Class Assignment

Thurs., January 26<sup>th</sup>

**HUB – Chapter 2 in action**

**Literature search and endnote**

#### Theory and Research

Tues., January 31<sup>st</sup> Neuman, Chapter 3, p. 55-89

#### The Meanings of Methodology

Thurs., February 2<sup>nd</sup> Neuman, Chapter 4, p. 90-122

Sun., February 5 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Turn in list of sources in ASA style (D2L)</b>
<b>The Literature Review</b>	
Tues., February 7 <sup>th</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 5, p. 123-143
Thurs., February 9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>HUB – Chapter 5 in action</b>
<b>Research Ethics</b>	
Tues., February 14 <sup>th</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 5, p. 143-160
	Movie: Kinsey
Thurs., February 16 <sup>th</sup>	Movie: Kinsey
Sun., February 19 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Turn in annotated bibliography for 5 sources</b>
Tues., February 21 <sup>st</sup>	ASA Code of Ethics (D2L)
	Lewis-Kraus, “The Trials of Alice Goffman” (2016) (D2L)
	IRB Guidelines (D2L)
<b>Planning and Preparation</b>	
<b>Strategies of Research Design</b>	
Thurs., February 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 6, p. 163-197
Friday, February 24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Short Assignment #1 Due: Ethics</b>
<b>Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement</b>	
Tues., February 28 <sup>th</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 7, p. 198-239
Thurs., March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Chapter 7 continued
Tues., March 7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Exam #1</b>
<b>Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling</b>	
Thurs., March 9 <sup>th</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 8, p. 240-274
SPRING BREAK	
<b>Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis</b>	
<b>Survey Research</b>	
Tues., March 21 <sup>st</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 10, p. 308-357
	Guest Researcher: Dr. Jim Rhoads
Thurs., March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Chapter 10 continued

Sun., March 26 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Short Assignment #2 Due: Survey (D2L)</b>
<b>Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis</b>	
Tues., March 28 <sup>th</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 11, p. 358-382
	Guest Researcher: Dr. Shannon Smithey
<b>Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis</b>	
<b>Field Research and Focus Group Research</b>	
Thurs., March 30 <sup>th</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 13, p. 420-463
Tues., April 4 <sup>th</sup>	Class Field Research
Friday, April 5 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Short Assignment #3 Due: Observation (D2L)</b>
<b>Interviewing Participants</b>	
Thurs., April 6 <sup>th</sup>	Rubin and Rubin (D2L)
<b>Analysis of Qualitative Data</b>	
Tues., April 11 <sup>th</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 15, p. 506-541
Thurs., April 13 <sup>th</sup>	No Class – Easter Break
Fri., April 14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Subsection of literature review due (D2L)</b>
Tues., April 18 <sup>th</sup>	No Class – Monday classes meet
Thurs., April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 15 continued
Tues., April 25 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 15 continued
Wed., April 26 <sup>th</sup>	<b>URAC (required attendance)</b>
Thurs., April 27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Exam #2</b>
Sun., April 30 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Draft Literature Review Due (D2L)</b>
<b>Communicating With Others</b>	
<b>Writing the Research Report and the Politics of Social Research</b>	
Tues., May 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Neuman, Chapter 16, p. 542-574
Thurs., May 4 <sup>th</sup>	Office Hours
Thurs, May 11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Final Proposal Due, Final Presentations, and Breakfast (8-10:30 am)</b>

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### Guidelines for Final Proposal and Presentation

The final proposal is due to the designated folder at My Westminster by no later than 8 am on Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. Your proposal presentations are at 8 am on Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, in Patterson Hall 208 Please bring food to share.

**Include the below sections in your first draft and final draft of your final proposal.**

**Title Page (1 page):** Include you title, name, date, and running head. See ASA guidelines for title page.

**Abstract (1 page):** Include an abstract of approximately 150-200 words.

**Introduction (1-2 pages):** Include general introduction of the topic you will study while citing a few significant studies in this area. Include a brief introduction to your method including research question. Include how your research fits into the existing literature, i.e. what contribution are you making to the field?

**Literature Review (6-10 pages):** Include your revised literature review. Pay attention to headings and subheadings, transition sentences, the “funnel”, and integrating sources within and between paragraphs. **Minimum of 10 sources.**

**Research Design (6-8 pages):** Address the methodology and method at length in this section. Include the following subsections: research question/hypotheses, methodology, data collection methods, sampling method, lessons learned from short assignments and data analysis project (if applicable), and potential ethical issues. I should be able to replicate your study with your description. See detailed research design guidelines for more depth.

**Analysis (1 page or less):** Include a paragraph on potential analytical tests and software you will use.

**References:** Include your reference section in ASA citation style.

**Appendix:** Attach any relevant documents that do not go in the body of the paper. Label them in appropriate ASA citation style.

**\*\*VERY IMPORTANT:** You should address the revisions on your literature reviews and research designs from me in your final proposal. If you are unclear about or disagree with any of the comments come talk with me. Completion of these revisions is very important and inadequate attention to them LOWERS your final proposal grade.

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### Final Presentation Guidelines

Each student is required to present their final capstone proposal to the class during our final exam period on Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup> from 8-10:30 am. Dress to impress. Each presentation should be **10-12 minutes** in length and should include the following in your presentation:

- 1) Brief Introduction to your topic
- 2) Literature Review
- 3) Research Question or Hypotheses
- 4) Research Design**
- 5) Analysis
- 6) What you think you will find
- 7) Reference page

The majority of your time should be spent on the **Research Design** portion of your proposal.

#### ***Presentation quality:***

-The presentation followed a **logical organization**, with transitions between sections

-The material was **clearly presented**, using and defining appropriate terminology for the capacities of the audience. Spoken and explained rather than read.

-**Visual and technological aids** were appropriately used, to provide an overview or highlight central points.

-The **pace** of the presentation was appropriate.

-The presenter used **vocal variety** in rate, pitch, and intensity to heighten and maintain audience interest.

-Appropriate **documentation of sources** was used, both on the slides themselves and in a final Works Cited slide (using ASA citation guidelines).