

Sociology 305: Quantitative Research Methods
Tuesday & Thursday 1:30pm – 2:55pm
Rangeview 244

Instructor: John T. Lang

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 11:45am – 1:15pm, and by appointment

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Course Website: <http://moodle.oxy.edu>

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Quantitative Research Methods! This course introduces quantitative research methods and statistical analysis from a social science perspective. We will address the major components of the research process and will stress the importance of critical thinking in all matters numerical. We will cover measures of central tendency, the normal curve, probability, frequency distributions, correlation, and regression. We will work on thinking, writing, and speaking about quantitative data.

By the end of the course, you will have mastered basic statistical concepts and techniques and learned how to write about quantitative data in a concise and cogent manner. You will also be able to critically examine and evaluate common (mis)uses of these concepts.

“There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”

—Benjamin Disraeli quoted by Mark Twain

“Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please.”

—Mark Twain quoted by Rudyard Kipling

Please Note

Prerequisite: Sociology 101.

Open to Sociology majors/minors only; first year students may not enroll in this class.

This course may be used toward the Core Science/Mathematics requirement.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

You will be expected to use a calculator frequently in the class. It does not have to be fancy. It should be something other than the calculator on your cell phone.

Both books are available at the Occidental College Bookstore. You can also find them online at your favorite book seller.

Miller, Jane E. 2004. *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Paperback.

ISBN: 978-0226526317

Salkind, Neil J. 2007. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, 3rd Edition*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Paperback w/SPSS Student Edition CD.

ISBN: 9781412951517

Companion Website: <http://www.sagepub.com/salkindstudy/>

Errata and Corrections: <http://www.statisticsforpeople.com/Corrections.html>

GRADING

I do not give extra-credit assignments, nor will I allow make-ups on the exams without a superb, legitimate explanation (bring me medical records, phone numbers of surviving relatives, etc.). Weddings, personal holidays, oversleeping, etc. are not acceptable excuses for missing exams. Drop the course now if there is a conflict between the test days and your personal schedule. To be blunt, it is not to your advantage to miss my scheduled tests.

I will base your final grade on the following:

10% = Attendance/Participation

20% = Final Paper

40% = Assignments

30% = Exams

Attendance/Participation – 10%

I expect you to bring your textbook and calculator to all classes. I expect you to come to class on time and remain here until class is over. Our time together is brief and we have a wealth of ideas to exchange and explore in that limited period.

You may miss 4 class sessions without penalty. After that, your attendance will be penalized a full letter grade for each absence. I have this policy not for any punitive reason, but to encourage students to attend class and to do well in the course. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. You are, therefore, strongly encouraged not to miss class carelessly because of the possibility of unexpected or unavoidable absences during the semester. No matter the reason, it is always your responsibility to contact other students to learn what you've missed and to get notes.

Assignments – 40% – due October 9, October 23, November 4, and November 20, 2008.

There will be four assignments, each worth 10% of your final grade. These assignments will require you to apply the techniques learned in class. Importantly, each of these assignments will be directly relevant to your Final Paper.

Late papers will be penalized a full letter grade for each day late; those not turned in within one week of due date are still required but will not receive points.

Final Paper – 20% – due December 2, 2008.

We will talk MUCH more about this paper throughout the semester. Your final paper should be on the order of 7-8 pages in length. It must not exceed 10 pages (not counting tables). For the final project you should choose the data analysis technique(s) and presentation mode(s) that best allow you to test your hypotheses, and present your results.

Miller's book provides many important “tools of the trade” for those who want to think, write, and speak about quantitative data. You'll want to actively use it when writing, especially when you get stuck on how to present or phrase your writing.

In this paper you will make an argument in a concise and cogent manner, test your theory, and present your results in an effective manner. We will discuss possible topics and ideas throughout the course. You must turn in a hard copy at the start of class on the due date. Late papers will be penalized a full letter grade for each day late.

Exams – 30% – scheduled September 25, November 11, and December 9, 2008.

There are three scheduled exams each worth 10% of your final grade. I will base these exams on your assigned reading, class discussions, and exercises. They will be closed book. Calculators will be required. ONLY the final exam will be cumulative.

COURSE GRADES

I post grades on assignments as soon as the grading is completed. Thus, you are able to track your progress throughout the semester. All inquires/disagreements regarding grades will be handled during my office hours or at another mutually agreeable time. Do NOT count on a curve.

I will assign letter grades for the entire course as follows:

92.5% and higher = A	72.5 to 77.49% = C
90.0 to 92.49% = A-	70 to 72.49% = C-
87.5 to 89.99% = B+	67.5 to 69.99% = D+
82.5 to 87.49% = B	62.5 to 67.49% = D
80 to 82.49% = B-	60 to 62.49% = D-
77.5 to 79.99% = C+	59.99% and lower = F.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I will hold you responsible for the information in this syllabus, so I expect you to read it, understand it, and ask questions about anything you don't understand.

Office Hours: I hold three official office hours each week. I also encourage you to make an appointment outside of office hours or come by my office anytime to see if I'm available. I am happy to discuss class concepts, college more generally, musings about majors, future planning, or graduate school.

Feedback: I love getting feedback on my teaching and how the class is going. I value your input and I am willing to make changes to the class according to your preferences. Please share with me any comments, suggestions, and ideas you may have, and help me make this a great class. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can type and print out a note and drop it in my mailbox on the 3rd floor of Middle Swan.

Class Demeanor: While we may find ourselves disagreeing, we must do so with respect, a commitment to hearing what others have to say, and a willingness to think and rethink our own positions. Personal insults have no place in the college classroom.

Technology in Class: Please turn off your cell phones or set them on silent mode when you come to class. Similarly, text messaging will not be tolerated in class. You are welcome to bring your laptop to class and use it to take notes, access readings we're discussing, and the like. You are not welcome to surf the web, check email, or otherwise perform non-class-related activities during class. Here's my best advice: If you aren't using it to perform a task specifically related to what we are doing in class at that very moment, put it away.

Special Accommodations/Learning Differences: Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability should talk to me sometime in the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes a learning disability, I encourage you to contact the friendly folks over at the Center for Academic Excellence (x2849).

Assignments: A hard copy of all papers/assignments must be handed in at the start of class on the scheduled date. I do not accept assignments via email. Late assignments are docked 1 grade per day. Computer and printing problems are not a good excuse for missing a deadline. Make sure to print your papers early enough to be able to address

any problems before class. Keep a paper and electronic copy of everything you hand in until you receive your course grade.

Academic Integrity: As is always the case, you are responsible for your own work. If you find yourself questioning whether you have documented or cited your sources properly, it is your responsibility to come see me about these issues prior to submitting an assignment. If you are thinking about submitting work that is not your own due to pressure, frustration, perfectionism, or any other reason, please talk to me. I am here to help you resolve these issues before they become a problem for your academic career. Academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, will be taken very seriously. A description of Occidental's academic ethics policies is available in the Student Handbook and on the following webpage:

<http://departments.oxy.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/academic.policies/>

Readings

Your most basic duty in this class is to read all of the assigned texts. Be sure to read the calendar of class meetings, readings, assignments, papers, and exams. All readings are due on the day they are listed. You must have read them carefully, taken notes, and be prepared to discuss them intelligently.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Although I will do my best to keep us on schedule, it is possible that we will make some adjustments during the semester. I will give as much notice - both in class and on the course website - when changes are necessary.

AUGUST

28th Welcome to the class

SEPTEMBER

2nd Salkind: Chapter 1, Statistics or Sadistics?

4th Salkind: Chapter 2, Means to an End

9th Salkind: Chapter 3, Vive la Différence

11th Salkind: Chapter 4, A Picture Really Is Worth a Thousand Words

16th Salkind: Chapter 5, Ice Cream and Crime

18th Salkind: Chapter 6, Just the Truth

23rd Salkind: Chapter 7, Hypotheticals and You

25th Exam 1

30th Miller: Chapter 2, Seven Basic Principles

Miller: Chapter 10, Writing about Data and Methods

OCTOBER

2nd Salkind: Chapter 7, Hypotheticals and You
Come prepared with a first draft of Assignment 1

7th Salkind: Chapter 8, Are Your Curves Normal?

9th Assignment 1 due at the start of class

Salkind: Chapter 8, Are Your Curves Normal?

14th No Class. Fall Break .

16th No Class. Visit the Library to work on Assignment 2.

21st Salkind: Chapter 9, Significantly Significant

23rd Assignment 2 due at the start of class

Salkind: Chapter 9, Significantly Significant

28th Salkind: Chapter 10, t(ea) for Two

30th Salkind: Chapter 10, t(ea) for Two

NOVEMBER

4th Assignment 3 due at the start of class

Salkind: Chapter 11, t(ea) for Two (Again)

6th Summing Up and Review

11th Exam 2

13th Salkind: Chapter 15, Predicting Who'll Win the Super Bowl

18th Salkind: Chapter 15, Predicting Who'll Win the Super Bowl

20th Assignment 4 due at the start of class

Salkind: Chapter 15, Predicting Who'll Win the Super Bowl

25th Come prepared with a first draft of your Final Paper

27th No Class. Thanksgiving Break.

DECEMBER

2nd Final Papers due at the start of class

Summing Up and Review

FINAL EXAM – Tuesday, December 9, 2008 at 1pm

Good luck! I'm looking forward to a great semester!