

**SOCI 4490**  
**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS**  
**Spring 2008**  
**SO 3027**  
**TH 5-7:45 PM**

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For class related questions PLEASE use WebCT Vista email.

**CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION:**

Social scientific research is a systematic study of human behavior in society. In this course, students become familiar with the diverse qualitative strategies used in social science research methods, including ethnographic techniques, participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and content analysis. Students will learn how to obtain IRB approval, design a research study, develop interview guides, construct content analysis templates, code data, and acquire standard academic writing skills. Course requirements include field trips in which students will be introduced to unfamiliar cultures and behaviors, learn to appreciate diversity, and observe human interactions with an objective but inquisitive mind.

**Course Objectives (Learning Outcomes):**

- Identify basic methodological approaches and describe general role of methods in sociological knowledge
- Compare and contrast basic methodological approaches for gathering data
- Design a research study in an area of choice and explain why various decisions were made
- Describe and apply appropriate ethical practices in doing human-based research, including IRB processes
- Critically assess a published research report and explain how the study could have been improved
- Identify underlying assumptions of particular methodological approaches to an issue
- Develop a qualitative research proposal

**Required Books:**

- Writing Empirical Research Reports by Pyrczak and Bruce (2005)
- Discovering Qualitative Methods by Carol B. Warren and Tracy X. Karner (2005)

<b>Course Requirements and Grading System</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Percentage of Grade</b>
Human Subject Research Certification*	10	10%
Midterm Test	20	20%
Assignments (2)	20	20%
Rough Drafts (2)	20	20%
Peer Review	5	5%
Research Proposal	20	20%
Attendance	5	5%
Final Grade: 90-100=A; 80-89=B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D; Below 60=F		

\*Human Subject Research Certification will be discussed in class.

**Attendance:** I will take attendance. You are allowed two absent days. After that, I take off one point for each day absent.

### **Midterm Test**

There will be one mid-term on the chapters covered in the textbooks up until that point. If you miss the midterm for any reason whatsoever, you can make up the test **ONLY** on the make-up day (last day of class). You may not take a make up test to replace a low grade on a test. The make-up test will be different than the mid-term test and cover all material in the book

### **Assignments:**

All assignments are discussed in class. You may choose two out of five possible assignments (including field trips) related to qualitative methods: unobtrusive observation; participant observation; content analysis, in-depth interviews, or focus group.

### **Rough Drafts**

In order to help you write a good research proposal, I will ask for two rough drafts. One includes your introduction with the research statement and the literature review (with references). The second includes your methods section. Spelling and grammar count toward your grade. Put your name on the first page top left hand corner and type "rough draft 1" (of 2). I will edit these so you may incorporate my comments in your final paper. You should email your rough drafts in a Word document by WebCT Vista email attachment so I can use the tracking tool.

**Policy on late rough drafts and assignments:** If you are late handing in the rough draft of assignment for any reason, one point will be deducted for each DAY late (weekend days included).

### **Peer Reviews**

Research shows that students' reviewing other student's writing produces good results for both the reviewer and the student writer. Each student will have other students review their research proposal. The reviewer will send the student and me the review and receive up to 5 points for good reviews. More instructions will be posted on WebCT Vista and discussed in class.

### **Research Proposal:**

The purpose of this class is to learn how to conduct research. At the end of the course you will turn in a complete research proposal for a research study you would like to conduct in Senior Seminar. You should be thinking of a topic early in the semester and discuss any ideas with me. You should be using what we have learned in class when writing your proposal. Remember, that your proposal must be **DOABLE**, which means you should have the time, funds, access and knowledge to be able to conduct the research, analyze your data, and write a paper in one semester (Senior Seminar). Most often, students try to do too much. Keep this in mind as you develop your proposal. All final research papers should be turned in as a hard copy. Please staple all papers but do **NOT** enclose in any type of folder. Double spaced and number all pages. I have no minimum or maximum page number requirement; however, good proposals are typically between 5-10 pages. Please see the student examples I post on WebCT Vista.

**Your final research proposal will include the following:**

*Title Page*

Name of Research Proposal

Your name

Course

Date

(centered)

*1. Introduction and Statement of the Research Problem*

(The statement of the research problem, question or exploration fully explained. Include your contribution--what contribution does this research add to the field?)

*2. Literature Review*

(The literature you read that informs this research, identifying any gaps that your research might fill or areas that your research will expand upon. If you have a theoretical framework, include it in this section.)

*3. Methods*

(A full description of the methodological approach, how you plan to conduct the study, and how will you analyze the data collected. Sometimes this includes sub-headings of "sample" or "data collection." See journals for ideas.)

*4. References*

(In ASA format only)

ASA style guide is in your text and also on the department website and at

<http://www.calstatela.edu/library/styleman.htm>

You will receive a "0" for any work you hand in that is plagiarized. You are also responsible for reading what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html> and <http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/plagiarism.html>

**Academic Integrity Statement:** Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section II of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the University's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to University materials, misrepresentation/falsification of University records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the University Judiciary Program, which includes either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct's minimum one semester suspension requirement.

**Disability Clause:** Kennesaw State University provides support for students with disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to identify himself/herself as an individual with a disability. A qualified individual in the area of the identified disability must provide the documentation of the disability. This documentation must show how the disability creates a significant impact on the individual's academic performance; it should include suggested accommodations that are reasonable to provide in an academic setting.

**Please email professor privately for all personal hardships.**

**Checklist for grading Final Research Proposals (Use for Peer Reviews)**

ASA Format: 2 points total

Citations: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
References: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Five journals: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Headings: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Comments:

Introduction: 3 points total

Purpose statement: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Reasoning: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Spelling and grammar: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Comments:

Lit Review: 5 points total

Summaries: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Link to study: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Gap/build: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Spelling and grammar: Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Comments:

Methods: 10 points total

Data Collection:

Sampling methods (where, who, age, number of respondents, and why):  
Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Instrument template or questionnaire (explained and in Appendix):  
Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Confidentiality and ethics explained (cover letter in Appendix):  
Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Interview or other research process explained in detail:  
Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Spelling and grammar:  
Needs Improvement\_\_\_ Satisfactory\_\_\_ Excellent\_\_\_  
Comments: