

Syllabus 1 — SOC 320: Social Research Methods

(Courtesy of Dr. Joan Ferrante, Department of Sociology, Northern Kentucky University; abridged)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This 4-credit-hour course is an introduction to the social research process. The major objectives are to:

- consider the relationship between theory and the methods of social research.
- understand the various methods of gathering information and of designing and conducting research projects.
- provide hands-on experience gathering information and doing research through in-class and out-of-class assignments and activities.
- increase critical thinking abilities related to evaluating information.
- understand how information gathering and research skills prepare students for meaningful careers and for "living in a community" and being of service to others.

As one way of meeting these objectives, this class will participate in the Campus Connects Student Philanthropy Project for Colleges and Universities. In May 2007, Cincinnati philanthropist Roger Grein awarded colleges in Kentucky and Ohio a \$400,000 gift to fund a four-year model program supporting courses that challenge students to collaborate with each other and with community leaders to (1) identify and evaluate a community need; (2) solicit and assess funding requests from nonprofit organizations in a position to address that need; (3) select and award \$4,000 to one or more requests for funding; (4) monitor outcomes of the investment(s).

The community need to be addressed will revolve around the needs of Hispanic/Latino immigrants in six Kentucky and six Ohio counties: Boone, Kenton, Campbell, Pendleton, Bracken, and Grant in Kentucky, and Hamilton, Clermont, Butler, Warren, Brown, and Adams in Ohio. We will do research to identify the needs of the population, and we will award Campus Connects funds to 501(c)(3) organizations that address these needs.

REQUIRED READING

How It's Done: An Invitation to Social Research by Emily Stier Adler and Roger Clark Adler

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

We will cover all the topics listed below as we proceed with the research project, but not necessarily in the order shown. Research is not a linear process with predictable steps.

The Scientific Method/Steps of Social Research
Methods of Gathering Data

- Secondary Data Analysis
- Interviews: Structured, Unstructured
- Surveys and Questionnaires
- Observation Research

Data Management Tools

- SPSS
- Excel
- Access
- PowerPoint

Analyzing Data and Presenting Findings; Basic Statistics

The Connection Between Theory and Research
Review of the Literature
Personal Biases and the Politics of Information
Concepts, Variables, and Hypothesis
Populations and Samples
Operational Definitions
Determining Cause
Generalizability

OVERVIEW OF CLASS PROJECTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Reflective journals: Write essays in response to the seven questions designed to encourage reflection on some aspect of the Campus Connects Project. Essays 1-4 are due September 5. Essays 5-7 are due November 26. Begin each response on its own page. Type your name and class at the upper right-hand corner of each page.

Literature review: Identify relevant and meaningful "literature" to help clarify the needs of the Hispanic/Latino immigrant community. Exact instructions and an example will be presented.

Census data entry: The class will create a data set for the 475 census tracts in Boone, Kenton, Campbell, Pendleton, Bracken, Grant, Hamilton, Clermont, Butler, Warren, Brown, and Adams counties. The data set will focus on the number and percentage of Hispanics in each tract plus other data that helps us learn about the population (number of Hispanics 5 and under, over 65, and so on; number of Hispanic males and females; number who speak English, etc.). Each student is responsible for creating 15 lines of data (one line for each census tract assigned). The data can be submitted on disk or e-mailed in an attached Excel file.

Community-level analysis: Enter census tract-level data onto an Excel spreadsheet. Transfer the data to an SPSS spreadsheet and use that data to identify communities in the region with significant Hispanic/Latino populations. Create 4 graphs and/or pie charts summarizing the data. Make 5 PowerPoint slides to highlight research findings.

Interview with Hispanic/Latino immigrant: Find a person of Hispanic/Latino descent who has immigrated to the United States. The interview questions will be generated through class discussion.

On-site visit to agency or neighborhood drive-through: Visit one of the 501(c)(3) organizations nominated to receive Campus Connects funds, and write a 1-2 page typed paper describing the visit and your impressions. Another option is to drive through a community with a high concentration of Hispanic/Latino immigrants. Document establishments that seem to serve or are owned by Hispanics/Latinos.

501(c)(3) list: Make a list of agencies serving the Hispanic/Latino population that we may approach about submitting a RFP for Campus Connects funds. Some names on this list may come from a review of the Cincinnati Enquirer, looking for names and organizations that serve or represent Hispanic/Latino interests.

Significant life events analysis: Identify and discuss significant personal experiences in the context of historical events that influence your research interests (2-4 pages, typed).

Grades and Assignments: Course grade is based on:

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| 1. One final exam (20 pts) | Dec. 12 |
| 2. Census track data in an Excel database (5 pts) | Sept. 10 |
| 3. 2-page analysis of pre-test questions (15 pts) | Sept. 24 |
| 4. Review of local newspaper (10 pts) | Sept. 19 |
| 5. Significant life events analysis (15 pts) | Oct. 3 |
| 6. Literature review (20 pts) | Oct. 17 |
| 7. Interview with an Hispanic/Latino immigrant (30 pts) | Oct. 24 |
| 8. List recommending 501 (c)(3) agencies (15 pts) | Oct. 24 |
| 9. On-site visit and/or community drive-thru report (15 pts) | Nov. 14 |
| 10. Other miscellaneous assignments (15 pts) | |
| 11. Reflective responses (10 pts each) | Sept. 5, Nov. 26 |
| 12. Community-level analysis (20 pts) | Dec. 1 |

180-200 points = A; 160-179 points = B; 140-159 points = C; 120-139 points = D; 119 or below = F

Note: Late assignments cannot receive an A. Absence is not an excuse for handing in assignments late. All assignments must be typed and double-spaced.