

Sociology Capstone
SOCI 4990, Spring 2021
Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00pm to 3:20pm
GAB 330D

Professor: William “Buddy” Scarborough, PhD
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Virtual Office Hours: Fridays 1pm-4pm (please e-mail for appointment)

Course Description

Senior sociology majors use their skills and knowledge to develop data-driven senior theses that integrate core sociological concepts, theories and methods. Students are required to find an applied sociology application to their projects.

From UNT Course Catalogue

This course is designed to be the culmination of students’ education in the undergraduate sociology curriculum at UNT. We will build directly from what you’ve learned in previous classes. Throughout the semester, we will move from primarily *consumers of knowledge* to applying the skills that allow us to become *producers of knowledge* to contribute to society, workplaces, and positive social change.

An additional function of this class is to help students acquire valuable skills that will allow their knowledge attained in the sociology curriculum at UNT to transfer into the labor market and non-academic settings. In pursuit of this aim, students will learn how design and implement data collection tools, access publicly available data, and analyze data to draw insight in social patterns, phenomena, disparities, and trends.

Course Goals

The course is broken into four substantive sections each pertaining to specific learning outcomes.

In Part 1, we will identify the skills and contributions a degree in sociology provides to society and in the labor market. Students will reflect on their personal interests and passions, identifying how their degree in sociology can help them pursue these aims post-graduation.

Part 2 of the course is more technical. In this section, we will focus on acquiring and applying sociological tools of research. These will help us become producers of knowledge and also develop marketable skills to transfer to the labor market or to graduate school.

First, we will engage in survey design. We will construct, field, and analyze a survey experiment. Each student will contribute a question to the survey based on their interests.

Second, we will use publicly available data from the General Social Survey to examine nationally representative attitudinal trends. Here, we will refine our data analysis skills.

Third, we will learn how to access and analyze data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), the primary source of economic wellbeing in the U.S., in order to identify economic and social trends across groups, geography, and over time.

Across these three aspects, students will acquire valuable skills in both collecting data, accessing nationally representative datasets, and data analysis.

Finally, in Part 3 we will focus on writing. Students will have written paper in previous classes, but these previous papers were likely to be literature reviews. Here, we will focus on writing original contributions based on our own primary data analysis.

COVID-19

We are in a global pandemic. We all need to be flexible. If you are feeling unwell, do not attend class. In these cases, you may attend remotely, just let me know in advance.

Masks: Consistent with UNT Policy, face masks are required in the classroom. If, for health or other reasons, you cannot wear one, please let me know as soon as possible.

Cleaning the Workspace: There will be materials to disinfect computers and desks before the start of every class. Please use these at the beginning of every class to clean you desk, chair, and computer.

Communication

Please be sure to check your e-mail regularly, particularly on Tuesdays and Thursdays as this semester it is possible that consequential announcements regarding where our class is meeting may happen regularly.

Land Acknowledgement

In recognition of the history and ongoing processes of colonialism by which the land where our class and the University of North Texas exists, I would like to acknowledge that this space is the occupied/unceded/seized territory of the Wichita, Caddo, Commanche, and Cherokee tribes. These tribes have stewarded this land through several generations and we pay our respects to elders, both past and present.

Note: Adapted from the UNT Division of Institutional Equity and Diversity

Guest Policy

Children and dependents are welcome in class. We meet in the evenings. This is difficult for those of us with caregiving responsibilities. Please do not hesitate if you need to bring your loved ones to class.

Required Materials: Stata Statistical Software

We will be using Stata in this class as a quantitative analysis software. If you have never used Stata before, that is OK. We will use lab time to orient you to the software.

Stata is available in the computer lab we use in class. But you will also need it outside of class time to conduct your personal research and complete course assignments. I strongly suggest you

purchase Stata. There are different versions with varying computational power. You'll have to choose one that fits your needs.

Stata IC is best for small to mid-sized datasets, such as the General Social Survey (although, not all GSS variables will fit in Stata IC, so you must select which variables you want). It's the cheapest version. A student license is \$48 for a 6-month license, \$94 for a yearly license, or \$225 for a perpetual license.

Stata SE can be used for larger datasets, such as the U.S. Census microdata (1 to more than 15 million observations) or the full GSS (nearly 3,000 variables). A student license is \$125 for a 6-month license, \$179 for a yearly license, or \$425 for a perpetual license.

Stata MP versions are like Stata SE, but improve computing speed which can be important when using large datasets and complex models. You probably don't need these versions yet.

To purchase Stata, visit this website and follow the prompts:
<https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/>

I realize many students get nervous about using different statistical software. Perhaps you are more comfortable with SPSS. Or you'd rather use R or SAS. As a researcher, you need to be familiar with multiple software programs for data analysis. We will use Stata because it is the most useful for our educational setting and for collaborative work.

Grades

I use a typical 100-point rubric for the course with points being distributed across four categories: 1) Daily class assignments, 2) Presentations, 3) the first draft of the final paper, and 4) the final paper. Letter grades will be awarded based on the percentage of total points received (see table below).

Daily Class Assignments	20% of Grade
Presentations	30% of Grade
First Draft of Capstone Thesis	10% of Grade
Final Capstone Thesis	40% of Grade
Total	100%

Grading Rubric:
90%-100% points: A
80%-89.9% points: B
70%-79.9% points: C
60%-69.9% points: D
59.9% or below: F

Assignments

Daily Class Assignments 20% of Grade

Throughout the semester, students will be assigned activities in-class. Sometimes these will be completed during class time. On other occasions, they are to be completed and turned in prior to the following class. These assignments are intended as pedagogical tools to facilitate engagement with the material and encourage student learning. These assignments will be distributed in class and the due date will be announced at that time.

Daily assignments also operate as an attendance mechanisms. Students who miss class and are not excused will not receive credit for the daily assignment. If you are feeling unwell, send me and e-mail and do not come to class. You will be excused. If there are extenuating circumstances preventing you from attending some classes, communicate these with me as soon as possible and we will make a suitable plan.

Presentations 20% of Grade

Students will provide four presentations throughout the semester. The first three presentations will be based on the results of data analysis performed within the course curriculum. The fourth presentation will be a summary of students' final paper.

Presentation dates and topics are:

Thursday, February 18: Presentation of Survey Experiment Results

Thursday, March 11: Presentation of GSS Analysis

Thursday, April 1: Presentation of CPS Analysis

Thursday, April 22: Presentation of Final Paper

Students should present with PowerPoint or an equivalent visualization tool. The presentations should focus on the results of their data analysis. Details on methods should be included, as well as data visualizations showing results. Further details will be provided closer to each date. Presentations should be about five minutes long.

First Draft of Capstone Thesis 20% of Grade

Students will submit a first draft of their final thesis by Saturday, April 17. I will provide feedback on these first drafts to be incorporated before the final submission.

Capstone Thesis 40% of Grade

The capstone thesis is the most important assignment of this course, and probably your undergraduate education. It should represent the culmination of your UNT education, incorporating theory, methods, and writing learned throughout the sociology course curriculum. For those who may attend graduate school in the future, the final paper may serve as a strong writing sample. Others may have job applications requiring evidence of strong research, writing, and analytic skills. This paper will serve that purpose.

For the capstone thesis, students will choose one of the results from their analysis of the survey experiment fielded in class, their analysis of GSS data, or their analysis of CPS data. They will incorporate these results into a 10 to 20 page (double-spaced) paper that motivates the analysis with a theoretical framing and hypotheses, discusses the methods used to obtain and analyze data, interprets the results of the analysis, and discusses implications of the findings.

The thesis should use the following template:

- I. Introduction
- II. Literature review and theoretical framing
- III. Statement of research question and hypotheses
- IV. Methods
- V. Results

- VI. Discussion of Implications
- VII. Conclusion

Further details on the capstone thesis include:

- Page range of 10-20 pages double-spaced, Times New Roman font size 12
- Includes at least 1 table and 1 data visualization (graph or figure)
- Uses at least 10 citations
- ASA reference style should be used (see https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_ASA_Style.pdf)

Grading of the capstone thesis will follow a rubric summarized posted on canvas. It should be noted that I am required to use this rubric because it is designed to evaluate students based on the departments' expectations for what a sociology student should learn by the time they graduate. We will use the evaluation of these papers not only to grade students, but also to assess our program.

The rubric for the capstone thesis includes the following components:

- Research Question: Specific and clearly stated, interesting, relevant. Based on previous work, the question opens the foot to a new avenue of research. Demonstrates an understanding of how theory can be used to explain practical phenomenon.
- Taking Different Perspectives: Utilizes different theories and demonstrates how theories explain social issues. Shows an understanding of different theories and demonstrates an appreciation of each.
- Literature Review: Utilized a variety of appropriate sources that clearly and convincingly link theory to practice. Able to synthesize material drawn from a multidisciplinary perspective presenting a logical and creative argument. Interesting and sophisticated hypothesis is identified.
- How Worldwide Systems of Power Relations Work: Explains and applies theory on power to social topic. Reviews impact power issues would have on issue at a global level.
- Research Methodology: Explains and justifies the approach used to examine the research question. All variables are identified, defined and appropriateness established. Strong casual relationships established.
- Analysis: Data analysis is clearly presented and described with ample evidence to support conclusions. It is linked to the research question, hypothesis, and theory. Appropriate use of figures, tables and charts are incorporated into the analysis and effectively utilized.
- Application Conclusion: Results are effectively applied to the current situation with the implications thoroughly examined. Potential weaknesses and future research directions are presented. A summary of the major findings is provided. Results were placed into broader context and were not overstated. Insightful application reflects ethical approaches taught in the program.
- Reasoning for One's Ethical Responsibilities: Conclusion discusses results in a broader context that reviews ethical implication at the local, national, and/or global level. The reasoning behind the ethical responsibility is well thought out.
- Communication: All sources are included in the reference/bibliography section. Scholarly language is used throughout paper. Sentences are clear and concise creating paragraphs

that convey a central message. Transitions between paragraphs are smooth and coherent. The paper is logically organized with appropriate use of headings or subheadings. Minimal number of mechanical, grammatical, style errors.

Assignment and Grade Policies

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted and will be assigned a zero. This pertains to daily assignments, presentations, the first draft of the thesis, and the final capstone thesis.

In some instances, there will be extenuating circumstances preventing the submission of assignments. Particularly during these times of global pandemic. Please communicate these with me. I will make every accommodation with respect to students' needs and challenges.

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades may only be assigned when the student is making satisfactory progress until the request for an incomplete is made. Incompletes will only be offered with medical documentation or other documentation that a highly unusual circumstance beyond the student's control (e.g. the death of a loved one) has made finishing the semester impossible. All requests for incompletes must be made prior to the final examination.

Make-ups

Other than medical emergencies and religious observations, no make-ups will be given for any in-class assignments.

Diversity and Global Issues Requirement for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

This course fulfills the CLASS requirement for Diversity and Global Issues. At the end of this course, students should be able to do at least three of the following: 1. Identify the origins, influences, and limits of one's own cultural heritage. 2. Demonstrate the ability to learn from and empathize with perspectives and experiences different from one's own. 3. Show an understanding of the interrelationships of the self, local society, and global environments. 4. Describe the impacts of complex, worldwide systems. 5. Explain the reasoning for one's ethical responsibilities within worldwide systems.

Visit the UNT Learning Center

The UNT Learning Center provides a variety of free academic support programs from tutoring and supplemental-instruction services to academic skills workshops and coaching. **Contact Information:** Phone: 940-369-7006 | Email: Learning.Center@unt.edu | In-person: Monday through Friday, from 8a - 5p, Sage Hall, Room 170. For more information about the services provided, visit the LC online: learningcenter.unt.edu.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences.

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from

the University. Students who engage in academic dishonesty will receive a zero in the assignment and potentially a zero in the course and administrative action from the university.

ADA Accommodation Statement

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648.

Religious Holidays

If you wish to observe a religious holidays that conflicts with the completion of a course module, notify me by the tenth day of the semester of the relevant module unless the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester. In such cases, you should notify me at least five days in advance of the date. I will make every reasonable effort to honor the request, not penalize you for missing material, and if an examination or project is due during the absence, I will give you an exam or assignment equivalent to the one completed in the module.

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART 1: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH AGENDA

Tuesday, January 12: Introductions

Thursday, January 14: Taking Inventory of our Current Sociological Toolbox

Tuesday, January 19: From Consumers to Producers of Knowledge

Readings:

- Maris, Peter. 1990. "Witnesses, Engineers, or Storytellers? Roles of Sociologists in Social Policy." Pp. 75–87 in *Sociology in America*, edited by Herbert Gans. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Thursday, January 21: Developing a Research Agenda

Readings:

- Harnois, Catherine. 2018. "Chapter 1: An Introduction to Analyzing Inequalities." pgs. 2-16 in *Analyzing Inequalities: An Introduction to Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality Using the General Social Survey*. Sage.

PART 2: TOOLS AND METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

2.1.: Survey Design, Experiments, and Implementation

Tuesday, January 26: Survey Design and Sampling

Readings:

- Scarborough, William J. and Allyson Holbrook. 2021. "Chapter 8: Surveying the Social Landscape." in *Sociology in Action* edited by Kristin Kenneavy and Catherine Harnois. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thursday, January 28: Experiments

Readings:

Half the class will read:

- Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American journal of sociology* 108(5): 937-975.

The other half will read:

- Scarborough, William J., Danny L. Lambouths III, and Allyson L. Holbrook. 2019. "Support of Workplace Diversity Policies: The Role of Race, Gender, and Beliefs about Inequality." *Social Science Research* 79: 194-210.

Tuesday, February 2: Survey Lab Generating Survey Experiment

Lab: Qualtrics survey design

Thursday, February 4: Sampling and New Methods of Data Collection

Reading:

- Shank, Daniel B. 2016. "Using Crowdsourcing Website for Sociological Research: The Case of Amazon Mechanical Turk." *The American Sociologist* 47: 47-55.

Lab: Fielding our survey

Tuesday, February 9: Introduction to Stata

Readings:

- Acock, Alan C. 2012. "Chapter 1: Getting Started." Pgs 1-18 in *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*. Stata Press.
- Acock, Alan C. 2012. "Chapter 3: Preparing Data for Analysis." Pgs 47-70 in *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*. Stata Press.

Thursday, February 11: Analyze Survey Experiment Results

Reading:

- Acock, Alan C. 2012. Sections 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 in "Chapter 5: Descriptive Statistics and Graphs for One Variable" Pgs 96-114 in *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*. Stata Press.

Lab: Analyze results of experiment

Tuesday, February 16: Analyze Survey Experiment Results

Reading:

- Acock, Alan C. 2012. Sections 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 in "Chapter 6: Statistics and graphs for two categorical variables" Pgs 119-124 in *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*. Stata Press.

Lab: Analyze results of experiment

Thursday, February 18: Presentations of Survey Experiment Results

Presentations

2.2.: Secondary Data Analysis: Attitudes and Cultural Trends

Tuesday, February 23: Introduction to the General Social Survey

Reading:

- Harnois, Catherine. 2018. "Chapter 2: Understanding Data: Critical Concepts." pgs. 19-39 in *Analyzing Inequalities: An Introduction to Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality Using the General Social Survey*. Sage.

Lab: Intro to GSS Data Explorer and selecting variables to analyze

Thursday, February 25: GSS Lab – Coding Variables

Reading:

- Acock, Alan C. 2012. “Chapter 3: Preparing Data for Analysis.” Pgs 47-70 in *A Gentle Introduction to Stata.* Stata Press.
- UCLA guide on coding variable with Stata:
<https://stats.idre.ucla.edu/stata/modules/creating-and-recoding-variables/>

Lab: Coding GSS dataset

Tuesday, March 2: GSS Lab – Univariate Statistics

Lab: Descriptive statistics and univariate data visualizations

Thursday, March 4: GSS Lab – Bivariate Statistics

Reading [note, these can be used as a reference if needed for statistical tests]:

- Leon-Guerrero, Anna, Chava Frankfort-Nachmias, and Georgiann Davis. 2021. “Chapter 7: Testing Hypotheses.” Pgs 201-236 in *Social Statistics for a Diverse Society.* Sage.
- Leon-Guerrero, Anna, Chava Frankfort-Nachmias, and Georgiann Davis. 2021. “Chapter 8: The Chi-Square Test and Measures of Association.” Pgs 237-278 in *Social Statistics for a Diverse Society.* Sage.

Lab: Tests of bivariate relationships, differences between groups, and data visualization

Tuesday, March 9: GSS Lab

Lab: Finalize Results

Thursday, March 11: Presentations of GSS Analysis

Presentations

2.3.: Secondary Data Analysis: Federal Data from the U.S. Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics

Tuesday, March 16: Introduction to IPUMS, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

Reading:

- United States Census Bureau. 2020. “The Importance of the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census.” <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about/acs-and-census.html>
- United States Census Bureau. 2020. “About the American Community Survey.” <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about.html>

Thursday, March 18: Introduction to the Current Population Survey via IPUMS

Reading:

- United States Census Bureau. 2019. “Chapter 1: General Current Population Survey Information.” Pgs. 1-29 in *Design and Methodology: Current Population Survey – America’s Source for Labor Force Data.*

Lab: Intro to CPS Data

Tuesday, March 23: Analyzing Nationwide Trends

Reading:

- Acock, Alan C. 2012. "Chapter 7: Tests for One or Two Means." Pgs 147-182 in *A Gentle Introduction to Stata.* Stata Press.
- Acock, Alan C. 2012. "Chapter 8: Bivariate Correlation and Regression" Pgs 182-202 in *A Gentle Introduction to Stata.* Stata Press.

Lab: Analyzing monthly trends in the CPS

Thursday, March 25: CPS Lab

Lab: Analyzing monthly trends by group

Tuesday, March 30: CPS Lab

Lab: Finalize Results

Thursday, April 1: Presentations of CPS Analysis

Presentations

PART 3: WRITING

Tuesday, April 6: Analyzing Nationwide Trends

Reading:

- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. 2014. "Chapter 1: They Say: Starting with What Others Are Saying." Pgs. 19-29 in *They Say, I Saw: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing.* Norton.

Lab: Identifying bodies of literature to cite

Thursday, April 8: Analyzing Nationwide Trends

Reading:

- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. 2014. "Chapter 4: I Say: Yes/No/Okay, But." Pgs. 55-67 in *They Say, I Saw: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing.* Norton.

Lab: Identify unique intervention to the literature

Tuesday, April 13: Outlining the paper

Lynn White. 2005. "Writes of Passage: Writing an Empirical Journal Article." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67(4): 791-798.

Thursday, April 15: Writing lab

DRAFT 1 OF PAPER DUE ON SATURDAY, APRIL 17 BY 12AM.

Tuesday, April 20: Writing lab

Thursday, April 22: Final Presentations

FINAL PAPERS DUE ON FRIDAY, APRIL 30 BY 5:00PM.