

SOC 497
Capstone Research Practicum
3 credits
Thursdays: 3:10-6:00
333 Wilson-Short Hall

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Description

This course is designed for students to obtain experience working as part of an ongoing academic research project. The experience of participating on an active research project in your field of study is a major advantage of attending a large state research university (Boyer Commission 1998), as expressed in the WSU advertising tagline “World Class, Face to Face.” This semester you will participate on my National Science Foundation funded database development project, designed to assemble comparative and over-time data on environmental civil society groups in a cross-national context. I’m interested in documenting long-term trends in the number and size of environmental groups, and assessing their effect on political and other outcomes, across nations. By making these data readily available to others, this research contributes to the building of important infrastructures for research and education.

In the inaugural WSU capstone research course in sociology (Spring 2009) students created a codebook and set of coding procedures, and piloted data collection for every entry in the 2000 edition of *Associations Canada: The Directory of Canadian Associations*. Since that time coding of Canadian associational data has continued as part of my funded research, building on the work piloted in this course. In Spring 2010, course members completed a codebook and baseline coding for one complete year of the *Directory of Australian Associations*, and piloted more detailed examination of Canadian environmental groups.

This year, we will have two primary research goals. The first will be coding information to develop a check on the reliability and validity of *Associations Canada*, an important source of data for researchers studying a broad range of civil society groups. The second will be to advance a particular research project which you will select from a menu of options that I will present to you over the first month of the course.

A secondary goal of this course is to serve as a professionalization experience for those intending to pursue graduate education. To that end, we will have numerous guest speakers on topics such as “applying to graduate school” and “surviving graduate school.” You will be expected to present yourself professionally during these visits, with a clear focus on the presenter (no food, cell-phones off, maintain eye-contact and be responsive).

A tertiary goal is to provide an opportunity to learn technical skills that may be of use in a variety of settings (e.g. graduate school, business, non-profit work). One of the most highly evaluated parts of the course in past years has been the experience of gaining a basic working knowledge of the useful database software package Microsoft Access. Those intending to pursue graduate degrees especially appreciate experience with the STATA statistical software package. This year we will, I hope, also integrate use of some basic cloud computing technologies.

The focus of this course is hands-on, original research. In addition to participating in the coding of organizational entries (where I hope you will learn something about how to create a codebook, about using technology generally, and the useful program Microsoft Access in particular, about coding protocol, reliability and validity, and database management) research groups will take primary responsibility for a discrete research project and developing a research poster that conforms to disciplinary norms of presentation.

By the end of this capstone research practicum you will have an improved ability to:

1. Critically assess the reliability and validity of research findings and conclusions
2. Convert relevant information into various mathematical forms (e.g. spreadsheets, graphs, diagrams, tables), manipulate that information and explain what it represents.
3. Pose and evaluate arguments based on evidence and apply conclusions from such arguments appropriately.
4. Design and implement appropriate research strategies
5. Communicate research findings in disciplinary appropriate ways, both written and oral
6. Understand how sociological methods and concepts relate to those of other disciplines (particularly political science, history and area studies) and engage in cross-disciplinary research activities.

Learning goals	Course topics (& dates) that advance these learning goals	Primary means by which this objective will be evaluated
1	Week 3: reliability and validity	Week 5-7 assignments, creating codebook, coding cases and revising based on that experience
2	Week 4, creating a codebook and weeks 5 and 6, revising that codebook <i>and</i> Week 11, quantitative analysis and using Microsoft Excel	Weeks 5 and 6 codebook assignments <i>and</i> Week 12 assignment (quantitative analysis worksheet) <i>and</i> group project research poster
3	Week 11: quantitative analysis and using Microsoft Excel	Group project research poster
4	Weeks 7 and 9 group project work	Weeks 8, 9 and 11 coding assignments <i>AND</i> group project research poster
5	Week 8: Designing a research poster	Week 13 and 16 presentations of group project research poster
6	Week 12 (SESRC visit) and weeks 13-15 group project work (and resources for research week 14)	Group project research poster

Required Materials

There are no required textbooks for purchase. Course readings and freely available through links or pdf downloads available from the course webpage wsu.edu/~johnsone/497.html. While not required, it is strongly recommended that, if you don't have it already, you obtain Microsoft Access for you home computer (available for free to through my.wsu.com). Finally, expect to have some monetary expenses at the end of the year when constructing a presentation-quality poster as a final product for group projects.

Free Microsoft Access 2007 Tutorials:

<http://www.baycongroup.com/access2007/index.html>

<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/access2007>

Grading:

20pts Attendance/participation.

40pts individual assignments. There are ten class assignments. Each assignment is worth 4 points.

Individual assignments are due every week by 9am Wednesday morning (the day prior to class).

Late assignments (up to 24 hours late) are eligible for up to half credit.

20pts Research poster: group research projects will culminate with research poster presentations in the final weeks of class (see attached for more details)

20pts Peer Assessments: assessments will evaluate the contribution of each project member to the class and completing the group research project and poster.

Academic Integrity: I would treat breaches seriously. Anyone caught plagiarizing will receive a failing grade and your name will be forwarded to the office of student conduct.

Students with Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to participate fully in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

Weekly schedule

1. (Thurs. Jan 13) Introduction to course AND (Microsoft Access) databases
2. (Thurs. Jan 20) Content Analysis of existing records AND Microsoft Access input forms

Reading due:

- Singleton, Royce A. Jr., Bruce C. Straits, and Margaret Miller Straits. "Research Using Existing Data". Chapter 12 in *Approaches to Social Research* (2nd ed.).
- <http://www.sociology.org.uk/methodca.pdf>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Database_design

Assignment due: Install Access, complete coding of 100 cases using supplied codebook and Access database (see course website for downloads). E-mail file as per instructions (e.g. naming conventions)

3. (Thurs. Jan 27). Reliability and validity (possibly AND Lorena O'English, WSU Social Sciences Librarian, on using Zotero)

Reading due:

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2008. Ch. 4 "Measurement" in *Political Science Research Methods*, 6th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press
- Neuendorf, Kimberly A. "Reliability." Chapter 7 from *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Woolley, John T. 2000. "Using Media-Based Data in Studies of Politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(1): 156-73.
- Martin, Andrew W., John McCarthy, and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2006. "Measuring Association Populations Using the *Encyclopedia of Associations*: Evidence from the Field of Labor Unions." *Social Science Research* 35 (2006): 771-778.

Assignment due: 300 cases using Access form

4. (Thurs. Feb 3) Creating a codebook generally AND our project specifically

Reading due:

- <http://www.policyagendas.org/page/topic-codebook>
- <http://www.stanford.edu/group/collectiveaction/cgi-bin/drupal/> (click on data, codebook, and download the excel codebook file for viewing)
- <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/help/cb9721.jsp>
- Johnson, Erik W. 2006. "Changing Issue Representation Among Major United States Environmental Movement Organizations." *Rural Sociology* 71(1): 132-54.
- Minkoff, Debra C. 1995. *Organizing for Equality*. Appendix A.
- Minkoff, Debra C. 1993. "The Organization of Survival: Women's and Racial-Ethnic Voluntarist And Activist Organizations, 1955-1985." *Social Forces* 71(4): 887-908
- Minkoff, Debra C. and Silke Aisenbrey and Jon Agnone. 2008. "Organizational Diversity in the US Advocacy Sector." *Social Problems* 55(4): 525-548

Assignment due: 300 cases on SQL server

5. (Thurs. Feb 10) Dr. Monica Johnson “Applying to Graduate School” AND review codebooks

Reading due:

- Baumgartner, Frank et al. 2008. “Tracing Interest-Group Populations in the US and UK. Prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, August 28–August 31.
http://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/papers/apsa_08_us_uk_groups.pdf
- Walker, Edward, John D. McCarthy and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2010. “Replacing Members with Managers? Mutualism among Membership and Non-Membership Advocacy Organizations in the U.S.” *American Journal of Sociology*.

Assignment due: codebook for your datasource are due 24 hours prior to class

6. (Thurs. Feb 17) Review coding/revised codebook AND creating Microsoft Access data input forms

Reading due:

- Ramos, Howard. 2008. “Opportunity for Whom? Political Opportunity and Critical Events in Canadian Aboriginal Mobilization, 1951-2000.” *Social Forces* 87(2): 795-823.
- Nownes, Anthony J. 2004. “The Population Ecology of Interest Group Formation: Mobilizing for Gay and Lesbian Rights in the United States, 1950-98.” *British Journal of Political Science* 34: 49-67.
- Johnson, Erik W. 2008. “Social Movement Size, Organizational Diversity, and the Making of Federal Law.” *Social Forces* 86(3): 967-994.

Assignment due: Revised codebook, narrative of revisions, Access database and 100 coded cases

7. (Thurs. Feb 24) Guest: Graduate students AND Group Project Work Day

Assignment due: Access form and 500 cases

8. (Thurs. March 3) Designing a Research Poster AND Lorena O’English, WSU Social Sciences Librarian, on web-tools for collaboration

Reading due: Chap 2 and 3 from Nicol, Adelheid A.M and Penny M. Pexman. 2003. “Displaying Your Findings: A Practical Guide to Creating Figures, Posters, and Presentations.” American Psychological Association.

Assignment due: group codebooks/databases/forms and code 250 cases

9. (Thurs. March 10) Group Project Workday

Assignment due: 500 cases

10. (Thurs. March 17) No Class: Spring Break.

11. (Thurs. March 24) Quantitative Analysis AND using Microsoft Excel

Assignment due: 500 cases

12. (Thurs. March 31) SESRC site visit w/ Marion Shultz, Data Collection Manager. Meet at 3:30 at 1425 Terreview Drive, Suite F (grey-blue building).

Assignment due: quantitative analysis worksheet (see course website for download)

13. (Thurs. April 7) semi-formal group presentations/mock posters AND Group project work

Poster1 due: group project assignment (rough draft of poster)

14. (Thurs. April 14) Resources for research AND group project work

Reading due:

Baumgartner, Frank R., Bryan D. Jones, and John Wilkerson. 2002. Studying Policy Dynamics. Chapter 2 (pp. 29-49) in *Policy Dynamics*. Ed. Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

15. (Thurs. April 21) Katie Evermann-Druffel, Director of Social Services, at Pullman Regional Hospital AND Group project work

16. (Thurs. April 28) Group project final poster presentations and peer assessment/wrap-up

Poster2 due: group project assignment (final poster presentation)