

SEMINAR: Social Science Methods for Latin American Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies

LTAM 6100-090/, 6102-090, R, 6:30pm - 9:15pm. Fretwell 302.

Fall 2023

Professor Fred Batista

(Pronouns: He/Him/His)

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Office: Fretwell 435M.

Office Hours: by appointment.

This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered during the semester. However, the policies, assignments and readings contained in this syllabus are subject to change with advance notice.

1 Course Description

This is a course in social science methods applied to the study of society, culture, and politics. The course deals with fundamental issues that are essential for social science research: concepts and measurement, epistemology, causation, and inference. Moreover, the course deals with issues of research design and specific methodological tools used in the social sciences. The purpose of this course is to learn specific research skills while examining topics that are relevant to understand topics studied in the social sciences. The weekly sessions will be held in seminar, workshop, or lecture style, where students will be expected to actively participate. By the end of the semester you will: (1) understand the conceptual and theoretical foundations of social science methodology; (2) be familiarized with a range of research techniques in the social sciences; (3) apply specific techniques.

2 Course Material

The course will rely on articles and book chapters. All of the material will be provided to the students through Canvas.

3 Evaluation

Class Participation	10%
IRB Training and Certification	15%
Focus Group	
- Design	5
- Recruitment	5
- Data Collection	<u>10</u>
	20%
Survey	
- Design	10
- Data Collection	<u>10</u>
	20%
Research Paper	
- Proposed Research Questions	5
- Annotated Bibliography	10
- Presentation	5
- Final Paper	<u>15</u>
	35%

3.1 Grading Scale

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59 and below	F

3.2 Class Participation

Active and thoughtful participation in class discussion (based on having done the readings in advance) is an essential part of this course and will count for 10% of the final grade. Students are expected to critically engage the readings, to raise questions, make connections between the readings and their own substantive interests in political science. To ensure that everyone has a fair chance to contribute, I may call on students at times. At the end of the semester, students will present their final papers in a conference panel format.

3.3 IRB Training and Certification

By Week 6, students are required to familiarize with UNCC's Office of Research Compliance (ORC) and complete the training program and certification for researchers conducting human subject research at <https://research.uncc.edu/departments/office-research-compliance-orc/human-subject-research-training-information>. This assignment will count for 15% of the final grade.

3.4 Focus Group Exercise

The students will conduct a focus group with UNCC students on Week 9. The students will use the focus group to gather qualitative data about the research questions that they will examine in their final papers. The students will be required to design the focus group questions, recruit participants, lead and record the session, and transcribe the data. The session on Week 8 will be used to prepare students for the assignment, and Week 10 will consist of debriefing and analyses of the data. This assignment as a whole will count for 20% of the final grade.

3.5 Survey Exercise

The students will conduct a survey with UNCC students between Weeks 12 and 15. The students will use the qualitative data from the focus group to design a short self-administered survey questionnaire about the research questions that they will examine in their final papers. Each student will be required to design the questions, recruit and distribute the 10 questionnaires. The session on Week 12 will serve as training for students, while Week 15 will consist of a workshop on how to analyze survey data. For the final paper, the instructor will provide a data report with tables that students will be able to use in their final papers. This assignment as a whole will count for 20% of the final grade.

3.6 Research Paper

Each student is expected to submit an empirical paper on a research question related to Latin American and/or Latinx students at UNCC. On Week 3 students will be required to submit a list of (causal and empirical) research questions that will be discussed in class, and then they will be required to choose one question to work with during the semester. The session on Week 2 will give students the background to formulate research questions in the social sciences. On Week 5, students will submit an annotated bibliography on the chosen topic. The session on Week 4 will provide the background for this assignment. Students will be required to list 10 peer-reviewed references and discuss how each one of them contributes to answering the research question. The data for the final paper will be collected as part of the sessions on focus groups and surveys. Students are only allowed to use the data for writing the final paper for this class, and not for a thesis, dissertation or could you use the data for other purposes. Students will submit video presentations of their papers along with the final paper. The final paper and presentation is on December 14 (from 5:00pm to 7:30pm) and should be submitted as a Canvas assignment. The paper must have double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, 1-inch margins, page numbers, title page, complete references. The suggested length is 15-20 pages. You are both encouraged and expected to come talk to me about your research paper during the course of the semester. This assignment as a whole will count for 35% of the final grade.

4 Administrative Policies

4.1 Course Website and Email

The course website can be accessed through Canvas. Please check this site regularly for readings, assignments, and other updates. Announcements may be sent out via email or posted directly on Canvas. You are responsible for all information disseminated via Canvas and/or email. If you send me an email on a weekday, I will respond to you that same day. If you send me an email on a weekend or holiday, I will respond to you the following business day.

4.2 Attendance

You are expected to come to class, to be on time, and to participate constructively.

4.3 Absences and Late Work

Missed deadlines will only be rescheduled if you have received prior approval of your absence and you have documentation explaining why you cannot be in class that day. Makeups for assignments will only be granted if you provide documentation explaining why you could not be in class, or under extraordinary circumstances. I reserve the right to determine what constitutes an extraordinary circumstance.

4.4 Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity. In short, this means that cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students violating the Academic Honesty Policy in this course will receive a minimum penalty of a grade of zero for the assignment or test in question and may receive an F in the course and referral to Judicial Services.

4.5 Students with Disabilities

UNC Charlotte is committed to ensuring equal academic opportunities and inclusion for students with disabilities based on the principles of independent living, accessible universal design and diversity. Students with disabilities who anticipate needing an academic accommodation in this course must first consult with the Office of Disability Services and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

4.6 Diversity

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is committed to equality of educational opportunity and does not discriminate against applicants, students, or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, or disability. In keeping with this commitment, UNC Charlotte actively seeks to promote diversity in its educational environment through its recruitment, enrollment, and hiring practices.

4.7 Courtesy in Classroom

Attention to classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distraction. As such, cell phones should be turned off or silenced during class and put away. Do not talk on your cell phone or text message during class. You are permitted to use laptops during class, but I reserve the right to ask you to put your laptop away if you are using it for purposes unaffiliated with my course. Please be on time to class and remain in class until you are dismissed. Being late to class is a sign of disrespect towards the instructor and your fellow students. Please refrain from talking during lectures, as well as when other students are speaking. Similarly, please respect the opinions of your fellow students, even if you are in disagreement with them. Repeated disruption of class may lead to your being asked to leave the classroom and/or a reduction of your final grade.

4.8 COVID-19 Policies

It is the current policy of UNC Charlotte that as a condition of on-campus enrollment, all students are required to engage in safe behaviors to avoid the spread of COVID-19 in the 49er community. Such behaviors specifically include the requirement that all students properly wear CDC-compliant face coverings in all indoor spaces on campus, including classrooms and labs, **regardless of vaccination status**. Failure to comply with this policy in the classroom or lab may result in dismissal from the current class session. If the student refuses to leave the classroom or lab after being dismissed, the student may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity for charges under the Code of Student Responsibility.

5 Title IX Reporting Expectations

UNC Charlotte is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these incidents, know that you are not alone. UNC Charlotte has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with civil protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UNC Charlotte employees, including faculty members, are expected to relay any information or reports of sexual misconduct they receive to the Title IX Coordinator. This means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I am expected to report the information to the Title IX Coordinator. Although I am expected to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can contact the following on-campus resources, who are not required to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator: (1) University Counseling

Center (counselingcenter.uncc.edu, 7-0311); or (2) Student Health Center (studenthealth.uncc.edu, 7-7400). Additional information about your options is also available at titleix.uncc.edu under the Students tab.

5.1 FERPA Notification

In establishing University Policy 402, Student Education Records, UNC Charlotte adheres to a policy of compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, also known as FERPA, a federal law that affords students the following rights with respect to their education records. For details, see the FERPA Annual Notification posted on the Office of Legal Affairs website. All questions concerning this FERPA Annual Notification may be directed to the attention of the Office of the Registrar.

5.2 Food Insecurity Statement

Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as “a lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy life.” Food insecure categories include: reduced caloric intake, reduced food quality, lack of variety in diet, disrupted eating patterns, and hunger. Research shows that college students experience food insecurity at higher rates than the American household rate, and that food insecurity can negatively impact academic performance and persistence. In recognition of this problem, UNC Charlotte offers assistance to students facing food insecurity through an on-campus food pantry. The Jamil Niner Student Pantry (JNSP) is located on the east edge of campus at 1224 John Kirk Road. It has regular hours which may change from semester to semester; please see the website at <https://ninerpantry.uncc.edu/> for schedule and details on its services, as well as resources about hunger and food insecurity among college students.

6 Course Schedule

This schedule is a guide for the course and is subject to change at my discretion with appropriate notice. Please read or listen to the assigned readings or podcasts before the session for which they are listed below.

Week 1

August 24, 2023: **INTRODUCTORY SESSION**

No Readings

Week 2

August 31, 2023: **LECTURE: RESEARCH METHODS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Readings:

- Bhattacharjee. A. (2012), *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*. University of South Florida: Scholar Commons. (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)

Week 3

September 7, 2023: **WORKSHOP: RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Due at noon: Research Question Assignment

Readings:

- Booth, W., Colomb, G., Williams, J. (2003), *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Chapters 3 and 4)
- Read the introductions of Trejo (2009) and Pavão (2018).

Week 4

September 14, 2023: **WORKSHOP: ENGAGING THE LITERATURE**

Readings:

- Booth, W., Colomb, G., Williams, J. (2003), *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Chapters 5 and 6)
- “A Guide to Writing Literature Reviews in Political Science and Public Administration.”
- Read the literature sections in Trejo (2009) and Pavão (2018).

Week 5

September 21, 2023: **WORKSHOP: RESEARCH ETHICS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Due before class: Annotated Bibliography

Readings:

- The Belmont Report
- Seligson, M. (2008), “Human Subjects Protection and Large-N Research: When Exempt is Non-Exempt and Research is Non-Research”, *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41(3): 477-482.
- Wood, E. (2006), “The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones.” *Qualitative Sociology* 29(3): 373-386.

Week 6

September 28, 2023: **LECTURE: RESEARCH DESIGN**

Due before class: IRB Training and Certification

Readings:

- King, G., Keohane, R., Verba, S. (1994), *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 1)
- Lawrence Neuman, W. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Essex: Pearson Education. (Chapter 2)
- Read the research design in Trejo (2009) and Pavão (2018).

Week 7

October 5, 2023: **LECTURE/WORKSHOP: QUALITATIVE TECHNIQUES**

Readings:

- Lawrence Neuman, W. (2014), *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Essex: Pearson Education. (Chapter 13)
- Freedman, D. (2008). “On Types of Scientific Enquiry: The Role of Qualitative Reasoning.” In: Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology.
- Read the research design in Trejo (2009) and Pavão (2018).

Week 8

October 12, 2023: **WORKSHOP: DESIGNING A FOCUS GROUP**

Due by noon: Focus Group Questions

Readings:

- Berkowitz, B. (2018), “Conducting Focus Groups.” *Community Tool Box: Assessing Community Needs and Resources*. The University of Kansas.

Week 9

October 19, 2023: **IN-CLASS FOCUS GROUP**

Due before class: Recruitment of Participants

No Readings

Week 10

October 26, 2023: **WORKSHOP: FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS**

Due by noon: Transcription of Focus Group Segment

Readings:

- Lawrence Neuman, W. (2014), *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Essex: Pearson Education. (Chapter 14)
- Stewart, D, et al. (2007), *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. (Chapter 7)
- Read the qualitative sections in Trejo (2009) and Pavão (2018).

Week 11

November 2, 2023: **LECTURE/WORKSHOP: QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES**

Readings:

- Lawrence Neuman, W. (2014) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Essex: Pearson Education. (Chapters 10 and 11)

Week 12

November 9, 2023: **WORKSHOP: DESIGNING A SURVEY**

Due by noon: Survey Questions

Readings:

- Groves et al. (2004), *Survey Methodology*. New Jersey: Wiley & Sons. (Chapter 1).

Week 13

November 16, 2023: **LECTURE: PRESENTING RESEARCH RESULTS**

Readings:

- Booth, W., Colomb, G., Williams, J. (2003), *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 15)
- “How to give a dynamic scientific presentation.” Elsevier Connect. (<https://www.elsevier.com/connect/how-to-give-a-dynamic-scientific-presentation>)

Week 14

November 23, 2023: **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

No Readings

Week 15

November 30, 2023: **WORKSHOP: SURVEY ANALYSIS**

Due by noon: Survey Responses.

Readings:

- Lawrence Neuman, W. (2014), *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Essex: Pearson Education. (Chapter 12)
- Read the quantitative sections in Trejo (2009) and Pavão (2018).

December 14: FINAL PAPER AND PRESENTATION (VIDEO) DUE ON CANVAS, From 5:00pm to 7:30pm