Senior Thesis
SOC 4860 (CRN: 21847)
Spring 2024: January 8 – May 4, 2024
Individual Study

Contact Information
Professor: Dr. Amanda Fehlbaum
Pronouns: She/Her/Hers
Office: DeBartolo Hall 507
Phone: 330-941-2716 (Office) or 330-406-9490 (Google Voice/Text)
Email: afehlbaum@ysu.edu
Preferred Contact Method: Email
Student Support Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 – 3 PM; Wednesdays from 1 to 4 PM. I am also willing to meet by appointment (virtual or in person) at other times.
Communication Expectations: I typically respond to email within 24 hours on weekdays. I strive to grade assignments within one week.

Catalog Description
A capstone experience for the major in Sociology. Designing, implementing, and completing an empirical research project or paper on a topic approved by the thesis advisor.

Course Description
This course is a seminar in social research wherein participants apply research methods in the theoretical and/or empirical investigation of a social issue and/or problem. Participants are involved in all phases of the research process.

The design of this capstone course combines class discussions, one-on-one meeting times between the student and instructor, and individual student work. It is set up to ensure a balance between structured meeting times and independent work time.

Social Research is appropriate for Sociology majors. Students take the capstone course only after completing research methods where they have developed their project proposal. One of the goals is to complete the bulk of the project in time to present to the university community at Quest, a forum for student scholarship, in early April.

Course Materials
Recommended Textbooks:
Gordon, Liahna. 2020. *Real Research: Research Methods Sociology Students Can Use*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN: 9781544357874

Students are required to have access to Blackboard for submission of assignments and some reading assignments. These are the computer lab locations on campus

If the university shifts to a fully online modality, the course will take place as "online-live" over WebEx videoconferencing. In that case, a webcam, microphone, and speakers will be required, whether as separate devices or as integrated into a computer or smartphone.

Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives
After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Plan an original research project
- Design a suitable research instrument with which to gather data
- Submit paperwork to the Institutional Review Board for research project approval
- Gather appropriate data for their research project
- Conduct an analysis of the data
- Write up their findings in a suitable manner
- Present their findings in a public forum, such as the Quest Research Day

Required Certification
Students must complete their CITI training and turn in their certificates to Dr. Fehlbaum by the second week of the course. The training is located at https://www.citiprogram.org. Go to Human Subjects Research and complete the course entitled "Social and Behavioral Research." It has 16 graded modules.

Design of the Course
This course is involves meeting every other week, unless otherwise agreed upon, to verify progress on the independent research project.

Assignments
Assignments throughout the course focus on specific components of your thesis project. By completing the assignments on time, you will have almost drafted the entire paper by the time you sit down to draw all of the elements together. The thesis itself makes up more than half of your grade for this class. Your drafts, poster, and attendance make up the remainder of the grade.

All deadlines are absolute. Late work will only be accepted in the most extenuating of circumstances and only with prior permission of the instructor. A grade penalty of half a letter grade for every day late will be enforced for late assignments (weekends counts as late days!).

Attendance (5% of grade)
Attendance in individual meetings is mandatory. The course will only work if you participate and complete assignments on time. If you have two unexplained absences for class meetings or individual meetings, you will be given an F and will have to take the course again.

Class Meetings

These meetings involve all of Dr. Fehlbaum's capstone students. In the meetings, we will discuss common issues, concerns, and solutions. You are welcome, and even encouraged, to help one another by reading each other's drafts, offering editing and feedback, and serving as general sounding board for each other's projects. For example, you will prepare your research instrument by having your classmates pre-test it for you.

Note – if this is a class with a single student, this course will just involve individual meetings.

Individual Meetings with Dr. Fehlbaum

These are 15 to 30 minute conferences with Dr. Fehlbaum to go over your progress. You are required to hand in drafts, discuss changes, and/or provide evidence of on-going work toward the completion of your capstone project.

Rough Draft of Revised Literature Review and Methods Proposal (15% of grade)

Researchers often receive feedback from others that must be incorporated into their work. For this assignment, you will be rewriting your proposal in terms of the comments on your final proposal (your graded assignment from research methods), as well as searching the literature for more (1 or 2) current sociological (or discipline-specific) articles about your topic that you will then include.

You must also find at least one research article – it does not matter how old – that uses your method for your topic or a similar topic that you can incorporate into your literature review and that will serve as a model of sorts for your research.

You will need to turn in *both* your revised proposal AND the graded proposal from your Research Methods class.

If you did not take Sociology's Research Methods, you need to create the front end of your paper: Intro, Lit Review, Method you plan on using, and your plan for gathering data. You can write this in future tense as you are proposing doing this project.

IRB Application (5% of grade)

Your project will most likely require applying to the Institutional Review Board for approval to conduct your study. This assignment entails completion of the forms and paperwork.

Rough Draft of Results and Analysis/Discussion (10% of grade)

For this assignment, you will be presenting a rough draft of the results and analysis section of your capstone paper/project.

Poster (5% of grade)

You will apply to present your research at QUEST, a forum for student scholarship (or a similar presentation in the Fall for Humanities and Social Sciences students and faculty). Your poster

will present key issues from your research. At the event, you will stand by your poster and engage with anyone who comes to look at your research. You will also have the opportunity to review each other's projects and offer informal peer evaluations. Your performance will be evaluated in terms of clarity of key issues from research, presentation of the poster, the ability to orally discuss the methodology, findings, and implications of your research.

Final Thesis Paper (60% of grade)

The goal for this paper is to model a manuscript suitable for publication. The preferred length of the written paper is about 15 pages, including references, tables, and charts. It must include a title page, abstract, and any appendices as deemed appropriate (such as a copy of your interview guide or survey instrument).

Submitting Assignments to the Safe Assign Folder on Blackboard

The reason you must submit assignments to the Safe Assign link on Blackboard is so that a plagiarism check can be run on your assignment. If you turn in your assignment early and see that you had a high plagiarism rating in the originality report, you may have the opportunity to see what you did and correct the assignment before it is due. You may contact me to clear your original so that you can submit an improved version. Plagiarism, regardless of intention, is taken seriously.[1]

Please make sure you are submitting to the correct assignment file for the assignment. **If you have problems submitting to the assignment file, you need to e-mail me and let me know well before the assignment is due (e.g., two days, not two minutes).** Assignments should be submitted as .doc, .docx, or .pdf files. Other file types will not be accepted. You are responsible for converting your document, if necessary, into an acceptable format. Unless otherwise noted, **do not just copy and paste the assignment into the text box!**

Blackboard has the option of uploading from Cloud Storage such as Google Docs and Cloud Drive. Submitting just a link to a Google Doc or OneDrive document – unless you have uploaded on Blackboard using Cloud Storage - will result in a grade of zero because it does not allow for the plagiarism check to take place.

Please take care to ensure that your assignment properly uploaded to Blackboard.[2] After you submit your file to the Safe Assign folder, you will receive a confirmation number that your submission was successful.

How to Succeed in This Course

I truly want everyone in this class to succeed not only in this course but throughout their college careers. To succeed in this course, I expect students to attend class regularly, engage

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[1] See section on Academic Integrity

[2] This video shows you how to upload an assignment

with the course, complete the assigned readings for each class, participate in class discussion, complete assignments on time, proofread their papers, and not plagiarize.

Levels of engagement can vary from above average to below average and may be reflected in your grade.

Above average engagement involves:
- Spirited intellectual engagement with the course readings and the class
- Conscientious and insightful preparation of assignments
- Assignments that make and support sophisticated arguments, are well-written and interesting to read, and are free of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- Active and thoughtful participation in class discussion

Average engagement involves:
- Clear demonstration in papers and in class discussion of understanding the concepts we explore
- Assignments with clear thesis statements and careful research
- Consistent participation in class discussion

Below average engagement involves:
- Work that shows minimal synthesis of concepts or original analysis
- Infrequent participation in discussion
- Assignments that are incomplete or late
- Assignments that are not well-researched or are presented carelessly (not proofread or contain many mechanical errors)

My Student Support Hours (Office Hours) are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 to 3 PM, Wednesdays from 1 to 4 PM, and by appointment. Please see me if you have any questions concerning the reading material, in-class assignments, papers, study strategies, etc. If you are unable to meet me during these hours, but need to be seen, you can e-mail me to make an appointment

How to Get Help
YSU is committed to your success. As a student you have access to several resources that may be instrumental in helping you succeed in this course and others. Please do not hesitate to utilize any of these free support services to support your academic success, physical and mental health, and help you navigate your time as a YSU student.

One such support service is the Writing Center. They provide writing consultations for any discipline as well as basic computer literacy help.

Attendance Expectations

This course is designed to be interactive. Please come to class prepared to discuss and actively participate. I encourage vibrant and respectful interaction. Discussion should be directed to the entire class. I start instruction promptly and continue to the end of designated class time.

Attendance will be taken during each live class. I understand that you may not be able to attend every class and/or that you may be required to leave a class early. I ask that you please communicate with me via email as soon as possible if you cannot attend a class and/or you have to leave a class early, and together we will make arrangements to ensure you can catch up on any content you missed.

Youngstown State University's Attendance Policy reads as follows:

> The faculty believes that classroom activities are essential to learning. The student is responsible for knowing and meeting all course requirements, including tests, assignments, and class participation, as indicated by the course instructor. The responsibility for work missed during absence rests with the student.
>
> The instructor has no obligation to give make-up graded coursework or to review other class work missed by a student because of absence apart from absences due to participation in university-sponsored events, government-related activities, religious observances, death of a family member, and documented personal illness.

Students who are consistently absent without a university-sanctioned excuse and accompanying documentation need to meet with me to discuss their situation and what steps can be taken to ensure their success in the course. Missing more than 60% of classes and/or non-submission of coursework may result in a Nonattendance F (NAF).

Late Work Submission Policy

Late assignments are eligible for credit according to the following schedule: one day past due = 75%, three days past due = 50%, one week past due = 25%. These assignments cannot be accepted more than one week past the due date.

Please Note

Technological difficulties are not considered a valid excuse for tardiness. Please contact me – email, call, text - well before an assignment is due if you are having technical difficulties. I will do my best to work with you to address the situation.

Class Conduct

The American Sociological Association states, "As sociological scholars and citizens, we have a responsibility to study and speak out regarding all forms of racism and injustice." I stand in solidarity and support the fight against systemic racism and the oppression of Black folks, Indigenous folks, and other People of Color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and non-binary individuals.

In this class, we will discuss issues that are highly controversial. We all come from different perspectives on these issues. It is likely that we will disagree with one another. I welcome and encourage lively discussion, as that is necessary for true learning to occur. However, disagreements should not come in the form of personal attack. Mutual respect is required to maximize a healthy and fair learning environment. You may disagree with each other's ideas and the evidence used in the arguments, but you should respect each other as people.

Communication Issues

Email

I can best be reached by e-mail, but my response may not be immediate. Please indicate which course you are in when emailing me for the first time. You also need to always sign your emails at the end (write your name).

Students are expected to check their e-mail for university announcements or information from instructors, though announcements will typically be cross-posted on Blackboard. It is to your benefit to check your e-mail so that you have the most up-to-date information pertaining to this class. If you use an e-mail address other than your YSU account (in other words, it does not end in "@ysu.edu"), I cannot guarantee that I will receive your e-mail.

Phone

I have a phone in my office; however, I cannot always be relied upon to answer it. The number is 330-941-2716. You may call or text my Google Voice number - 330-406-9490. Regardless if texting or calling, please identify yourself.

Grading and Grading Scale

Course Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation

- Attendance: 5%
- Rough Draft – Literature Review and Methods – 15%
- IRB Application – 5%
- Rough Draft – Results and Analysis/Discussion – 10%
- Poster Session – 5%
- Final Thesis Paper – 60%

Final Grades

Final letter grades will be assigned as follows:

A: 90 – 100%
B: 80 – 89%
C: 70 – 79%
D: 60 – 69%
F: 0 – 59%

Final grades are non-negotiable.

YSU's Grading System can be found [here](#).

University Policies

[University policies](#) can be found online and provide you guidance on your rights as a student in this course. The links below take you directly to a specific policy. Should you have any questions about a policy, please do not hesitate to contact me using the information at the top of the syllabus.

- [Statement of Non-Discrimination from the University](#)
- [Academic Integrity/Honesty](#)
- [Student Accessibility](#)
- [Incomplete Grade Policy](#)
- [Academic Grievances and Complaints](#)
- [Attendance Policy](#)

Academic Integrity

As outlined in *The Student Code of Conduct*, all forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited at Youngstown State University. This includes plagiarism, the unauthorized use of tools or notes in taking tests or completing assignments, fabrication of data or information used for an assignment, working with others without permission from the instructor, and more. A student who is believed to have violated the [academic integrity policy](#) will meet with the instructor to discuss the allegations. The student may accept responsibility for the violation and any sanctions selected by the instructor, or they have the right to ask for a hearing before a hearing panel. The full Academic Integrity policy can be found in Article III. 1. of *The Student Code of Conduct*, while further information on University procedures for alleged academic integrity violations can be found in Article V.

Note: Not adequately citing your sources, such as only listing sources at the end and not citing them within the paper, is a violation of academic integrity. If you do this in a paper or homework, you will receive a zero on your assignment and will be reported for academic dishonesty.

All rules pertaining to plagiarism and academic integrity in general also pertain to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Artificial intelligence (AI) is a new tool - of both striking capacity and severe limitations. Use it at your own risk.

- If you include AI-generated text directly into an assignment, treat it like a quote from any other source. Set it aside from the text with quotation marks or as a block-quote and cite the source parenthetically or in a footnote (see how here: libguides.umn.edu/chatgpt).
- You are responsible for fact checking statements composed by AI language models.

- If you include information or data into an assignment that you found through an AI tool, treat it like information from any other source and include a citation. The citation should also include the prompt to which you asked the AI to respond.
- If you include AI generated materials that the AI copied without attribution from another published source, you - and not AI - will have committed plagiarism.
- You will be held responsible for any errors that derive from AI-generated materials.
- AI will not count toward an assignment's source-minimum (I.e., the number of sources you are required to include in an assignment).
- If you are in doubt as to whether you are using AI language models appropriately in this course, I encourage you to discuss your situation with me.

If you are retaking this class to receive a higher/passing grade, you may not submit papers you previously submitted in the course.

Title IX
Title IX makes it clear that violence, discrimination, and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: Title IX Coordinator (titleix@ysu.edu), Counseling Services (330-941-3737), YSU Police (330-941-3527), and Rape Crisis & Counseling Center (24-hour crisis line: 330-782-3936). More information can be found at https://ysu.edu/title-ix/.

Voluntary/Involuntary Medical Leave or Withdrawal
Medical leave/withdrawal is available for all students with a documented physical or psychological illness of a serious nature that requires them to leave the university after the last day to withdraw with a grade of "W" without completing their coursework.

University Schedule of Operations

Last Day to Add or Change a Grade Option:	Tuesday, January 16, 2024
Last Day for 100% Refund:	Sunday, January 21, 2024
Last Day for Withdrawing with a Grade of "W":	Monday, January 22, 2024
No Class (MLK Day):	Monday, January 16, 2024
Spring Break:	Monday, March 4 - Sunday, March 10, 2024

Course Schedule
The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning. For maximum benefit in this course, complete the readings by the assigned date to prepare for class.

Wk	Date	Topic	To Prepare for Class / Assignment Due
1	Week of January 8	Introduction to Course	• Overview of course and assembling your project • Set up next meeting
2	Week of January 15	Individual Meetings with Dr. Fehlbaum	• Touching-base and updates • ***CITI Training Certificate due at meeting***

3	Week of January 22	Class Meeting: Writing Good Questions	• Read appropriate section on research questions in textbook (section starts at page)
			  • Interviews: pg. 65
			  • Observations or Ethnography: pg. 135
			  • Surveys: pg. 188
			  • Secondary Data: pg. 294
			  • Content Analysis: pg. 356
			• Group discussion of research instrument questions
			Hand in Revised Proposal as well as graded final research proposal from Dr. Jiang's class OR front end of paper

4	Week of January 29	Class Meeting: Getting Your Research instrument Ready	• Pre-test your research instrument
			  • Bring your interview guide, survey, etc. to class
			  • Class problem-solving/troubleshooting
			• Writing an informed consent form
			• Overview of IRB Website
			• Set up next meeting

5	Week of February 5	Individual Meetings with Dr. Fehlbaum	• Get feedback on revised proposal
			• Bring revised research instrument
			  • Those using an online instrument will enter questions into account
			• ***Complete IRB Submission***
			  • Forms as well as informed consent, research instrument, recruiting materials (if applicable)

6	Week of February 12	Class Meeting: Checking In	• Group discussion of research process
			  • Next steps, including what data analysis entails
			  • Potential IRB revisions
			• Set up next meeting

Wk	Date	Topic	To Prepare for Class / Assignment Due
Start Collecting Data (If IRB Approved)			
7	Week of February 19	Individual Meetings with Dr. Fehlbaum	• Feedback on research and writing • Troubleshooting data collection issues
8	Week of February 26	Class Meeting: Putting Your Thesis Together – Pt. 1	• Changing tense in the proposal from future to past, as applicable Read appropriate section on data analysis in textbook: • Interviews: pg. 115 • Observations or Ethnography: pg. 180 • Surveys: pg. 276 • Secondary Data: pg. 318 • Content Analysis: pg. 397 • How to write up the data analysis section
9	Week of March 4	NO CLASS	SPRING BREAK
10	Week of March 11	Catch-Up Week	• Catch up week (if necessary)
11	Week of March 18	Class Meeting: Preparing for Poster Session	• How to put a poster together • Troubleshooting research paper writing
12	Week of March 25	Class Meeting: Discussing Results	• How to write up results section • Troubleshooting posters • Set up next meeting
13	Week of April 1	Class Meeting: Putting Your Thesis Together – Pt. 1	***Hand in Rough Draft of Results and Analysis Section***
14	Week of April 8	Class Meeting: Putting Your Thesis Together – Pt. 2	• Problem-solving session on thesis • Making sure it flows and is put together properly
15	Week of April 15	Individual Meetings with Dr. Fehlbaum (as needed)	• Optional rough draft of entire thesis due • ***Poster or Presentation Due***
16	Week of April 22	Finals Week	• Individual meeting, if necessary
May 1: Deadline for Capstone Project – Due by 5 PM			