

# Conservation Social Science Methods

PTRM 500/NRSM 500, 3.0 credits  
Monday/Wednesday 2-3:30, NAC 201

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## **Course Description**

This course provides a foundational understating of key research methods utilized in natural resource social science. The course is designed to provide students with basic knowledge of the scientific process and in-depth knowledge of common qualitative and quantitative methods used in the field. Research ethics and IRB, research design and proposal writing, the role of paradigms and theories, and publishing and the peer review process will also be explored. The course will help prepare students to develop their research proposals by providing the knowledge and skills necessary to write a methods section.

## **Learning Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of key research methods relevant to natural resource social science
- Integrate course material into their own research proposals
- Offer insightful critiques of methods used in natural resource social science
- Communicate knowledge of science and research methods in both written work and oral presentations

## **Seminar Format and Focus**

PTRM/NRSM 500 is a graduate seminar, which means that students are responsible for contributing to the content of the course through engaged participation, discussion, and presentations. The success of the course depends on a collective dialogue about the meaning and implications of the readings and other course materials. Students are expected to carefully and thoroughly read ALL assigned readings prior to class and come to class prepared to discuss, examine, analyze, and critique each reading. The course is reading intensive, especially at the outset. Throughout the course, the instructor will provide short lectures to build a common foundation amongst course participants. However, for the most part, classes will be discussion-oriented. In class discussions, please follow the thread or theme of the discussion, rather than the queue (who is next in line to speak).

***Do not take this class unless you are prepared to read, think, and take responsibility for your learning – this is a graduate seminar, not an undergraduate lecture class!*** “Engaged participation” does not refer to the number of comments you make during class or your level of expertise, but rather describes the sort of thoughtful, meaningful, prepared (meaning you *actively* read/completed the assignments) questions and comments that further your own intellectual development and that of the group. A

willingness to work on the material at hand, and consider its application to the field is critical. Civility and respect for different views and ideas are also expected.

**Students with Disabilities**

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that adversely affects your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

**Student Conduct Code**

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#).

**Grading Statement**

Please note, this class is offered for traditional letter grade only. It is not offered under the credit/no credit option.

**Course Withdrawal Deadlines**

<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
To 15 <sup>th</sup> instructional day	Students can drop classes on CyberBear with refund & no “W” on Transcript	Sept 21 = last day
16 <sup>th</sup> to 45 <sup>th</sup> instructional day	A class drop requires a form with instructor and advisor signature, a \$10 fee from registrar’s office, student will receive a ‘W’ on transcript, no refund.	Sept 12 through Nov 2
Beginning 46 <sup>th</sup> instructional day	Students are only allowed to drop a class under very limited and unusual circumstances. Not doing well in the class, deciding you are concerned about how the class grade might affect your GPA, deciding you did not want to take the class after all, and similar reasons are not among those limited and unusual circumstances. If you want to drop the class for these sorts of reasons, make sure you do so by the end of the 45 <sup>th</sup> instructional day of the semester. Requests to drop must be signed by the instructor, advisor, and Associate Dean (in that order) so if you pursue this request, leave sufficient time to schedule meetings with each of these individuals (generally this will take at least 3-5 working days). A \$10 fee applies if approved. Instructor must indicate whether the individual is Passing or Failing the class at the time of request.	April 3 – Dec 12

## **Readings**

Readings for this course include articles, book chapters, a book, interview transcripts, survey instruments, and other materials relevant to research methods. Please purchase the following books as soon as possible at a local bookstore (you will need to order it) or through an online vendor:

Babbie, E. (2012). *The Practice of Social Research*. Wadsworth Publishing, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Optional:

Hesse-Biber, S.N. and P. Leavy. (2011). *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications.

Dillman, D., Smyth, J., & Christian, L. (2009). *Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys*. John Wiley & Sons.

With the exception of the Babbie book, course readings (articles and book chapters) will be available on Moodle.

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

### **Course Grades**

Final course grades will be based on the following:

Attendance and participation	10%
Response papers	30%
Final paper	35%
Peer review	15%
Presentations	10%

### **Class Participation (10%)**

Participation grades will be based on regular attendance and engaged participation (see above for a description of engaged participation).

### **Response Papers (30%)**

Beginning on 9/11, written responses to assigned readings will be due by email every day by 11:00 am before class (please email responses to the instructor). Responses should consist of a VERY brief summary of the main points/argument of the readings (this is largely a description.). The bulk of the paper should be a response, wherein you evaluate, analyze, question, connect, synthesize, or critique. Your response can explore how a particular method is justified or applied, how different methods and methodologies are similar or different, how the readings connect to other readings or topics, the normative commitments or theoretical assumptions they reflect, why particular points or conclusions were surprising or new, what was contradictory in the reading, or alternative explanations or views. Please remember that a response does not need to be negative to be thoughtful (although it's okay to disagree with an author). Also, responses do not need to be comprehensive; rather, you can focus on several key aspects of the reading. At the end of your response, please ask 2-4 questions. Questions can be focused on clarification (Why did the author reach this conclusion? Why do they describe the approach in a way that is different from another author?), theory/methodology (What are the normative commitments built into this approach? What are the assumptions about knowledge and science?), application (What does this imply for research practice? How would a researcher implement

this idea?), or alternative explanations (If X were considered, how would it change the approach?). The purpose of the responses is to facilitate a level of participation appropriate for a graduate seminar. You may miss two days of response papers throughout the semester. Response papers may not be turned in late, except in cases of documented medical or family emergencies. Response papers should be 400-600 words only, single-spaced.

### **Final Paper (35%)**

Your final paper for this course will be an 18-20 page research proposal focusing specifically on methods. Please introduce your topic, provide a problem statement, and articulate research questions in the first two pages. The remainder of the paper should describe the methods and methodology you plan to utilize to answer the research questions. Be sure to explain why these particularly methods are appropriate for answering your research questions and then describe data collection and analysis in detail. Final papers should be typed in double-spaced, 12-point font and properly referenced (any social science style is acceptable so long as it is followed consistently). Please cite your sources in text (last name of the author and the year is fine, include page number if using a direct quotation) and in the bibliography. Papers are due December 4<sup>th</sup> by 5:00 pm.

### **Article Review (15%)**

Students will review social science articles assigned by the instructor to learn more about the peer review process. Article reviews will evaluate the merits and shortcomings of the methods in the context of the article as a whole. Questions to address in your review include: How does the author justify the choice of methods (if at all)? Is the research design suitable for answering the questions posed? Do the methods make sense in the context of the theoretical orientation of the article? Does the author effectively explain how the data was collected? Is sufficient detail provided for you to understand, evaluate, and even replicate the methods? What information is missing? Does the article identify the procedures followed? Are these procedures ordered in a meaningful way? Was the sampling appropriate for the questions asked/methods used? Have the equipment and materials been adequately described? Is the nature of the data/measurements clear? Is the data analysis adequately explained? How is the data used as evidence to support particular interpretations/conclusions? Are the conclusions merited given the methods used? Article reviews should be 4-6 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font with relevant references. Reviews are due on Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> in class.

### **Presentations (10%)**

Each student will be required to give a 10 minute presentation about their research proposal (see final paper). Students will receive a detailed description of presentation format in October.

### **Course Schedule**

9.6 Course introduction

9.11 Science and social science

9.13 Research design

9.18 Ethics, collaborators, and IRB

9.20 Indigenous research methods and working with tribes (Guest Speaker: Ruth Swaney)

9.25 Research design exercise

9.27 Why do in-depth interviews?

- 10.2 Sampling and interview guides
- 10.4 What makes good interviewing
  
- 10.9 Interview exercise
- 10.11 Interview analysis
  
- 10.16 Why do quantitative surveys?
- 10.18 Sampling and developing a survey instrument (Guest Speaker: Libby Metcalf)
  
- 10.23 Survey administration (Guest Speaker: Libby Metcalf)
- 10.25 Survey exercise
  
- 10.30 Survey data analysis (Guest Speaker Libby Metcalf)
- 11.1 Mixed methods and innovative designs
  
- 11.6 International research and household surveys (Guest Speaker: Jill Belsky)
- 11.8 Social network analysis (Guest Speaker: Theresa Floyd)
  
- 11.13 Workshop/Q and A session
- 11.15 Student presentations
  
- 11.20 Student presentations
  
- 11.27 Student presentations
- 11.29 Student presentations
  
- 12.4 Other methods: Participant observation, field notes, experimental design
  
- 12.6 Interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and participatory research
  
- 12.11 Writing, publishing, and the peer review process