



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 9003
Quantitative Research Methodology
Fall 2016
Mondays, 9:30-12:30 SSC 5220

Instructor: Dr. Andrea Willson

Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Description

The primary goals of this course are to help students become informed and critical consumers of social research, as well as to move students from consumers to producers of social research. We will focus on a number of issues central to the conduct of quantitative research in sociology and we will ground our discussions in the practical aspects of sociological inquiry, from formulating a research question, to conducting research, to interpreting results. Along the way we will examine the theoretical underpinnings of sociological methods, the problem of constructing “testable” hypotheses, causality, measurement, sampling, along with some of the more recent issues and challenges that have arisen.

Learning Outcomes

- * Apply theory and sociological research to interpret social events and practices.
- * Demonstrate an understanding of results from quantitative research.
- * Demonstrate a competent understanding of the use of different quantitative research methodologies and designs.
- * Demonstrate competence in the research process by applying an existing body of knowledge in the critical analysis of a new question or of a specific problem or issue in a new context.
- * Conceptualize and design original research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding that makes a sustained, evidence-based, sociological argument and presents ideas and concepts clearly.
- * Demonstrate effective oral communication and presentation skills, and the ability to discuss ideas clearly and articulately.

Course Material(s)

There is no textbook for this course; all of the following required readings are available electronically from Western Libraries, the course OWL website, or will be provided in class. A note on the required readings: Each reading has been chosen because it includes information, concepts, arguments, etc., that comprise the foundation of sociological research methods. However, some readings include technical information or mathematical equations that may not be accessible to you at this stage of your training. My goal in assigning these readings is to expose you to the conceptual argument that the author makes (and there always is one) and to the reading as a potential future resource in your own research, when the technical aspects will become relevant. I have chosen accessible readings, so if you keep an open mind as you read, you may be surprised how much of the more technical aspects of the reading you can understand.

In addition, in most sections I have provided recommended readings. These are readings that may be beyond the scope of this class or that we do not have time to cover, but are important if you pursue the topic further in the future.

I highly recommend that everyone have at least one basic methods text for future reference purposes. If you do not have one from an undergraduate class, you might purchase one from the list below (there are many others).

Singleton, Royce A. and Bruce C. Straits. 2010. *Approaches to Social Research*. Oxford. (any edition will do).

Babbie, Earl, and Lucia Benaquisto. 2002. *Fundamentals of Social Research*. Thomson Nelson (any edition).

There are many excellent methods resources for those who are looking for additional sources. The books listed below are highly recommended as handbooks that cover a variety of methodological topics in further depth.

Aneshensel, Carol S. 2002. *Theory-Based Data Analysis for the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. [We'll read a couple of chapters, but the entire book is quite helpful.]

Hardy, M., and Bryman, A. (Eds.) 2004. *Handbook of Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Maxim, Paul S. 1999. *Quantitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. New York: Oxford.

There are also many resources available for writing. Clear, professional writing is one of the most important aspects of producing high quality research. A good resource for effective writing and the unique requirements of writing for social science research is:

Northey, Margot, and Lorne Tepperman. 2009. *Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*. 4th Edition. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.

Finally, make sure you are familiar with: Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association's *Code of Ethics*.
<http://www.csaa.ca/structure/Code.htm>

Methods of Evaluation

Each component is described below.

Participation	20%	
Leading class discussion	20%	
Research proposal:		
Assignment 1	15%	(October 17)
Final research proposal	45%	(December 12)

Participation

Class periods will be organized around a mix of lecture and student-led discussion. I have purposefully kept the weekly reading assignment lighter than many graduate courses because it is critical that everyone read all the assigned readings each week and come to class ready to actively participate in the discussion—to ask questions, speak to debates in the literature, challenge what class members (including me) have said, and relate the material to your own projects. The more you participate, the more you will get from the class and the more interesting it will be for all of us.

**As part of your class participation grade, and to help prepare everyone to discuss the articles, you should write two questions for discussion from the readings each week. Questions should be emailed to me at our class OWL website by 9 a.m. the day of class. You are not required to submit questions on the day of your presentation, and you may skip one submission.

In-class presentations

Students will sign up to lead one or two class sessions (depending on class size and determined on the first day of class) in groups of two or three sometime during the semester. This involves carefully studying the assigned readings, preparing a set of questions to stimulate discussion, and assisting with keeping the dialogue moving during that session's discussion. It is important to understand that the purpose of the presentation is not to provide a summary of the readings to the class, but instead to engage the class in a critical analysis that synthesizes, compares, critiques, and draws conclusions about what we know of the topic based on the readings.

Research Proposal

The research proposal will be completed in three stages over the course of the semester. In assignment #1, you will propose a research question. On the last day of class, you will present your work thus far on your proposal informally to the class. In the final paper, you will build on the work you have been doing all semester to develop a research proposal to answer your research question. Detailed instructions will be distributed in class.

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines

To receive full credit, all assignments must be submitted on the date they are due. Accommodation will not be granted automatically, and if you must submit an assignment late in the case of medical illness or the death of a family member, it is your responsibility to contact me in advance to make alternate arrangements.

Plagiarism

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/appeals_discipline/index.html

Accommodation

Only in exceptional circumstances may a student be provided special accommodation in the completion of a course requirement (i.e., exams, papers). To request a one-time accommodation (brief illness, family emergency), the student should inform the professor when they are able so accommodation can be made. To request other accommodation(s), the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to discuss options. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office.

Completion of Course Requirements

Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall-December 31; Winter-April 30, Summer-August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook:

http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html

Mental Health

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness Western for a complete list of options to obtain help: http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. The [Wellness Education Centre](http://se.uwo.ca/wec.html) (lower level UCC) assists students in finding mental health and other related resources best suited to their needs: <http://se.uwo.ca/wec.html> Western's School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' [Living Well](http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/living_well/index.html) website provides tips for thriving at grad school and other helpful information: http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/living_well/index.html

Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in [Western's Campus Recreation Centre](http://www.westernmustangs.ca/index.aspx?path=ims#): <http://www.westernmustangs.ca/index.aspx?path=ims#> Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Also, we encourage you to check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>.

Course Schedule and Readings

I may make minor changes to the course during the semester. Announcements of any changes will be made in class and students are responsible for adjusting to these changes.

Note: The symbol ► indicates a reading that I have selected from a text and will be provided at the beginning of the term. All other readings are journal articles that are available online through Western Libraries.

- 1. September 12: Introduction to class and getting organized**
- 2. September 19: Sociology and Science**
- 3. September 26: Asking the Research Question and the Research Process**
- 4. October 3: I have a great idea – where do I find data?**
- 5. October 10 – Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class**
- 6. October 17: Causal Inference and Social Science Research
*ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE***
- 7. October 24: From Theory to Observation: Concepts and Measures**
- 8. October 31: The Role of Variables**

- 9. November 7: Survey Designs**
 - 10. November 14: Time and Context: Longitudinal and Multilevel Methods**
 - 11. November 21: Sampling: who are you studying and why does it matter?**
 - 12. November 28: Sources of Error: Missing Data and Selectivity**
 - 13. December 5: Student consultations**
- DECEMBER 12: FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE**