



**The University of Western Ontario  
MA Research Paper Milestone  
Winter 2017  
Fridays, 1:30pm, SSC 5406**

**Professor: Tracey L. Adams**

Office Hours: Fridays noon to 1pm, or by appointment

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### **Milestone Course Description**

This course is designed to teach MA students about writing sociological research papers, and will facilitate the completion of MA research papers required for the one-year MA program. Through reviewing published sociological (and related) journal articles, and through student and instructor feedback, students will learn how to produce a research paper that makes a contribution to the field.

**\*Students should have an advisor by the beginning of the course. Students' advisors will supervise student research, progress on the research paper, and the final version of the research paper. This course will assist with the writing of that paper. Meeting the requirements of this course may not mean meeting the requirements of your advisor or of a completed research paper.**

The class will meet 6 times and active participation is expected during class and between classes. Students are expected to provide written work on schedule. This includes the helpful editorial and substantive feedback regularly provided to classmates. Students will discuss and provide feedback on one another's work throughout the course.

The atmosphere is one of mutual support where individual and collective efforts are all aimed at improving writing skills, writing a good research paper that makes a worthy contribution to the field (as good journal articles should), and doing so in a timely manner.

### **Learning Outcomes**

This milestone will enhance your ability to do the following:

- \* Synthesize and critically evaluate theoretical arguments and published research from a sociological perspective
- \* Understand and critically evaluate current research and scholarship within sociology
- \* Demonstrate an understanding of results from both quantitative and qualitative research and the competent use of different quantitative and/or qualitative research methodologies and designs
- \* Conduct original research and write a theoretically informed research paper (or thesis) that makes a sustained, evidence-based, sociological argument and presents ideas, concepts, and results clearly
- \* Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss ideas clearly and articulately through effective oral and written communication

\* Demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the complexity of knowledge, the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines, and the limitations of one's own work and of the discipline more generally

## **Assigned Readings**

Kearl, Michael. 2004. "The Research Paper" [www.trinity.edu/~MKEARL/research.html](http://www.trinity.edu/~MKEARL/research.html)

Matthews, Sarah. 2005. "Crafting Qualitative Research Articles on Marriages and Families." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67:4:799-808.

White, Lynn. 2005. "Writes of Passage: Writing an Empirical Journal Article." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67:4:791-798.

### **For your reference:**

Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article*. University of Chicago Press. EXCERPTS only.

## **Methods of Evaluation**

Your work in this course is assessed on a Pass/ Fail basis. To pass the course you must attend and participate in class, and between classes, and submit acceptable assignments (articles, drafts, editorial feedback, and a final draft), *as scheduled*.

Active class participation is a critical component of this course. Be prepared to contribute.

## **Weekly Schedule**

### **January 6, 2017**

### ***Research Questions and Writing about Research***

Review of course and expectations

Writing a good sociology paper

The importance of the research question

Searching for and keeping records of materials

Marg Sloan, subject library for Sociology – doing literature searches

### **Work due:**

*\*Students should arrive with at least a general research question.*

*\*Students should know who will be serving as their advisor(s).*

**January 13, 2017**

***The Research Paper as Process / Reviews of the Literature***

Reading Assignments for class discussion:

Kearl, Michael. 2004. "The Research Paper" – Introductions and Literature Reviews

**Work due:**

**Students will hand in a one or two page abstract or proposal** that could form the basis for an introduction. The 'proposal' should include a clear statement of your research question, and study rationale (noting a theoretical perspective or key literature shaping the study), and a general statement on what your research is about and what you expect to find.

**Students should do a literature search and identify at least fifteen readings** that could be included in their literature review, in anticipation of writing and submitting a literature review next class.

Note:

The literature review should be a **critical analysis** of the available research, integrating what is known on related topics from a variety of sources, and noting the gaps or unanswered questions that will be addressed by the research paper. Avoid simple description, study by study.

**February 3, 2017**

***Literature Reviews and Writing Methodology***

Reading Assignment:

Matthews, Sarah. 2005. "Crafting Qualitative Research Articles on Marriages and Families." Journal of Marriage and Family 67:4:799-808.

White, Lynn. 2005. "Writes of Passage: Writing an Empirical Journal Article." Journal of Marriage and Family 67:4:791-798.

Kearl: Hypotheses, Methods and Findings

**Work Due:**

Students will **submit and discuss a draft literature review** (as well as a revised introduction) and **specify their anticipated conceptual framework and methodological approach**. *This will have been previously circulated to assigned readers.*

**Feb 24, 2017**

*No Class: Revised Literature Review Due by 4pm*

**March 3, 2017**

*Results: in quantitative, qualitative and theoretical papers*

Reading Assignment:

Review Karl, White and Matthews on results.

**Work Due:**

Students will **submit a revised draft of their research questions, expected findings and methodological approach.** *These should have been previously circulated to assigned readers.*

**March 24, 2017**

**Results + *Writing Discussions and Conclusions***

Discuss writing conclusions and discussion sections (main conclusions, discussion of conclusions and of research paper's contribution to the literature, discussion of research paper's limitations; future directions)

**Work Due:**

Come to class prepared to discuss your research challenges and progress.

**April 7, 2017**

***Present Research in Progress***

**Work Due:**

Students should come to class prepared to present on their research and findings, thus far.

**Submit a complete draft paper**, including preliminary results and conclusions and/or a detailed description of what remains to be done.

## Important Policies

### A Note on 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. See **Scholastic Offences** (below) for the link to Scholastic Discipline regulations.

### 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](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](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/](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](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/>.