Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide an understanding of research design. This consists of understanding the preliminary considerations that go into selecting a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research design. These include knowing the definition for these different approaches, considering philosophical worldviews, reviewing the literature, understanding the use of theory, anticipating ethical issues, and developing writing strategies. We will discuss the process of research as it relates to each approach. This process includes specifying a purpose statement and developing research questions and/or hypotheses as well as the methods and procedures for quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies.

Learning Outcomes

* Apply theory and sociological research to interpret social events and practices.

* Demonstrate a competent understanding of the use of different quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and designs.

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1 This is a course includes synchronous and asynchronous learning; synchronous components will take place during this time slot. See Course Organization for more information.
* 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 Organization**

This is an online course that will include both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Students will be asked to review and critically engage with course material prior to the synchronous seminar held via Zoom. The live portion of the course will consist of structured class discussions. Due to the large class size, students will be assigned to one of two groups and the groups will meet each week at an assigned time. Group and time schedule information can be found on the OWL course site.

**Course Material(s)**

**Text**


The Western University Bookstore has ordered physical textbooks for the course. Students can order through the Book Store’s website and the books will be shipped directly to them. Student may also purchase the ebook version through the Book Store’s website: [https://bookstore.uwo.ca/product/cebebookid9676557](https://bookstore.uwo.ca/product/cebebookid9676557)

**Other Required Readings:**

In addition, each week example empirical articles, primarily authored by Sociology Department faculty and students, are assigned. These are available electronically from Western Libraries free of charge.

**Other Recommended Resources:**

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:


Finally, make sure you are familiar with: Canadian Sociology Association’s *Code of Ethics*. [http://www.csa-scs.ca/code-of-etihcs](http://www.csa-scs.ca/code-of-etihcs)
Methods of Evaluation*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(October 26)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(November 23)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research proposal:</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>(December 14)</td>
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*Detailed instructions on all assignments will be provided on the OWL course site. Brief descriptions follow.

**Participation**

It is critical that everyone read all the assigned readings each week and come to class ready to actively participate—to engage the readings, ask questions 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.

Participation includes three components:

1) Participation in discussion of course readings each week. Everyone is expected to complete all the required readings each week prior to our synchronous Zoom meeting and be fully prepared for discussion of those readings. You will use the “hand raise” feature in Zoom for this component.

2) To help facilitate our weekly discussion, you will write four questions/comments for discussion from the readings each week. Two should be from the assigned text reading and one each from the empirical example readings. Questions/comments should critically engage the material, may pose questions that you would like to discuss in our class meeting, and for the empirical examples, should address how this example fits with the weekly topic and issues related to the study’s research design. Note: in this course, we are focused on the research design of each article, not with the substantive topic or findings of the research. Questions should be emailed to me through Messages in our OWL course site Friday at 5:00 p.m. You may skip one submission.

3) Many weeks a portion of our class period will involve a practical component during which you will apply the course material to your research topic in a variety of ways. Some weeks you will prepare this in advance to bring to class for discussion and some weeks we will work on this together as a class. Details will be provided in advance of each class.

**Webcam use is expected**

Because we are not meeting in person, seeing each other is important for building community and for facilitating discussion. We may be challenged with technical issues from time to time, but it is expected that you use a webcam and share video during our Zoom class meetings.
Assignment 1
This assignment is designed to get you started on your research project. The first step in the process is identifying a research area that is of interest to you. You will propose a research question and briefly review literature related to the topic.

Assignment 2
You will identify two scholarly articles on your research topic that use the methodology you are not planning to use in your research proposal (e.g., if you plan to use qualitative methods, you will identify two articles using quantitative methods) and provide a written evaluation of the research design.

Research Proposal
In the final paper for the course you will build on the work you have been doing all semester to develop a research proposal to answer your research question.

Communication
I respond to emails within 24 hours. Please check the course outline and OWL course site for information before you email with those questions. If your question will require a considerable amount of detail to answer, I will suggest we meet.

Make sure to check the course OWL site regularly for course updates, cancellations, and other course-related postings. You are also responsible for any emails I send to your Western email account. Please be sure that you can receive and access emails from this account.

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).

Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement
Course material produced by faculty is copyrighted and to reproduce this material for any purposes other than your own educational use contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings.

Recording Devices
No recording devices can be used in class. This includes recoding class Zoom discussions. If you require a recording device for medical or other reasons, please see me.

Lectures and Course Materials
Instructor generated course materials are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright is an academic offence.

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

Standards of Professional Behaviour
It is the responsibility of all members of the Department of Sociology to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- **Respect for others** both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others’ expectations of confidentiality and privacy)

- **Active engagement in learning** and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best)

- **Personal integrity** (following through on commitments; doing own work)

Students should also be aware of the UWO Student Code of Conduct found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf

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)

**Digital Student Experience**
Students should consider checking out the Western University Digital Student Experience website for additional information about online learning [https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/](https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/).

**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 (lower level UCC) assists students in finding mental health and other related resources best suited to their needs: [http://se.uwo.ca/wec.html](http://se.uwo.ca/wec.html) Western’s School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies’ Living Well 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/](http://www.music.uwo.ca/), and our own McIntosh Gallery [http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/](http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/).

**Extraordinary Circumstances**
In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University or instructor’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.