



Western University
SOCIOLOGY 2206-650
Distance Studies
Research Methods in Sociology
Summer 2019
Instructor: Dr. Stephen Lin

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Course Description:

This online course is designed to introduce students the tools which scientists use to conduct research on society and produce knowledge – in other words, how to *be* sociologists. Many of the fundamental issues of research will be covered in this course, including the scientific method and research process, ethical dilemmas that may arise, and some of the procedures used to collect and analyze data, i.e., quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research. During the course, students will learn how to carry out a scientific investigation from the formulation of hypotheses, to the selection of an appropriate methodology, to the implementation of a study. Enhancing students' ability to critically examine sociological research is a key part of this course.

Prerequisite(s): 1.0 Sociology course at the 1000 level or First Nations Studies 1020E or Women's Studies 1020E, or enrolment in Honors Specialization in Human Resource Management, or Honors Specialization in Public Administration, or Specialization in Public Administration.

Antirequisites: [Social Work 2206A/B](#), [Health Sciences 2801A/B](#), or [Political Science 3324F/G](#).

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will:

- Identify key aspects of qualitative and quantitative research and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each.
- Distinguish between poor and well-crafted research methods in sociology
- Design a realistic research project that incorporates all elements of the research process
- Thoughtfully analyze and evaluate published research from a methodological perspective

Required Text(s):

Neuman, L.W., & Robson, K. (2016). *Basics of Social Research* (4th Canadian Ed.). Toronto: Pearson Canada (ISBN: 9780134308050).

Method of Evaluation:

Research Proposal Assignment	15%
Research Article Assignment	35%
Online Final Exam	50%

Evaluation Breakdown:

Research Proposal Assignment (15%): Due on Friday, June 7

In this assignment, you will exercise your sociological imagination by developing a suitable research question based on your own area of interest. You will begin by choosing a general research topic (it must be sociologically or criminologically related) and then formulating a specific research question and a hypothesis. To complete this assignment, you need to give some thoughts on what variables you plan to use and show their interconnectedness in an **explanatory model**. Detailed instructions can be found in the assignment instruction folder on OWL.

Research Article Assignment (35%): Due on Friday, July 26

After you develop your research topic and a specific question, your next step is to find a **peer-reviewed journal article** and analyze it thoroughly and critically. The purpose of this exercise is to apply your knowledge you have gained in the course by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a research study you chose from the existing literature. Detailed instructions for this assignment can be found in the assignment instruction folder on OWL.

Online Final Exam (50%): Thursday, August 1

The final exam is worth 50% of your total grade. It will cover everything you have learned from this course. The format of this exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. This exam must be submitted as a **WORD file** to your own OWL dropbox **before 11:59pm**.

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 (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 detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking 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>).

Policies on Examinations

You may not use any electronic devices during examinations. Computer marked multiple-choice tests/exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation:

http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

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:

www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western

(http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Weekly Topic and Reading

Week	Date	Topics	Reading
1	May 6 - 12	Read the course outline and buy the textbook Email me with questions	None
2	May 13 - 19	Doing Social Research / Theory and Social Research	Ch. 1, 2
3	May 20 - 26	Designing a Research Study	Ch. 5
4	May 27 - June 2	Conceptualization, Operationalization & Measurement	Ch. 6
5	June 3 - 9	Experiment & Survey Research ** Research Proposal Due (June 7)	Ch. 8
6	June 10 - 16	Survey Design	Ch. 9
7	June 17 - 23	Sampling	Ch. 7
8	June 24 - 30	How to Write Literature Review	Ch. 4
9	July 1 - 7	In-depth Interview / Field Research	Ch. 12 & 13
10	July 8 - 14	Nonreactive Quantitative Research / Secondary Data Analysis	Ch. 10
11	July 15 - 21	Non-reactive Qualitative Research / Ethics in Social Research	Ch. 3 & 4
12	July 22 - 26	Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis ** Research Article Review Due (July 26)	Ch. 11 & 15
13	July 29 – August 3	Online Final Exam (Due on August 1 by 11:59pm)	