



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 2206B-001
RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY
Winter 2025

Delivery Method: in-person

Instructor: Professor Edward Bell

Department of Sociology

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This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.

Calendar Description

An introduction to the research process and ethical dilemmas faced by sociologists, as well as a survey of the essential procedures used to collect sociological data, e.g., sampling, questionnaire design, and observational field research techniques.

Prerequisite(s): None

Anti-requisite(s): Social Work 2206A/B, Health Sciences 2801A/B, Political Science 3324F/G, or Political Science 2325F/G.

Course Overview

This course is designed to introduce you to the methodological tools used by sociologists to conduct empirically grounded and theoretically engaged research. It will cover the basic elements of research design, the role of theory in empirical research, the construction of sociological arguments, and ethics in social scientific research.

The main purpose of the course is to allow students to become acquainted with how knowledge is acquired in sociology and other social sciences, and how it is evaluated. You will become familiar with the leading research paradigms and their philosophical underpinnings, and will gain exposure to more specific topics such as causation, conceptualization, measurement, validity, reliability, ethnography, and qualitative interviewing.

Learning Outcomes:

This course is designed to enhance your ability to:

1. Understand what sociological research is and how sociological questions can be answered;
2. Formulate sociologically relevant research questions and evaluate research designs;
3. Know the basic elements of different methodological approaches and understand their merits and limitations;
4. Appreciate the challenges and complexity of sociological research; and
5. Understand the ethical considerations involved in doing research involving human participants.

Course Materials:

Textbook: Edward Bell, Alan Bryman, and Steven Kleinknecht. (2023). *Social Research Methods (Sixth Canadian Edition)*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Both hard-copy and electronic formats are available. Here is a link to information about acquiring the textbook at the Western Book Store: https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2024B&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/SOC2206B

Note: Prof. Bell will donate to charity his share of the royalties earned from student purchases of this book for this course.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/home>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

How to contact the instructor:

By email: eabell@uwo.ca, and in-person during office hours.

Generally, email is not suitable for questions requiring more than two or three sentences to answer. Questions requiring longer answers should be asked in person, during office hours or by appointment.

I will endeavour to answer emails within 48 business hours. It is unlikely that you will receive a response during the evening or on a weekend.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Component	Weight	Date
First in-class test	30%	February 4
Second in-class test	35%	March 11
Final exam	35%	To be announced by the Office of the Registrar

The two in-class tests and the final will be held in person, and are to be written without the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) programs.

Note that computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term (besides the final exam) as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. *For this course, the second in-class test has been designated as requiring supporting documentation.*

Note: Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or examination will be required to write a makeup test or exam. The course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup. Students should be aware that the makeup will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original.

Additional notes about Grading:

Consistent with departmental guidelines, it is expected that the class average for this course will be around 70-75%. Should the final overall grades yield a value significantly below this range, grades will be adjusted upward to ensure an appropriate average for the class.

Course Content

The content of the course will be broken down into seven modules. The time spent on each module will depend on the nature of the subject matter, and on the needs of the class. For that reason, the length of time we will spend on each module is not specified in advance.

The modules will be covered in the order listed. At every class, students will be updated about our progress through the modules, and about the readings that have been assigned. This information will also be updated weekly on the course Brightspace website.

Module	Description	Readings
1	The nature of science, research, and theory a) Science vs. other ways of knowing b) Three approaches to social science: positivist, interpretive, and critical	Guide to the Book (pp. viii-ix); Preface (pp. xx-xxi); Chapters 1, 9, 10
2	A general introduction to causation and research design	Chapter 2, and p.133 on the ecological fallacy
3	Research ethics	Chapter 3
4	Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement: dimensionality; levels of measurement; reliability; validity	Chapter 4; and pp. 179, 181, 184
5	Survey research	Chapter 5
6	Quantitative sampling	Chapter 7
7	Qualitative interviewing, qualitative data analysis	Chapters 11, 13

Copyright and Intellectual Property:

Lecture slides and notes, lists of readings, in-class activities, assignment guidelines, and other components of the course materials are typically the intellectual property of the instructor. Unauthorized reproduction through audio-recording, video-recording, photographing, sharing on social media, or posting on course-sharing websites is an infringement of copyright and is prohibited. Such action may be considered a Code of Conduct violation and lead to sanctions.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

University policy on academic considerations is described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic consideration must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found at the previous link. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#). Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is always required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g., December and April exams). Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation (for this course it is the second in-class test). Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Academic Policies:

Please review the Department of Sociology “[Important Academic Policies](#)” document (https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf) for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Course Selection
- Absence from Course Commitments
- Missed Tests and Exams
- Religious Accommodations

- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health
- Gender-Based and Sexual Violence statement