

Sociology 313: Introductory Social Research Methods

Fall, 2015

Dr. John Manzo

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TAs: TBA

Course Objectives:

This course encompasses an introduction to the methods of data collection and techniques of data analysis that are employed by sociologists and other social scientists. Students will be exposed to the broadest range of methodological topics, with modules addressing various quantitative and qualitative modalities, and every student will engage these methods in research projects of their own devising. While lecture and readings will constitute the primary sites of instruction, this is a course in which students' hands-on treatment of the material is absolutely essential. This will entail activities as structured as formal assignments and laboratory attendance to unstructured critical assessment of newspaper articles and other "research" in news media. The overarching agenda of this course is twofold: One goal is to apprise students of the practical data-gathering and data-analysing work that real sociology is, as a live and lively discipline. The second goal is to make students critical appraisers of social research, to appreciate what constitutes valid knowledge and how to criticize what passes for such.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to accurately define and discuss the nature of "science" and what counts as scientific inquiry; to read, assess, and conduct ethnographic, experimental, conversation-analytic, formatted-survey-based, qualitative-interview-based, and content-analytic social research; to read, assess, and conduct program evaluations; and to undertake research activities in ethically sound ways.

Required Text:

Earl Babbie and Lucia Benacquisto, Fundamentals of Social Research, Third Canadian Edition (Nelson Publishing). DO NOT purchase the second edition as the current one is a major revision.

"TBA" readings will be distributed to students as e-mail attachments (PDFs or web links). There is only one purchase necessary for this course, which is the required text.

Course Requirements:

There are four grade modules in this course: Two in-class tests, one written project, and lab work. These modules will constitute 25%, 25%, 30% and 20% of your semester grade, with lab work comprising five parts: four short research proposals, and a mark for class participation, each worth 4% of your semester grade.

Tests will contain multiple-choice and "fill in the blank" items. Test dates are **Thursday, October 13**, and **Thursday, November 19**.

Project:

The research project will consist of written reports of a research study on a topic of your devising. Projects will involve your deployment of a specific method of research as well as other stipulations. Reports will be six pages in length, not counting tables or other non-text elements. The research project will constitute 30% of your grade for the course. Your research project report is due on the last day of class, Tuesday, December 8.

It is anticipated that labs will take place seven or eight times over the course of the term. These meetings are will be scheduled on a "TBA" basis to coincide with your assignments and will be announced as such in class and via the course site on D2L. One meeting to discuss the assignment before undertaking it, and the following week to submit your assignment and to discuss what you accomplished and what you learned from it, including the challenges that the assignment posed. Your attendance is compulsory, so keep your assigned lab hour free as these will take place most weeks over the course of the semester. Each assignment will constitute 4% of your semester grade, with an additional 4% based on your participation in labs. Your TAs and professor will provide more information on these assignments and other issues related to lab work as the semester progresses.

Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A+	96-100
A	90-95
A-	85-89
B+	80-84
B	74-79
B-	70-73
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	0-49

Note on Course Outline:

I have organized this course to encompass fourteen topics. I have not assigned dates to these, because I can never be certain that I will cover all of a topic on a particular date, or if/when I may have to be absent. I will cover each topic in the order listed.

Schedule of Readings and Lecture Topics

1. Introduction, course policies, and so forth.

2. The Research Process and the Idea of "Science"

Reading: Chapters 1 and 2

3. Designing a Research Project

Reading: Chapter 4

4. Variables, Validity, Reliability

Reading: Chapter 5

5. Experimentation

Reading: Chapter 7

6. Ethnography and Other Approaches to Structured Observation

Reading: Chapter 10

7. Even More Focussed Observation: Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis
Reading: TBA

8. Sampling
Reading: Chapter 6

9. Survey Research
Reading: Chapter 8

10. Scaling
Reading: Handout, "Indexes and Scales"

11. Qualitative Interviewing, Focus Groups, and Issues Concerning Face-To-Face Interviewing
Reading: Chapter 11

12. Content Analysis, Historical-Comparative Research and other Nonobtrusive Methods
Reading: Chapter 9

13. Evaluation Research
Reading: Chapter 12

14. Introducing Statistics
Reading: Chapters 14, 15 and 16

14. Triangulation: Combining Research Methods
Reading: TBA

15. Ethics in Social Research
Reading: Chapter 3

POLICIES

Policy on Grade Reappraisal

Within one week of the day on which the exam/assignment is returned, students seeking reappraisal of examinations or assignments must submit a WRITTEN response to the instructor explaining the basis for reconsideration of one's mark. The instructor will reconsider the grade on that basis. It should be noted that a re-assessed grade may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.

Policy on Missed Term Work

When possible, please provide advance notice if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements, misreading the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a “make up” test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a “make up” test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar’s Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:

http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Sp_Su_DFE_App.pdf

Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It’s available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

I expect that every student will complete all work for course but recognise that emergencies might prevent this. My policy on missed work varies with the assignment:

1. If you miss the midterm test due to unforeseeable OR foreseeable emergencies or other circumstances, you will write the midterm in a make-up session as per department practices.
2. Late written work will be assigned a penalty of five percent per day; in other words, a paper submitted two days late that would have received an 80 will instead receive a 70.
3. If you must be absent for your presentation date, I will give credit without penalty if and only if rescheduling is possible. If rescheduling is not possible, which is likely, I will have to assign a zero for that assignment.

Student Representation

The 2015-16 Students’ Union VP Academic is Stephan Guscott: email: suvpaca@ucalgary.ca. The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: arts1@ucalgary.ca, arts2@ucalgary.ca, arts3@ucalgary.ca, and arts4@ucalgary.ca. You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>

Emergency Evacuations

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point, which is the Professional Faculties Food Court for Social Sciences occupants. Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

Policy on Retrieving Assignments

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice having students retrieve assignments from a public place, eg, outside the instructor's office, the department office, etc. Term assignments must be returned to students, individually, during class or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up their assignment from the instructor, they may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Safewalk

The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services ; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf