

Sociology 313.02: Introductory Social Research Methods
University of Calgary
Fall 2011

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Labs: TBA

Course Prerequisite: Sociology 201

Course Description: Why does one thing happen and not another? Does A cause B? A frustrating aspect of the social world is that few situations are black and white. Research helps provide answers some of those questions and can help us to understand the social world.

The aim of this course is to introduce the student to the basic skills and resources needed to conduct high quality research. The course covers an array of research methods to help the student identify, plan, execute, analyse and report findings from a research endeavour. It gives the student grounding in various processes of sociological inquiry including quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Knowing the components of social inquiry is important but one must also appreciate the larger issues affecting the research process. A number of extraneous issues such as research ethics, data ownership, and bias will also be explored and discussed. For example, to what extent should values affect the research process?

Course Objectives:

1. To provide students with the skills identify and analyze the key components of research process.
2. To introduce the student with terminology, goals, logic, techniques of data collection and procedures for data analysis.
3. To investigate the principles and precautions that guide ethical research practices

4. To provide an opportunity for students to learn an array of research methods and to determine when each methodology is best used.
5. To have students learn the complexities of organizing and drafting a variety of research projects.
6. To help students learn the critical and analytical skills to report research findings that offer convincing evidence and solutions.
7. To provide students an opportunity gain skills in visual and oral presentation by designing and presenting a poster presentation

The research process rarely moves in a straight line from finding a research topic, to stating a thesis, to data collection, analysis, and reporting. In reality, the research process moves forward and backwards, leads off on tangents, and loops back on it. At times you will be frustrated and expect to make mistakes during this learning process. The research process is meant to not only explore the topic at hand but to discover errors and pitfalls and to unearth topics for future examination.

Course Format: Class sessions will combine several formats: lectures; large and small group discussions; in-class group and individual assignments, videos, individual assignments, text readings and labs.

Required Texts: Bryman, Alan, James J. Teevan, and Edward Bell. 2009. *Social Research Methods (Canadian 2nd Edition)*. Oxford University Press. Don Mills: University Press.

The assigned readings will *generally (but not exactly)* correspond with the topics covered in the class. Thus lecture topics should serve as a tentative guide and may be adjusted by me.

Evaluation: Each exam and assignment will be worth 100 points. Feel free to consult me if you have any questions or concerns regarding grades. Final grades will be assigned according to the University of Calgary's 4-point grading system based on the following percentage distributions:

Percentage	Grade	Meaning
95+	A+	Outstanding
89 - 94	A	
86 - 88	A-	Very Good
82 - 85	B+	
79 - 81	B	
76 - 78	B-	Good
72 - 75	C+	
68 - 71	C	
64 - 67	C-	
60 - 63	D+	Minimal Pass
55 - 59	D	
0 - 54	F	

The A+ grade became an official grade at the University of Calgary in fall 2002. The A+ grade is described as an honorific grade having the same grade point value as an A grade (4.0). It will be

Calgary Calendar. University regulations require that you receive a score of zero on the final exam.

2. Research Projects: 40%

A. Individual: Data Collection Project 15%

During this exercise the student must watch television. The TV watching involves two ½ hour sessions. Each session must be a different time slot, a different night, and a different channel. You must design a tally sheet for a data collection project (with the help of the professor and the teaching assistant). You must record the time, date, channel, and program. During this time you must record the content of the television commercials. What are the products, messages, target audiences, primary actors, secondary actors, activity levels, dress, and backgrounds? After the data is collected, the student will analyze the information and then write it up and submit the research findings in a report. The report must be at least 7 pages long (excluding your title page and tally sheets), double-spaced, 12-point font, stapled, and have 1-inch margins. This report is due on November 8.

B. Poster Presentation 25%

This project has three parts: a proposal, a poster presentation and a colleague assessment.

i) Proposal 5%

Students must jointly submit a 3-page research proposal that details the topic you plan to research and how you plan to complete the project. The proposal is due October 6.

ii) Poster Presentation 15%

The research project will be displayed in a poster exhibition held during class on the weeks of November 14 & November 21. Students will present their project and their research findings to their classmates for about 15 minutes and then answer questions about their topic – much like artists explain their work to potential purchasers. Students must also provide handouts to their classmates for study purposes. Students are expected to incorporate easily readable text, photographs, maps, graphs, etc into their poster presentation. Be creative!

You must submit your poster presentation to me no later than November 24. Late projects are penalized 10% for each day over the due date. Please do not ask for an extension!

iii) Colleague Assessment 5%

Your group members will evaluate your contribution to the group project so you must do your share of the work. If you receive a group presentation participation grade of "0" from all of your fellow group members then you will not receive a grade for the poster presentation.

3. Lab Participation 10%

This grade will be assigned by the teaching assistants for participation in various lab activities and assignments.

4. In-class assignments

10%

I assign this grade. It will be given for various in-class activities and assignments.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP): “The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having student’s retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside 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”.

Research Ethics: Students are advised that any research with human subjects such as interviews (including interviews with family and friends), opinion polling, and unobtrusive observation must have the approval of the Department of Sociology’s Ethics Committee. Students **MUST NOT** undertake research projects with human subjects without discussing the topic with me and getting my approval to proceed.

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.

Plagiarism and Cheating: Using any words or ideas of another person without clearly documenting them is a serious academic offense. The University of Calgary is very intolerant of this malpractice. Students are advised to consult the 2007-2008 University of Calgary calendar at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2005/how/How_LB.htm and familiarize themselves with the definitions and penalties of these malpractices.

Academic Accommodation: Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student’s responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

Handing in Papers Outside of Class, Return of Final Papers, and Release of Final Grades: When students are unable to submit papers at class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant rather than at the Sociology Department main office.

Final papers will not be returned through the Sociology Department main office. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, (i.e., outside an instructor’s office, the department office, etc.). Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a

stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will only be available for pick-up during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or the beginning of the next term.

Final grades are not posted by the Sociology department and are only available online.

Electronic Classroom Etiquette:

My classroom is not an internet café! While in my classroom I expect your undivided attention and expect you to be fully engaged. This means **no** talking on cell phones, listening to music on earphones, checking emails, text messaging, facebooking or MSNing, surfing the internet or engaging in any other type of internet/or electronic activity during my class. Audio or video recording of lectures, using verbatim note taking programs, or taking photographs in the classroom in the classroom is not permitted. Remember that students beside you and behind you can see your computer screen and it can be a distraction. Please ensure that your cell phones, blackberries, pagers, or any other electronic devices are turned off for the duration of the class. Those who choose to ignore these rules will be asked to leave my classroom immediately. Students who have been asked to leave my classroom must meet with me before returning. Students taking class notes on a laptop computer will be asked to close their laptops from time to time to answer questions or engage in classroom discussions.

My Teaching Philosophy:

I love to teach and I hope it shows. I believe that learning is an active rather than a passive activity. You must be actively involved in your own education. I can assist you in the learning process but I cannot do it for you. Although attendance is not mandatory, I urge you to attend class regularly.

Class discussions, issues raised in class and information obtained from videos, lectures and other class activities can be give you some valuable insights to help you with assignments. You will not have access to that information unless you attend class.

I strive to provide a safe and non-competitive learning environment in which students are taken out of their comfort zones. I encourage class discussions as a means of exploring topics, ideas, and sometimes controversies. Your point of view is important but may be challenged by me or your fellow students during the course of this term. We may be dealing with sensitive and sometimes contentious issues in class. Your opinion may differ from those of your classmates. So please, remain open-minded and remember to be respectful of opinions that differ from your own.

Proposed Course Schedule
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Week:			Topic	Readings
1	September	12	Introduction Overview of the Research Process	Chapter 1 Chapter 18
2	September	19	Research Ethics	No Readings
3	September	26	Research Design	Chapter 2
4	October	3	Sources of Data	Chapter 7
Presentation Proposal Due Thursday				
5	October	10	Sampling	Chapter 11
6	October	17	Quantitative Research	Chapter 3 & 12
7	October	24	Review	No Readings
Midterm Exam on Thursday				
8	October	31	Interviewing and Questionnaires	Chapter 4 & 5
9	November	7	Qualitative Research	Chapter 8 & 13
Data Collection Project Due Tuesday				
10	November	14	Ethnography and Observation	Chapter 6 & 9
Presentations Begin				
11	November	21	Content Analysis	Chapter 16
Presentations Cont'd				
Project Due Thursday				
12	November	28	Writing the Report	Chapter 17
13	December	5	Course Wrap-up	No Readings