

Sociology 313.02: Introductory Social Research Methods
University of Calgary
Fall 2012

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Class: Tuesday/Thursday SS 109 11:00 – 12:15
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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 to 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 systematic and 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 to identify and analyze the key components of the 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 to 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 itself. At times you will be frustrated and you must expect to hit dead ends and 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. 2012. *Social Research Methods (Canadian 3rd 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

used to indicate outstanding performance in a subject area but does not result in a higher grade point average.

Lab: The lab is not meant to be a lecture. It is designed to complement course materials and to further discuss topics and concepts introduced in the lectures. It provides a venue for students to discuss, plan, prepare assignments and organize for exams.

NOTE: Receiving credit in all components of this evaluation is mandatory to obtain a passing grade in this course.

Course Evaluation:

1. Examinations 50%

There will be 1 midterm examination and 1 final examination. The examinations will cover lectures, class discussions, labs, and assigned reading materials scheduled up to the exam. This means that students will also be responsible for readings and topics **not covered** in class.

Examinations will be a combination of any or all of the following: multiple choice, definition, short answer, and long answer questions. This allows the student to demonstrate various methods of academic skill because I do not expect a student to rely solely on rote memory. I expect application, analysis, synthesis, and integration of course materials into reasoned answers.

The short answer and long answer questions require a reasonable standard of writing. Poor spelling, disjointed or incomplete sentences, poor grammar, and inadequate sentence structure only detract from the ideas you are trying to express and will negatively impact your mark.

The exams are **non-cumulative**. This means that the first midterm will cover only materials from the first class to the midterm exam. The final exam will cover materials from the midterm to the last day of class. Although the exams are non-cumulative, students might find reviewing the midterm exam valuable in preparation for the final.

The dates and assigned weights for exams are as follows:

Midterm Examination	October 25	25 %
Final Examination	Registrar Controlled	25 %

If you miss the midterm for a documented and legitimate reason **you must contact me within 48 hours** of the missed exam. The evaluation weight assigned to the midterm will be applied to the final exam and you will be given a comprehensive final. **I will not give you a make-up exam.** Your reason must be documented (a note from your doctor, etc. is required) and legitimate. Otherwise you will receive a score of zero for the midterm. If you miss the final exam for a valid reason, **contact the Sociology Department Office at 403 220 6501 within 48 hours** to apply for a deferred exam no later than the deadline indicated in the University of Calgary

Calendar. University regulations require that you receive a score of zero on the final exam if you do not follow this procedure.

2. Research Projects: 30%
A. Individual: Data Collection Project 10%

During this exercise the student must watch television for two 1/2-hour sessions. Each session must be a different time slot, a different day/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 analysis can include information about the ads themselves; what was the intent; how were they different or similar; who was the target market; what were the spoken or unspoken messages and how were the networks different or similar. What explanations can you give for the messages and actions in the ads and by the actors? 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 20%

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 11.

ii) Poster Presentation 10%

The research project will be displayed in a poster exhibition held during class on the weeks of November 12 & November 19. Students will present their project and their research findings to their classmates for about 20 minutes and then answer questions about their topic. 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 on November 27. 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 participation grade of "0" from all of your fellow group members then you will not receive a grade for the poster presentation, and thus, FAIL THE COURSE. The colleague assessment will occur on the November 27.

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 2012/2013 University of Calgary calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar> 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.

Classroom Etiquette:

Please get the most of your (or your parent's) hard-earned tuition dollars by devoting your class time to classroom activities. Please ensure that your cell phones, blackberries, pagers, or any other electronic devices are turned off and remain off for the duration of the class.

Those who choose to ignore this rule 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 and/or engage in classroom discussions.

For those taking notes of a laptop, please be aware that your screen is visible to those both beside you and behind you. I have received many complaints from fellow classmates who have been forced to endure distracting, offensive and otherwise unsuitable images from others' laptops.

My Teaching Philosophy:

I love to teach and I hope it shows. I believe that learning is an active rather than a passive activity. I want to assist you in your learning journey. Although attendance is not mandatory, I urge you to attend class regularly. I will not post my lecture materials or give you my lecture notes if you are absent.

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

I strive to provide a safe and non-competitive learning environment but one that periodically takes students out of their comfort zone. I encourage class discussion 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 this course. 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
Sociology 313:02: Introductory Research Methods
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Week:			Topic	Readings
1	September	10	Introduction Research Orientations	Introduction Chapter 1
2	September	17	Conducting a Research Project Research Ethics	Chapter 18 Chapter 11
3	September	24	Research Design	Chapter 2
4	October	1	Sources of Data	Chapter 7
5	October	8	Sampling Presentation Proposal Due Thursday	Chapter 12
6	October	15	Interviewing and Questionnaires	Chapter 4 & 5
7	October	22	Review Midterm Exam on Thursday	No Readings
8	October	28	Quantitative Research	Chapter 3 & 13
9	November	5	Qualitative Research Data Collection Project Due on Thursday	Chapter 8 & 14
10	November	12	Ethnography and Observation Presentations Begin	Chapter 6 & 9
11	November	19	Content Analysis Presentations Cont'd	Chapter 16
12	November	26	Writing the Report Presentations Cont'd (if needed) Poster Due on Thursday	Chapter 17
13	December	3	Residual/ Course Wrap-up	No Readings