

Sociology 313.01  
Introductory Social Research Methods  
Winter 2009

**-COURSE OUTLINE-**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Bruce Arnold

**OFFICE:** SS 912  
**OFFICE HOURS:** TBA  
**PHONE:** 220-6508.  
**CLASS:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:00PM- 1:50PM  
**ROOM:** SB 148  
**LABS:** Lab 1 – Monday 2:00 – 3:30PM  
Lab 2 - Wednesday 3:00 – 4:30PM  
Students must attend the labs they are assigned through the Registrar's office. **Labs start the first week of class and are focused on the first research assignment (Survey Research Assignment)**

\* Instructor does not use e-mail for course related correspondence.

\* For student study resources see ¶ <http://soci.ucalgary.ca/18/jfstud.htm><sup>†</sup>

\* Some changes may be made to course deadlines, timing, format, and content by the instructor.

\* Concerns about evaluations and grades must be first put in writing, including the grounds and rationale for said concerns, and submitted to the instructor in advance of a meeting being scheduled.

**\*TEACHING ASSOCIATES/ASSISTANTS: TBA**

\* Teaching assistants do not use e-mail for course related correspondence.

**Course Goals and Organization:** The purpose of this course is to provide an understanding of the logic of sociological research and the relationship between concepts, theory and empirical study. Both “qualitative” and “quantitative” as independent and interdependent methodologies are introduced. Topics include research ethics, research design, sampling, reliability, validity, survey research, participant observation, and other selected methodologies. Each method is examined for its strengths, limitations and reasons why it may be best suited for specific research questions.

Research methodology is one of the core subjects of the sociological discipline. This is a busy and demanding course that allows students some methodological understanding and experience that they can bring as a resource to their other sociological classes and assignments. Students will need to exercise responsible planning and time management skills in this course, as they would in any research undertaking. Students are expected to actively participate in class and lab discussion.

This course makes full use of students learning by doing (participating), focusing on thinking skills, and student's existing knowledge and experiential basis. This is also known as “**inquiry-based learning**” (See Blackboard for more details) and a teaching priority at the U of C. Methodological techniques and analytical skills are introduced and practices so they may be applied to other university courses and work and volunteer activities outside the classroom. Students are also

expected to develop academic and civil responsibilities as members of this class and their lab and research teams.

Methodological **THINKING** is introduced in this course and is often one of the more transferable skills underlying methodologies. Also called “critical” thinking, it is a mode of thinking - about any subject, content, or problem - in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it. This type of thinking will include: (1) raising vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely; (2) gathering and assessing relevant information and using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively, or *visa versa*; (3) coming to well reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards; (4) thinking with an open mind within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; (5) and, communicating effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

### Required Readings:

1. **Survey Research Methods.** Floyd Fowler (4<sup>th</sup> edition). Applied Social Research Methods Series. Sage Publications.
2. **Participant Observation: A Methodology for Human Studies.** (2001) Danny L. Jorgensen. Applied Social Research Methods Series. Sage Publications.
3. **Systematic Self-Observation.** (2002). N. Rodriguez & A. Ryave. Qualitative Research Methods Series. Sage Publications.
4. **How to Study & Learn.** (2001). Richard Paul and Linda Elder. The Foundation for Critical Thinking.
5. Other individual readings (TBA) from the Reserve Reading Room will be assigned for team presentations.

**EVALUATION:** Course evaluation will be based upon:

- **Survey design assignment:** Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup> (15%) – due in class only
- **Participant Observation assignment:** Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> (15%) – due in class only
- **Self systematic observation assignment:** Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup> (15%) – due in class only
- **Team assigned reading presentations:** April 1- 8<sup>th</sup> (15%)
- **Participation** (5%)
- **Short-notice Exam:** TBA (25%)
- **Final Quiz** Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup> (10%)

Students will be assigned to research teams and will undertake the course work as team members except for the short-notice and final exams. Any and all team membership changes must have the approval of Dr. Arnold. It is the student’s responsibility to organize and equally contribute to all team projects. All members of a team are assigned a team grade except in situations where individual team members have not contributed equally to the research efforts in which case the instructor will evaluate the individual student’s work. It will be at the instructor’s discretion to attend to situations (and possible penalties) where some team members are not fully attending to their team responsibilities. All components of this course must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course. All assignments are due in class only.

**Three research projects (15% x 3):** There are *three research projects* that are designed for students to: (1) gain experience in applying the research materials in the readings to actual research undertakings; (2) identify methodological problems that arise in the process; and, (3) to identify which options are available for each of these “problems” and which one/s are most appropriate for attending to these methodological issues. Further instructions and hand-outs will be give early in the

term and during the course of the semester. TIME MANAGEMENT is an important consideration for all projects and this course. You need to come to class prepared and keep up with readings, lab work, and readings. Team members who are unable to keep up-to-date with other team members may be given an alternative research assignment.

**Exams (25% + 10%):** The *two examinations* (not cumulative) will include multiple choice questions drawn from all materials presented in class, readings, and class discussion and presentations. One exam will be a short-notice exam where students will be given an exam with notice of the exam one class prior to the exam. This is to encourage students to keep up-to-date with all the readings and therefore be prepared for contributing to class discussion and contribute to their research team assignments. The final examination will include questions drawn from the team assigned reading presentation materials and course materials covered since the short-notice examination.

**Team presentation (15%):** For the professional *research presentation* of 20 minutes, students are expected, in consultation with the instructor, to work in a team environment to describe and analyze an assigned methodological reading and link it to course materials. A 2 page point-form outline of the presentation will be submitted to the instructor and all students at the beginning of class. Arrangements can be made for teaching aids to assist in presentations when necessary (e.g. Powerpoint). A team grade will be assigned to each team member. *All team members must provide an equal part of the in-class presentation to receive a grade. All team members must be present and participate in the presentations.* More details and a handout will be given in-class and the instructor and teaching assistants will assist you with this assignment. Team members who are unable to keep up-to-date with other team members may be given an alternative assignment.

**Participation (5%):** Students are expected to be prepared to contribute to all classes. Students will be asked throughout the course to thoughtfully comment on specific readings and or issues discussed in class. Again, this is for students to learn how to apply course material and issues and so all students are on “the same page” and are therefore better prepared to learn from the classes, labs, and be better equipped for exams and research projects.

Students are expected and encouraged to make timely use of the instructor, teaching associates, and team members as learning resources for this course on an ongoing basis. It is the student’s responsibility to make timely and full use of course resources. We are available just after class, labs, and in office hours to assist you with the challenges offered in this course. Come see us!

**Labs:** Students are often unclear about what the purpose of labs are and what is to be expected from students, the instructor, and teaching assistants. Labs are an essential part of the learning opportunity and process in this course. It is not a lecture. The labs are designed to complement materials and discussion in the lectures. They provide students, and research teams, the opportunity to ask questions and generate discussion about course materials as a part of their preparation for assignments and examinations. Students are expected to regularly attend labs before making use of the instructor and teaching assistants during their office hours. Labs provide students with skill and experience in identify and solving their own research problems while teaching assistants and the instructor guide them through this processes. Teaching assistants are therefore carefully chosen by the instructor for their skills and research experience. The instructor, not the TAs, is responsible for all administrative matters (including grade changes).

**Students' Responsibilities:** This course syllabus provides details of all course assignments, requirements, rules and regulations. Each student is responsible for knowing all of its contents and complying with all details herein. Any and all questions regarding this course should be brought to the attention of the instructor as soon as possible to avoid any delay or inconvenience to students.

**A deadline is a deadline.** Late work may be considered but with a 20% per day (including weekends) late penalty starting immediately after the due deadline. Any and all delays regarding completing course assignments and examinations must be accompanied by official documentation. Such documentation must clearly specify causes (i.e., severe hardship or serious illness) regarding a student's inability to complete course requirements on dates outlined in this syllabus. Assignments are due in class only. Students must keep a duplicate copy of assignments for their records. Date and type of make-up examination will be at the discretion of the instructor. All exams and lab assignments **MUST** be completed to pass this course. Students are required to check Blackboard regularly (at least weekly) for course announcements and information.

Grading for this course is designed to provide both merit and equal opportunity for all students. Students who wish to have their assignments and or examinations re-evaluated must put their concerns and specific criteria or rationale for re-evaluation in writing to Dr. Arnold. If a general principle regarding evaluation is involved all students in the class may have equal opportunity for re-evaluation. This class is intended to offer an encouraging educational environment so students can have the opportunity to rise to a variety of manageable challenges.

**Continued Registration in this course indicates full acceptance of the terms and conditions stated in this syllabus and which have also been presented in class.**

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## **USRI**

*At the completion of this course each student will be asked to complete a Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) form.*

**Exam Policies:** *You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam. All requests for deferral of an examination 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 physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferred exams may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. If you have missed an exam for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original exam as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam. Deferred exams will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.*

**Ethics Research:** *Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.*

**Academic Misconduct:** *cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.*

**The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)** *legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor’s office or the Department main office. 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 her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.*

**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 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.***