

Sociology 313: Introductory Social Research Methods

Winter 2010

Dr John Manzo

Office Hours, Winter 2010: 11:30-12:30 Mondays and Fridays. You NEVER need an appointment to see me during my scheduled office hours.

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Course Description:

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.

Required Text:

Earl Babbie and Lucia Benaquisto, Fundamentals of Social Research, Second Canadian Edition (Nelson Publishing).

"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 Wednesday, February 24, and Wednesday, March 31.

Project:

Projects 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 five to eight 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 April 14; the last day of class, April 16, which coincides with "Bermuda Shorts Day," is cancelled.

Unless announced otherwise, labs will take place almost every week. Your attendance is compulsory. Labs will generally consist of discussions before and after each of four separate assignments, each of which will constitute 4% of your semester grade. 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

Research Ethics: 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.

Handing in Papers Outside of Class, Return of Final Papers, and Release of Final Grades:

1. 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.
2. 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.

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

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. Generally, I will cover one topic per week 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 8

6. Ethnography and Other Approaches to Structured Observation

Reading: Chapter 11

7. Even More Focussed Observation: Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis

Reading: TBA

8. Sampling

Reading: Chapter 7

9. Survey Research

Reading: Chapter 9

10. Scaling

Reading: Chapter 6

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

Reading: Chapter 12

12. Content Analysis, Historical-Comparative Research and other Nonobstrusive Methods

Reading: Chapter 10

13. Evaluation Research

Reading: Chapter 13

14. Triangulation: Combining Research Methods

Reading: TBA

15. Ethics in Social Research
Reading: Chapter 3