

COURSE OUTLINE

Soci313-01: Introduction to Social Research Methods

University of Calgary – Department of Sociology

Winter 2014

Lecture: TR 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM, in SA147

Labs: Lab1 – T 3:30 – 5:20 PM, in EDC 276 (Laurent)

Lab2 – R 3:30 – 5:20 PM, in SS 006 (Kate)

Instructor: Dr. Annette Tézli

Office: SS950

Phone: 403-220-6513 (during office hours only)

Email: atezli@ucalgary.ca

Office hours: M 10:30 – 11:45 AM,

W 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM,

F 1:00 – 2:15 PM; or by appointment

Teaching Assistants: Laurent Wall (Lab1) and Kate Hickey (Lab2)

Course Description

“Bad statistics aren’t rare. You can probably spot at least one dubious number in this morning’s newspaper. Recognizing bad statistics is not all that difficult; it takes clear thinking more than it requires any advanced mathematical knowledge.” (p.170)

Joel Best. (2004). *More damned lies and statistics: How numbers confuse public issues*. Berkley: University of California Press.

The above statement applies to statistics as much as it does to other knowledge generated through scientific research. Generally speaking, social research is research conducted by sociologists and other social investigators to explore, describe, explain, critique and offer suggestions for improving aspects of the social world. Producing high quality social research, however, is an art that requires specific skills. This course is designed to provide you with the skills and resources necessary to conduct scientifically sound social research. These skills will not only make you a good researcher, they will also transform you into a critical consumer of social research presented to you in the academic and popular realms. Over the course of the semester, we will discuss the research process in its entirety, focusing on philosophical underpinnings of social science research and their implication for research design, ethical considerations, research planning, quantitative and qualitative methods of data generation, and data analysis. Furthermore, we will discuss the often intricate choices and challenges researchers face throughout the research process.

This course will provide you the opportunity to:

- examine social phenomena in a scientific manner;
- critically assess the use of scientific methods as a means to understand the social world;
- critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods;
- develop your written skills through informal and formal writing assignments;
- develop a research proposal;
- be part of a class in which participation in discussions and group exercises is encouraged.

Course Format

I will begin each class with a short lecture to cover key concepts and other pertinent information that will complement but not summarize the assigned readings. The remainder of the class will be interactive. We will engage in group and class discussions, hands-on exercises and watch pertinent films. After each activity, we will reflect on insights gained through discussions and various formal and informal writing assignments.

Required Text

(available through the UofC bookstore and Taylor Family Digital Library; also available as an eBook at a lower price on: <http://www.coursesmart.com/0205767419>)

Neuman, W.L. & K. Robson (2007). *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd Canadian ed.). Toronto: Pearson.

Please Note: The 2nd edition has been updated extensively. Please do not purchase earlier editions!

Supplementary Readings

For some classes, I selected short supplementary readings. Please refer to the course schedule for which days supplementary readings have been assigned. Electronic copies of the readings listed below are available through the UofC library (TFDL) or Blackboard (BB).

Book chapters

Bouma, G. D., Ling, R., & Wilkinson, L. (2009). *The research process* (Canadian ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford.

Flick, U. (2011). *Introducing research methodology: A beginner's guide to doing a research project*. London: Sage.

Journal articles

Head, E. (2009). The ethics and implications of paying participants in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 12(4), 335-344.

Lindsey, E.W. (1998). Service providers' perception of factors that help or hinder homeless families. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 79(2), 160-172.

Mason, R. (2003). Listening to lone mothers: Paid work, family life, and childcare in Canada. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 9(1), 41-54.

McChesney, K.Y. (1995). A review of the empirical literature on contemporary urban homeless families. *Social Service Review*, 69(3), 429-460.

Schneider, B., Chamberlain, K., & Hodgetts, D. (2010). Representations of homelessness in four Canadian newspapers: Regulation, control, and social order. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 37(4), 147-172.

Taylor-Powell, E. (1998). *Questionnaire design: Asking questions with a purpose*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

Methods of Evaluation

Assignment Schedule and Outline

Please note: All assignments are due at the **beginning** of class.

	Date due	% of final grade
Reading quizzes	unannounced	25
Tutorial assignments	see tutorial outline	15
Topic proposal	January 28	5
Annotated bibliography	February 13	10
Research design and sampling	March 20	20
Research Proposal	April 10	25

5 unannounced reading quizzes (25%, 5% each)

The quality of the class and your final grade depend in part on your attendance, preparation and class participation. To encourage attendance and preparation, you will write 5 unannounced, short reading quizzes which will cover the readings assigned for the day of the quiz. Quizzes will be written at the beginning of class. If you are late or miss a quiz for legitimate reasons as specified in the assignment policies below, the average of the remaining quizzes will be entered as your grade for the quiz you missed. In all other cases, a grade of 0 will be entered automatically.

5 tutorial assignments (15%, 3% each)

Tutorials provide you with an opportunity to apply theoretical material covered in lecture in a practical manner and thus deepen your understanding of the subject matter. Attendance should be considered a requirement, not an option. Your grade for this component will be based on your participation in various exercises and assignments, which will be administered and graded by your graduate Teaching Assistants. More information will be provided during your tutorials and on Blackboard.

Written Assignments – Preparing a Research Proposal (60%)

The remainder of your grade will be based on sequenced, written assignments which constitute different sections of your research proposal. In general, a research proposal explains why and how a research study will be conducted. It is useful for planning a study and for getting critical feedback before undertaking the study. The objective of this assignment is for you to practice writing a well-structured research proposal. This is your opportunity to prepare a proposal and receive feedback on each individual assignment. I will return each assignment before the next one is due, so that you can make necessary revisions. Please refer to the assignment schedule for the due dates of each assignment. Individual assignments are outlined below. More detailed information will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

1. Topic & research question proposal – 2 pages (5%)

Before you can write a research proposal, you have to decide on a topic. For this assignment, I expect you to discuss your research topic and a set of research questions that flow out of this topic. You can select any topic that interests you, but keep in mind that you have to examine your topic sociologically. Please explain your topic, telling me why this topic interests you and briefly outlining its sociological relevance. Secondly, what is/are your research question(s)? Research questions flow out of your chosen topic and provide an important first step toward planning and carrying out a research project. What is the research question you are trying to find the answer to? This can also be termed as the aim or purpose of the research. Think about how you finish this statement: “The purpose of this research is ...”

2. Annotated Bibliography – length will vary

The purpose of an annotated bibliography is to summarize and evaluate sources of information. For this assignment, select 10 scientifically sound sources relevant to your research topic and critically evaluate the information provided in each source.

3. Research Design and Sampling – 2-4 pages

This section should include an extensive discussion of your proposed methodology, your sample and your sampling technique. You will also discuss ethical considerations pertaining to your proposed research.

4. Research Proposal – no more than 15 pages

Here is where you put everything together into a final, polished proposal, which is the final product of your work throughout the semester. Your final research proposal will include an introduction, a literature review, and a discussion of your chosen methods if data generation and analysis, including your research instrument. Most of your final research proposal you will have already written in previous assignments, so do not feel intimidated by the length of the assignment. As long as you stay on top of your revisions throughout the semester, putting together the research proposal should be fairly straightforward.

Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned and submitted to the registrar based on the following scale:

A+	96 – 100%	B+	80 – 84%	C+	67 – 69%	D+	55 – 58%
A	90 – 95%	B	75 – 79%	C	63 – 66%	D	50 – 54%
A-	85 – 89%	B-	70 – 74%	C-	59 – 62%	F	<50%

The grades for a course component may be scaled to maintain equity among sections and to conform to departmental norms.

Emergency evacuations

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by the Social Science - Food Court (primary) or ICT - Food Court (alternate).

Technology Use

You are welcome to use your laptop/tablet in class. If you are using a laptop/tablet in class, I would kindly ask you to sit in the back of the class so that other students are not distracted. Please use your laptop/tablet for course-related purposes only (i.e. to access course presentations, take notes). Bear in mind that using your computer/tablet/phone to surf the net, shop, email, check Facebook, update your tweets, etc. is distracting to your classmates. It is also a waste of your tuition fees. Permission to use laptops/tablets may be withdrawn if they are not used appropriately. Please make sure to mute your cell phone and refrain from using it during class.

Attendance and Participation

Reading the assigned material, an open mind, and your active participation is required for this class to reach its fullest potential and to make it a rewarding experience for you and me. Furthermore, attendance is important in any class. If you miss a class, you will miss material relevant to your success in this course. To attend classes regularly is your responsibility. If you have to miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain the covered material from one of your class mates. If you need to leave class early, it is courteous to sit somewhere that will allow you to leave without disrupting others.

E-mail policy

Feel free to contact me over email at any time. Please put your course number and section in your email's subject line. I will do my best to answer emails promptly. However, it might take up to one business day for me to respond. Please take that into account when emailing me questions pertaining assignments or exams. If you have a course-related question, please check the course outline first. Questions that can be answered by consulting the course outline will not be answered. Also, please e-mail me for administrative purposes only, for example to set up an appointment. Please do not use e-mail as a replacement for an office visit, if there is something you want to discuss. Questions about the course content and readings, concerns about grades, or any other personal issues should be dealt with in person during my office hours.

Assignment Policies and Deferrals

It is your responsibility to complete and submit all assignments outlined in this course outline. If at all possible you must provide **advance** notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in an assignment on time. All requests for a deferral of an exam or assignment due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while you have the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. **Travel arrangements, misreading of the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment responsibilities** 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. There are absolutely **NO EXCEPTIONS**.

If you have missed an exam for a legitimate reason, I 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 I schedule a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department.

Assignments submitted late (as of the beginning of class on the dates indicated in the assignment schedule) without due cause are subject to a **5 percentage points deduction** (i.e. 80% instead of 85%) for **each day** past the due date. Assignments not submitted within 7 calendar days of the due date without approval for extension will automatically receive a grade of 0.

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://ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/APP%20FOR%20DF%20EXAM_0.pdf

Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades

1. When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor. Electronic submissions via email or Blackboard, papers placed under the instructor's door, or those submitted to the administrative assistants in the department's main office will **NOT** be accepted.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and 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 be available for

pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or at the beginning of the next term.

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

Ethics Research

Please be advised that any research involving 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, you must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing your plans with me, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct are regarded as serious academic offences. Please be 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's main office. I will return written assignments individually during class, or during my office hours. If you are unable to pick up your assignment, you may provide me with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of your assignment.

Student Representation

The 2013-14 Students' Union VP Academic is Emily Macphail; 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>

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. You can also contact Campus Security from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation

Students who require academic accommodation, must register with Student Accessibility Services (formerly the Disability Resource Centre) at MC 452 (or phone 403-220-8237). 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 Student Accessibility Services and to request academic accommodation, if required.

Reappraisal of Grades and Academic Appeals

If you chose to challenge a grade you received for an assignment, please refer to the UofC Calendar for more information and follow the procedures outlined therein.

Tentative Course Schedule

Subject to change. Changes will be announced and discussed in class.

Date	Topic	Readings
	1. How We Know What We Know	
January 9	Course welcome	
January 14	Foundations of scientific inquiry	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 1
January 16	Theory and social research	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 2
	2. Planning Social Research	
January 21	Selecting a research problem and formulating research questions	Bouma, Ling & Wilkinson, Ch. 3 (BB)
January 23	Reviewing the existing literature	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 4 McChesney (1995) (TFDL)
January 28	Selecting a research design Proposal due	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 5
January 30	Quantitative research design	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 6
February 4	Quantitative research design, cont.	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 6
February 6	Qualitative research design	Flick (2011), Ch. 4 (BB)
February 11	Selecting a sample	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 7
February 13	Ethical considerations Annotated bibliography due	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 3 Head (2009) (TFDL)
February 18/20	Reading Days, no class	
	3. Methods of Data Generation	
February 25	Selecting a research method	Flick (2011), Ch. 6 (BB)
February 27	Nonreactive quantitative research	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 10 Schneider, Chamberlain & Hodgetts (2010) (TFDL)
March 4	Nonreactive qualitative research	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 14
March 6	Quantitative research: Surveys	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 8
March 11	Quantitative research: Survey design	Taylor-Powell (1998) (online)
March 13	Qualitative research: Fieldwork	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 13
March 18	Qualitative methods: Observations	
March 20	Qualitative methods: Interviews Research design and sampling due	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 12
	4. Data Analysis & Representation	
March 25	Quantitative data analysis	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 11
March 27	Quantitative data analysis, cont.	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 11
April 1	Quantitative data analysis, cont.	Lindsey (1998) (TFDL)
April 3	Qualitative data analysis	Neuman & Robson, Ch. 15
April 8	Qualitative data analysis, cont.	Mason (2003) (TFDL)
April 10	Concluding class discussion Research Proposals due	