

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology 3310: Foundations of Social Research

September – December 2010

Course Lecturer: DR. JENNIFER JARMAN

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Lecture: WF 10 – 11:30

Lecture Hall: AT 2021

Office Hours: F: 4-5

What Does this Course Cover? This course introduces the student to the exciting realm of social research. We will define social research, and then build on our understanding by looking at small examples from research projects that have been conducted the world over. In so doing, we will seek to understand the basic concepts and tools of social research, and we will particularly address research problem definition, research design, and ethical and rigorous data collection, processing and analysis techniques. Students are given a broad understanding of what is involved in both qualitative, (field research, participant observation, in-depth interviewing) and quantitative, (survey data collection techniques).

The readings and lectures are supplemented by the assignments. The emphasis in the readings and lectures is on what other people have done, and on general rules and principles. The assignments take the student through the research process in miniature, so that by the end of the course students have some experience with the most important aspects of project construction relevant to both qualitative and quantitative traditions of research design, at a level appropriate for a novice. This course thus provides a solid base for future research methods courses and future research endeavors.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course you will know how to:

- (i) formulate a research problem,
- (ii) conduct a literature review,
- (iii) develop a research question and if relevant to the type of research you are undertaking, develop hypotheses,
- (iv) consider relevant ethical issues,
- (v) select a study sample,
- (vi) choose and implement a particular type of data collection technique,
- (vii) analyze the data and,
- (viii) present findings.

Required Text:



Babbie, Earl. 2010. *The Basics of Social Research*. 5th Edition. Florence, Kentucky: Cengage Learning.

Note: Earl Babbie's texts have been described as the "Gold Standard" for methods texts for decades. If someone asked me for one book that I thought they should have on their shelf if they need a reference book for methods, it would be this text. It is expensive, but if you go on to a career where you use data, (and what career these days doesn't?), you can keep this book handy for the rest of your life. There are other editions around, and they have good information and similar chapters. Later editions fix earlier typos and provide more recent examples, so if you want to be absolutely on top of what we are doing in class get this version. Tests and exams will be based on the material in this edition. If you get an older version, make sure you compare it carefully with this one to make sure you are covering everything. This is **your** responsibility – my recommendation is that you get the latest text.

Course Evaluation & Assignments:

Description	Due Date	Value
Assignment 1	October 13	25%
Mid Term Test	October 29	25%
Assignment 2	November 26	25%
Final Exam		25%

Due Date Policy

Assignments are due on the date indicated in the syllabus. Any assignments arriving after this day will be considered late and will receive a 10% deduction. If serious medical or emergency circumstances arise, you must provide appropriate documentation. Students must write their exam on the date indicated, during the scheduled time. There will be no make-ups.

Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism and Cheating

All assignments must be completed independently. Please review the university policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty. <http://mycoursecalendar/lakeheadu.ca/pg39.html>. If you are unsure what this means, please discuss your questions with me prior to handing in work. Please be aware that

the Minimum penalty for a student guilty of plagiarism and cheating is zero for the work concerned.

Tentative Schedule: (to be confirmed during First Week)

Date	Topic	Text Readings
Sept 15, 17	Introduction, What is Social Research?	Ch. 1
Sept 22, 24	Research Ethics	Ch. 3
Sept 29, Oct 1	Theory and Research, Literature Reviews	Ch. 2
OCT 6, 8	Selecting Researchable Topics & Questions; Steps of a Research Project	Ch. 4
Oct 13, 15	Identifying Key Concepts, Operationalization	Ch. 5
Oct 20, 22	Sampling	Ch. 7
Oct 27, 29 Test	Review and Test	
Nov 3, 5	Asking Questions	Ch. 9
Nov 10, 12	Qualitative Interviewing	Ch. 10
Nov 17, 19	Making Sense of the Data You Collected	Ch. 14
Nov 24, 26 Ass 2	Writing the Research Report	Ch. 15
Dec 1, 3	Conclusions & Review	

Tests and Exams

The **Mid-term Test** It will cover all lectures, reading materials and films up to this date.

Test structure. It will have two parts. The first part will consist of short answer definitions (2-3 sentence answers). The second part will be two short essay questions. You will have a small choice of questions in the second part.

The **Final Exam**, (see Registrar's office for timetabling), will primarily cover the course lectures, readings and films covered from after the Mid-term Exam to the last week of class. It will also have a small amount of material that covers material from the first part of the course.

Exam structure. This exam will have three parts. The first part will contain a general question relevant to the entire course. The second part will have short definition questions from the second part of the course. The third part will an essay / analysis section.

Assignments

Note: Information given here is to give you a general idea of what we will be doing. Much more precise guidelines will be given out in class. Do not proceed without them!

Assignment 1 will test your ability to come up with a topic of interest to you and other social scientists, identify aims and objectives for this project. Make sure they are grand enough to be interesting and small enough to be manageable! ☺ Then use the library to create a bibliography search for relevant materials in order to show you know how to connect with the big tradition of knowledge construction that we sociologists inherit. (If we build on the work of others then we need to know what relevant others have done !) Then you will write a short literature review about your topic. Total length: 6 pages double-spaced.

Assignment 2 will test your ability to analyze some data relevant to your first project and write it up in relation to your aims and objectives. We will follow ethics procedures so don't proceed until you have been briefed as a class and have Official Permission to proceed. Total Length: 6 pages double-spaced (not including presentation of data).

Reference Style for Assignments:

The Department of Sociology uses the ASA Style Guide as a reference style for students. These guidelines are posted on the Sociology website, so please refer to them.