

SOCI 2911 FDE
FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH
Fall 2021

Lecture: M/W 8:30-10am

Format: Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Sanders

Office hours: After lecture and by appointment



COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is this course about? SOCI 2911 is a survey course of the common types of methods sociologists use to collect and analyze empirical data. For most of you, university learning has mainly consisted of reading scholarly books and papers without giving much consideration to how that scholarship was created in the first place. This course is about how social scientists apply principles of the scientific method to systematically gather and analyze data that, in turn, are used to evaluate research questions and draw conclusions about social problems and social phenomena. We will explore many of the *how to* steps of the research process from conceptualization and research design to data analysis and presentation of findings.

What is the game plan? This semester we will begin by learning about the relationship between social theory and research methods. Next, we will explore research design skills, ranging from developing research questions and devising measurement categories to sampling techniques. Then we will examine basic quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Along the way, we learn about the importance of ethics and reflexivity in social research.

Why does this stuff matter? Research methods training teaches people how to analyze data and “truth” claims that are ostensibly based on evidence. The ability to evaluate the validity of evidence and truth claims has arguably never been more important than the present day where every day we find ourselves inundated with varying (often inconsistent) information from competing sources, all of which claim authority. What is more, competency with research methods is a highly valued practical skillset that will make you employable in professional environments ranging from universities and private sector research firms to non-profit organizations and government agencies. In short, research methods teaches you how to read and evaluate evidence and engaged citizen.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learn key concepts and approaches in social research methods to complete tests;
- Apply key concepts to class activities and major assignments;
- Contribute to an active learning environment through participation;
- Learn the process of developing a professional research proposal.

COURSE READINGS

The following textbook is available from the LU bookstore:

- Neuman, W. Lawrence and Karen L. Robson. 2018. *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, Fourth Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Pearson Canada
- Additional readings will be uploaded to D2L

ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE

This class is synchronous and runs as a lecture interspersed with open discussion and activities. Our class will meet weekly on Zoom (zoom links are available on the D2L course site).

Attendance is optional, though I will stress that there is no greater predictor of success in a course than attendance. You should complete the required readings prior to class to maximize the benefit of lecture.

COURSE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments will be discussed in class and you will have the opportunity to ask questions about expectations.

Description	Final Submission Date	Weight
Test 1	Oct 20	25%
Assignment 1	Nov 17	25%
Test 2	Dec 01	25%
Assignment 2	Dec 06	25%
Participation	TBD	TBD

Tests are comprehensive and include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Test questions are designed to evaluate your ability to apply key concepts. There are no makeup tests except with appropriate documentation (e.g., physician note). Make-up tests are essay format.

Assignments teach students to evaluate empirical research and write an original research proposal. Assignment 1 is a methodological review of an empirical research article. Assignment 2 is a “3 minute elevator pitch,” a concise 1-2 page summary of a research idea including research questions, significance, design, and ethical considerations. Precise guidelines for both assignments will be provided. Late assignments will be penalized 10% per day excluding weekends.

Participation: A voluntary honors section will be created for 5-10 students who wish to challenge themselves and enhance their understanding of research methods. The honors section will run like an upper-division seminar and students will be expected to participate in open discussion. Students should have a 75% average and must commit to attending the weekly honors sections and must be willing to complete additional readings and written work. This option will be discussed on the first day of class.

COURSE POLICIES

Zoom etiquette: The Zoom classroom format can be very difficult to manage for instructors. It is much more difficult to see raised hands and read body language than in a physical class environment. Interruptions and disruptions can really throw off the instructor's focus and derail a lecture. Just as students want instructors to take into account the challenges you are facing, please extend us the same courtesy. To help foster a classroom environment, I ask that when you participate in discussion to please activate your camera so I can see who I am speaking with. I also ask that you keep your sound "muted" unless you are speaking to minimize the sound distractions. You are welcome to use the chat box to ask/answer questions, but I may not see them right away so please be patient.

Email: It typically takes longer to reply to email than it does to write email; it can become extremely time-consuming, which I must place parameters on email correspondence. I encourage you to deal with issues related to your course assignments in person during class or class breaks. For more in-depth discussion of course issues, please see me during office hours or make an appointment. In situations when email is necessary, please consider email equivalent to any other form of written communication. Email should be brief and require a brief 1-2 sentence response. Students who write to their professors are expected to follow rules of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. In addition, please include a proper greeting, such as "Dear Dr. Sanders," and a closing that includes your full name, such as "Sincerely, Joe Biden." In the subject heading, please put the Course Number: SOCI 2911. Email failing to meet these standards may be returned with a request to revise appropriately. Please note that I will only respond to emails sent from a Lakehead university email account.

Grades: I do not discuss grades by email. Grade inquiries must be in person during office hours or by appointment.

Plagiarism: All work must be completed with academic integrity. Please review the Lakehead University policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty; it can be accessed from the LU homepage or the course information module of the course website. Please discuss with me any questions or concerns about this policy prior to handing in assignments or taking the tests. Ignorance of LU policy will not be accepted as an excuse if violations occur.

Copyright compliance: I understand and agree that all instructional, reference, and administrative materials to which I am given access in this course (the course materials), whether they consist of text, still or kinetic images, or sound, whether they are in digital or hard copy formats, and in whatever media they are offered, are protected in their entirety by copyright, and that to comply with this copyright and the law.

1. I may access and download the course materials only for my own personal and non-commercial use for this course; and
2. I am not permitted to download, copy, store (in any medium), forward or share, transmit, broadcast, show, post or play in public, adapt, or change in any way any text, image, or sound component of the course materials for any other purpose whatsoever except as expressly authorized, and only to the extent authorized, in writing, by the

course instructor. I further understand and agree that, if I infringe the copyright of the course materials in any way, I may be prosecuted under the Lakehead University Student Code of Conduct—Academic Integrity, which requires students to act ethically and with integrity in academic matters and to demonstrate behaviors that support the University's academic values.

Exam/assignment integrity

Plagiarism: All work must be completed with academic integrity. Please review the LU policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, accessible from the LU homepage or the course information folder on the website. Please come to me with any questions or concerns about this policy prior to handing in assignments or taking the tests. I understand and agree that:

1. Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must complete the assignments in this course without the assistance of anyone else.
2. Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must not access any sources or materials (in print, online, or in any other way) to complete any course exam.
3. I further understand and agree that, if I violate either of these two rules, or if I provide any false or misleading information about my completion of course assignments or exams, I may be prosecuted under the Lakehead University Student Code of Conduct—Academic Integrity, which requires students to act ethically and with integrity in academic matters and to demonstrate behaviors that support the University's academic values.

Accommodations: LU is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. This commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as early as possible. Please visit: <http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

As a university student, you may sometimes experience mental health concerns or stressful events that interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily activities.

All of us can benefit from support during times of struggle. If you or anyone you know experiences academic stress, difficult life events or feelings of anxiety or depression, **Student Health and Wellness** is here to help. Their services are free for Lakehead Students and appointments are available. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on and off campus at: lakeheadu.ca/shw

Remember that getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do - for yourself, for those you care about, and for those who care about you. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE*

Week 1: Welcome!

- Sept 08: Course introductions and *BSR* Ch. 1, "Doing Social Research"

Week 2: Theory and Methodology

- Sept 13/15: *BSR* Ch. 2, "Theory and Social Research"

Week 3: Ethical Considerations

- Sept 20/22: *BSR* Ch. 3, "Ethics in Social Research"

Week 4: Research Design

- Sept 27/29: *BSR* Ch. 5, "Designing a Study"

Week 5: Measurement Considerations

- Oct 04/06: *BSR* Ch. 6, "Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement"

Week 6: Reading Week

- Oct 11/13: No class, no assigned readings

Week 7: Test 1

- Oct 18: Test Review
- Oct 20: Test 1

Week 8: Sampling Strategies

- Oct 25/27: *BSR* Ch. 7, "Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling"

Week 9: Surveys and Questionnaires

- Nov 01/03: *BSR* Ch. 8, "Survey Research"

Week 10: Secondary Analysis

- Nov 08/10: *BSR* Ch. 10, "Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis"

Week 11: Interviewing Strategies

- Nov 15: *BSR* Ch. 12, "Interviewing"
- Nov 17: Assignment 1 due

Week 12: Ethnography

- Nov 22/24: *BSR* Ch. 13, "Field Research"

* Weekly schedule subject to change.

Week 13: Coding Data and Test 2

- Nov 29: *BSR* Ch. 15, "Analysis of Qualitative Data" and Test Review
- Dec 01: Test 2

Week 14: Course Conclusion

- Dec 06: Assign 2 discussion and due at 5pm

Enjoy the Winter Break!