

Lakehead University
Department of Sociology

Sociology 4305 YA
Honours Thesis Seminar

Dr. Chris Southcott
Office: RB2040
Office Telephone: 343-8349
E-mail: Chris.Southcott@lakeheadu.ca

2020-2021
Friday 2:30-5:30
Delivery: ZOOM

Office Hours

NA

Course Objective:

Students will design a sociological study, examine evidence, and report the results in a major undergraduate honours thesis paper.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Plan a sociological research project around a central social issue.
2. Understand the processes under which current sociological research projects are decided on, designed, organized, funded, and undertaken.
3. Understand the current ethics regime for social research in Canada
4. Analyze various contemporary research methodologies in order to determine which are most appropriate for different research questions.
5. Have knowledge of the various ways in which sociological research results are mobilized and shared.
6. Write a senior sociological honours thesis.

Texts:

Department of Sociology, 2012. *A Guide to Writing a Senior Thesis in Sociology*, Harvard University: Cambridge, Mass. Available at https://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/thesis_guide_sept_2012.pdf

Messingill, R. P. n.d. *Writing Sociology: A Guide for Junior Papers and Senior Theses*, Princeton University: Princeton, N.J.. Available at https://sociology.princeton.edu/sites/sociology/files/soc_ug_writing_guide.pdf

Jones, J. et al. 2011. *Writing for Sociology*, 2nd ed., Dept. of Sociology, University of California: Berkeley, California. Available at https://sociology.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/documents/student_services/writing_guide/Writing%20for%20Sociology%20Guide%20Second%20Edition.pdf

Basis of Evaluation:

Research Proposal.....	20%
Research Proposal Presentation.....	5%
December Take-home Assignment	15%
Participation.....	10%
Presentation of Thesis	10%
Honours Thesis.....	40%

December Take-home Assignment: Participants will be given a take home assignment on December 4th to be completed and handed in by January 8th. The assignment will be comprised of a list of short essay questions relating to material dealt with in the first part of the course.

Research Proposal: One of the main requirements of this course is to prepare an honours thesis research paper. The paper itself is described below but to ensure that you are prepared to write this paper you will be required to hand in a 10 – 15 page proposal on December 4th. This proposal should contain a section with a background section explaining why the topic you chose is important (why you chose it), a section containing a clear hypothesis/research question, a literature review, a section describing how you will examine your hypothesis/research question (ie a road map of the paper), and a suggested bibliography with at least 10 key sources. The proposal will also include an application to the Research Ethics Board of Lakehead University.

Participation: This course will be run as a seminar. For this reason, it is important that all participants are actively involved in the discussions. This means that readings should be completed before each session and that participants arrive with questions and points of interest to discuss. Participation marks will be based on attendance, level and quality of participation in discussions, and level of preparedness for each session. The more a participant contributes to creating an interesting, informative, and supportive leaning environment during the seminar the higher the participation mark.

Presentations: Participants will be required to organize and undertake a presentation for both the research proposal and the honours thesis. These presentations will take place in final classes of each term. Presentations should be approximately one hour in length and allow for at least 15 minutes of questions.

Honours Thesis: Participants will be required to write a 30 to 40 page Honours thesis on a contemporary social issue. The Honours thesis is an original research project that requires students to develop a focused research question and then attempt to answer that question using rigorous research. The thesis provides students with valuable training and experience in critical and independent thinking. Topics should be chosen in consultation with the professor. The completed paper is due on April 3rd. Research papers should use the manuscript format suggested by the American Sociological Association.

Please note that plagiarism is unacceptable and subject to various sanctions. Please see the university regulations section on academic dishonesty in the Calendar. For advice to avoid plagiarism please see <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html>

Soc 4305 Course Structure and Readings

Term One: Concepts and basic structures

Session 1: Introduction to the Course and What is a thesis?

Session 2: Elements of a Thesis 1 – choosing a problem

Bryman, A. 2007 “The Research Question in Social Research: What is its Role?”, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 10:1, pp.5-20.

Harvard, Part 1; Princeton, Chpt 1; Berkeley, Chpt 5.

Session 3: Elements of a Thesis 2- How to do a Literature review and the role of theory

Denny, A. and Tewksury, R. 2013 “How to Write a Literature Review”, *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 24:2, pp. 218-234.

Harvard, Part 2; Princeton Chpt 2 and 3

Session 4: Elements of a Thesis 3 – Creating a research hypothesis – operationalizing your research question.

Blackstone, A. 2012. “Chapter 6: Defining and Measuring Concepts” in *Principles of Sociological Inquiry – Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*, Saylor Academy Open Textbooks. Available at https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_principles-of-sociological-inquiry-qualitative-and-quantitative-methods/s09-defining-and-measuring-concept.html

Session 5: Elements of a Thesis 4- How to choose a method.

Princeton, Chpts 4 and 5;

Session 6: The evolution of Ethics

Panel on Research Ethics. 2018. *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. 2nd Edition. Ottawa.

Session 7: How to write a research proposal

Session 8 : Major problems that can be encountered with a research thesis

Session 9: Discussion of initial ideas

Session 10: Collecting the data

Harvard, Part 3; Berkeley, Chpt 6

Sessions 11 and 12: Presentations

Term Two: Doing the research and writing it up

Session 1: Making sure you are collecting the right data

Session 2: Analyzing the data

Session 3: Summarizing the data

Session 4 : Writing up the data

Session 5 : Discussing the implications of your findings

Sessions 6 to 12 Discussion of theses