

L A K E H E A D U N I V E R S I T Y
D E P A R T M E N T O F S O C I O L O G Y

Sociology 4313FA/FAO
Problems and Issues in Methods

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Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday: 10:00 AM-4:00 PM via email

Classes: Wednesday, 2:30PM-05:30PM, Zoom

Course Description:

This course will examine basic issues at different research stages. These research stages include research design (elements, measurement, and sampling), data collection (experimentation, survey, field work, and available data), data analysis, and writing research reports. This course will pay specific attention to research design and data collection. Data analysis will be taught in other courses (Soci 3311 WA: Research Techniques). The prerequisite course is the 2nd year research methods. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed that course.

The course will be conducted in a seminar format, with a focus on analyzing the readings which seminar participants are expected to have read in advance of a given seminar. Students should feel free both to ask “dumb” questions that encourage understanding and to take advantage of each other’s knowledge in the subject area.

Texts:

Singleton, R.A. Jr. and Bruce C. Straits. 2018. *Approaches to Social Research (5th edition)*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Course requirements

Class attendance (10%)

You are required to attend each class. Full marks will be given for those who have a perfect attendance record (12 classes). Partial marks will be given for those who miss classes.

Class participation (20%)

This mark will be based on evidence of having read the readings and involving discussion in class. For each seminar, all students are expected to have read the required readings listed on the course outline. Participation includes asking questions, answering questions, discussing links to other things, and thinking about implications. It is important to come to class with some notes and reflections on the material. The objectives are summarizing readings, raising important points, synthesizing, and critically discussing the research issues of given readings. After each class, the instructor will take note of the

quality and quantity of participation of each student, and the extent to which this participation is based on having done the readings in advance. These will then be assessed at the end of the course.

Presentation (40%)

Each student is asked to lead the discussion for two seminars. This may be done individually or with another student, depending on the class size. The person(s) responsible for a given seminar is asked to distribute a page of presentation outline or main issues at that specific research stage and questions that are used for the focus of class discussion.

The format of the seminar is that each class starts with student's presentation (about 45 minutes), followed by answering questions (on the presentation outline) or raising new questions from the class (20 minutes). In the last 15-20 minutes of each class, I will give a brief evaluation about the presentation by correcting the errors made in the presentation, adding important issues or points missed in the presentation, raising my questions about the research issues presented by the students, and relating the current chapter to those previous ones.

The presentation mark will be based on the quality of presentation and the discussion of the seminar and will be evaluated by students. This includes raising questions, sponsoring discussion, possibly bringing in additional material, synthesizing, and discussing the possible implications. When students work as a group, the same mark will be used for all members of the group. ***Each student is asked to email me his/her mark to the presenter(s) before the following class. Punishment might be applied if you fail to submit your marks.***

Examination (30%)

This will cover the required readings plus all the discussions that have taken place during the seminars. The exam will be close-book and essay type, with some choice. I will hand out a list of questions (one from each chapter) for the final exam in the last week of class. The final exam will include two parts. Part one includes one compulsory question (25%) which you will know in advance. Part two has 7 questions and you can choose five of them to answer (15% each).

The final grade will be determined as follows:

Class attendance	10%
Class participation	20%
Presentation	40%
Examination (during examination period)	30%

Specific issues with online activities

(1) 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 behaviours that support the University’s academic values.

(2) Exam/Assignment Integrity:

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.

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 behaviours that support the University’s academic values.

Outline and schedule (the following schedule may be modified slightly throughout the term)

- _____ Sep. 9: Course logistics/ introduction
- Liu Chapter 1 Introduction
- _____ Sep. 16: Chapter 2 The Nature of Science
- _____ Chapter 3 Research Ethics
- _____ Sep. 23: Chapter 4 Elements of Research Design
- _____ Part one: from “Origins of Research Topics” to “Relationships”
- _____ Chapter 4 Elements of Research Design
- _____ Part two: from “Formulating Questions and Hypotheses” to “Summary”
- _____ Sep. 30: Chapter 5 Measurement
- _____ Part one: from “The Measurement Process” to “Levels of Measurement”
- _____ Chapter 5 Measurement
- _____ Part two: from “Reliability and Validity” to “Summary”
- _____ Oct. 7: Chapter 6 Sampling
- _____ Part one: from “Why Sample?” to “Probability Sampling”
- _____ Chapter 6 Sampling
- _____ Part two: from “Non-probability Sampling” to “Summary”
- _____ Oct. 21: Chapter 7 Experimentation
- _____ Part one: from “The Logic of Experimentation” to “Staging Experiments”
- _____ Chapter 7 Experimentation
- _____ Part two: from “The Experiment as a Social Occasion”
- _____ Oct. 28: Chapter 8 Experimental Designs
- _____ Part one: from “Threats to Internal Validity” to “True Experimental Designs”
- _____ Chapter 8 Experimental Designs
- _____ Part two: from “Factorial Experimental Designs” to “Summary”
- _____ Nov. 4: Chapter 9 Survey Research
- _____ Part one: from “General Features of Survey Research” to “Steps in Survey Research: Planning”
- _____ Chapter 9 Survey Research
- _____ Part two: from “Face-to-Face and Telephone Interviewing” to “Summary”
- _____ Nov. 11: Chapter 10 Survey Instrumentation
- _____ Chapter 11 Field Research
- _____ Nov. 18: Chapter 12 Research Using Available Data
- _____ Part one: from “Sources of Available Data” to “General Methodological Issues in Available-Data Research”
- _____ Chapter 12 Research Using Available Data
- _____ Part two: from “Historical Analysis” to “Summary”
- _____ Nov. 25: Chapter 13 Multiple Methods
- _____ Part one: from “Triangulation” to “Multiple Tests of Hypotheses across Different Studies”
- _____ Chapter 13 Multiple Methods
- _____ Part two: from “A Comparison of the Four Basic Approaches to Social Research” to “Summary”
- _____ Dec. 2: Chapter 14 Evaluation Research
- _____ Chapter 17 Writing Research Reports