

## SOCI 3310-FA: FOUNDATIONS FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

**Lecture days/times:** MW 11:30-1:00

**Location:** AT-1010

**Instructor:** Dr. Chris Sanders

**Office:** RB 2038

**Office hours:** MW 1-2pm, or by appointment

**Email:** D2L/mycourselink

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The aim of SOCI 3310 is to introduce students to the exciting realm of social research! For most of you, your experiences with sociology have primarily involved reading the product of other people's thoughts and research. In contrast, this course is about how to do sociology. Throughout the term, we will explore how sociologists apply methodology to rigorously and systematically analyze research questions in an effort to understand broader social issues.

We will begin the term by considering how sociologists envision the relationship between social theory and research methodology. Next, we will learn basic methodological skills, ranging from developing research questions to devising measurement categories and sampling techniques. We will then examine key quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research as well as techniques for combining these approaches via "mixed" methods studies. Along the way, we will regularly reflect upon research ethics. Each of you will conclude the course by using this breadth of information to produce an original research proposal.

Students will be given a broad understanding of what is involved with quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. Readings and lectures will be supplemented by in-class activities, quizzes, and major assignments. Readings and lectures will focus on key concepts and exemplars in research; in-class activities and major assignments will emphasize novel applications of the course material. Competency in comprehending, developing and implementing empirical research projects is a highly valued skillset that is applied in a variety of environments, including universities, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and private sector firms. In practical terms, Foundations for Social Research is designed to prepare you for involvement in a range of independent research projects that you may encounter in your roles as student, employee, or engaged citizen.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In offering an exploration of methodology, SOCI 3310 focuses on developing both a conceptual and practical grasp of the social research process. The course learning objectives are: 1) for students to become familiar and comfortable with key concepts and approaches to social research (e.g., logical fallacies, social surveys, in-depth interviews); 2) for students to appreciate

the value and challenges of conducting social research (e.g., designing feasible projects, gaining access to hidden populations, ethical conundrums); 3) for students to be able to apply key concepts from readings and lectures to in-class activities and major assignments; 4) for students to contribute to an “active” learning environment via regular in-class participation; 5) for students to hone note-taking skills that will assist in preparing for tests and assignments; and 6) for students to learn the process of writing a research proposal on a topic of their choosing.

### **COURSE READINGS**

We will use the following book:

- Neuman, W. Lawrence and Karen L. Robson. 2014. *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, Third Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Pearson Canada.
- Additional readings will be uploaded to D2L on a weekly basis.

*Basics of Social Research* (BSR) is available at the Lakehead University bookstore. Additional readings will be made available each week on the D2L course website.

### **COURSE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Value</b>
Test 1	07 October	20%
Assignment 1 (Significant Aims)	28 October	20%
Test 2	16 November	20%
Assignment 2 (Research Proposal)	by 11 December	30%
Active Participation		10%

**Tests 1 & 2** are comprehensive and will cover all readings and lectures; test formats will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Test questions are designed to evaluate students’ ability to apply key concepts as opposed to rote memorization of materials.

**Assignments 1 & 2** are designed to teach students how to write an original research proposal. Assignment 1 will require that students produce a “significant aims” page, a concise 1-page summary of the purpose, significance, and design of your proposed study. You will receive detailed feedback on the aims. Assignment 2 will require students to write a full research proposal, including a revised significant aims, literature review, research design, references, and appropriate appendices (e.g., sample survey questions, partial interview guide). More precise guidelines will be provided in class.

Tests must be completed during the lecture period on the dates indicated. If serious medical or emergency circumstances arise, students must provide appropriate documentation in order to receive a make-up test. Make-up tests are essay format and will be scheduled as needed. Assignments are due on the date indicated in paper format (assignments will not be accepted

by email). Late assignments will receive a 5% deduction (approximately a 1/2 letter grade) per day including weekends. Likewise, if serious medical or emergency circumstances arise, students must provide appropriate documentation to avoid penalties.

All work must be completed independently and with integrity. Please review the Lakehead University policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty; it can be accessed from the LU homepage. Please discuss with me any questions or concerns about this policy prior to handing in assignments or taking the tests.

This course will rely in no small part on “active” participation from students. Students are expected to reflect on readings in advance of class and bring questions and comments to lecture for open discussion. Your **participation grade** (10%) will reflect the degree of participation and preparation you show for each class.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

**Etiquette:** Common courtesy goes a long way. This includes paying careful attention in class (i.e., not multitasking with social media/email), listening to what others have to say (i.e., not interrupting), and doing your best to promote to a safe and constructive learning environment.

**Email:** Students may contact me through D2L/mycourselink. Please provide the course in the subject line as I am teaching several classes. I will read and respond to student emails during my office hours (usually within 48 hours). Emails should be courteous and brief, requiring only a 1-2 sentence response. Lengthier inquiries and concerns should be brought to my office hours.

**Attendance:** Lecture attendance is not mandatory but is highly recommended. If you decide to attend lecture, you are expected to arrive on time and to be respectful to other students.

**Cell phones:** It should go without saying that cell phones should be turned off during lecture except in the case of emergencies.

## **WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1: Welcome!**

- 14 Sept: Introductions and Overview
- 16 Sept: *BSR* Ch. 1, “Doing Social Research”; *D2L* Henslin, “How Sociologists Do Research”

### **Week 2: Theory and Method in Sociology**

- 21 Sept: *BSR* Ch. 2, “Theory and Social Research”
- 23 Sept: *D2L* readings

**Week 3: Ethical Considerations**

- 28 Sept: *BSR* Ch. 3, "Ethics in Social Research"
- 30 Sept: DSL readings

**Week 4: Researching and Writing a Literature Review**

- 05 Oct: *BSR* Ch. 4, "Reviewing the Literature"
- 07 Oct: Test 1

**Week 5: Research Design Considerations**

- 12 Oct: Holiday
- 14 Oct: *BSR* Ch. 5, "Designing a Study"

**Week 6: Measurement Considerations**

- 19 Oct: *BSR* Ch. 6, "Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement"
- 21 Oct: D2L readings

**Week 7: Sampling Strategies**

- 26 Oct: *BSR* Ch. 7, "Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling"
- 28 Oct: D2L readings; Assignment 1 due in class

**Week 8: Questionnaires**

- 02 Nov: *BSR* Ch. 8, "Survey Research"
- 04 Nov: D2L readings

**Week 9: Secondary Analysis**

- 09 Nov: *BSR* Ch. 10, "Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis"
- 11 Nov: D2L readings

**Week 10: Interviewing Strategies**

- 16 Nov: Test 2
- 18 Nov: *BSR* Ch. 12, "Qualitative Interviewing"

**Week 11: Ethnography and Qualitative Data Analysis**

- 23 Nov: *BSR* Ch. 13, "Field Research"
- 25 Nov: *BSR* Ch. 15, "Analysis of Qualitative Data"

**Week 12: Writing a Research Proposal and "Mixed Methods" Considerations**

- 30 Nov: D2L readings
- 02 Dec: *BSR* Ch. 16, "Combining Methods in Social Science Research"

**Week 13: Course Conclusion**

- 07 Dec: No lecture. Extended office hours. Assignment 2 due in my office by Friday, 11 December.