

SOCI 3310: FOUNDATIONS FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

Lecture days/times: WF 1:00-2:30pm

Location: RB 2044

Instructor: Dr. Chris Sanders

Office: RB 2038

Office hours: T/W 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

Email: D2L/mycourselink



COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aim of SOCI 3310 is to explore the exciting realm of social research! For most of you, your sociological experience has primarily involved reading the product of other people's thoughts and research. By contrast, this course is about how to *do* sociology. We will explore how sociologists apply research methods to systematically analyze data to evaluate research questions and draw broader conclusions about social issues.

Will begin with the relationship between social theory and research methodology. Next, we learn basic methodological skills, ranging from developing research questions to devising measurement categories and sampling techniques. We then examine key quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Along the way, we reflect upon research ethics. Finally, each of you will use this breadth of information to produce an original research proposal.

Competency with research method skills is a highly valued skillset that is applied in a variety of environments ranging from universities and private sector firms to non-profit organizations and government agencies. This course is designed to prepare you for a range of tasks that you will encounter in your roles as student, employee, and engaged citizen.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Learn key concepts and approaches to social research (e.g., logical fallacies, social surveys, in-depth interviews)
- Appreciate the challenges of conducting social research (e.g., project design, identifying hidden populations, ethical conundrums)
- Apply key concepts to class activities and major assignments
- Contribute to an "active" learning environment through regular participation
- Learn the process of writing a research proposal on a topic of their choosing

COURSE READINGS

We use the following book available at the LU bookstore:

- 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

COURSE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Description	Due Date	Value
Test 1	17 February	20%
Assignment 1	03 March	10%
Test 2	31 March	20%
Assignment 2	TBD	20%
Activities/Quizzes	--	20%
Participation	--	10%

Tests are comprehensive and will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Tests are designed to evaluate students' ability to apply key concepts as opposed to rote memorization of materials. If serious medical or emergency circumstances arise, students must provide appropriate documentation to receive a make-up test. Make-up tests are essay format.

Assignments will teach students to write an original research proposal. Assignment 1 is a "significant aims" page, a concise 1-page summary of the purpose, significance, and design of your proposed study. Assignment 2 is a full research proposal, including a revised significant aims page, literature review, research design, references, and appendices. Precise guidelines will be provided in class. Assignments are due on the date indicated in hard copy (assignments will NOT be accepted by email). Late assignments receive a 5% deduction per day.

Activities and quizzes are short in-class or online exercises that evaluate basic application skills.

Participation: Students are expected to attend all lectures, and to reflect upon readings in advance of class and bring questions to lecture for open discussion. Your participation grade (10%) will reflect the degree of participation and preparation you show for each class.

Academic integrity: All work must be completed with academic integrity. Please review the LU 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.

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>

GENERAL POLICIES

Email: I will respond to email during office hours. Emails should be courteous and brief, requiring only a 1-2 line response. Lengthier inquiries should be brought to my office hours.

Grades: I do not discuss grades by email. Inquiries must be in person during office hours.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1: Welcome!

- 11 January: Introduction and *BSR* Ch. 1, "Doing Social Research"
- 13 January: *BSR* Ch. 2, "Theory and Social Research"

Week 2: Ethical Considerations

- 18 January: *BSR* Ch. 3, "Ethics in Social Research"
- 20 January: Activity, "Good Intentions and Awkward Outcomes" (O'Neill)

Week 3: Research Design

- 25/27 January: *BSR* Ch. 5, "Designing a Study"

Week 4: Measurement Considerations

- 01 February: *BSR* Ch. 6, "Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement"
- 03 February: Activity, "Conceptualization of Terrorism" (Gibbs)

Week 5: Sampling Strategies

- 08 February: *BSR* Ch. 7, "Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling"
- 10 February: Activity, "A Snowball's Chance in Hell" (Wright et al.)

Week 6: Test 1

- 15/17 February: Test 1

Week 7: Reading Week

- 22/24 February: No class

Week 8: Questionnaires

- 01 March: *BSR* Ch. 8, "Survey Research"
- 03 March: Activity, "Feminist Survey Research" (Reinharz); Assignment 1 due

Week 9: Secondary Analysis

- 08 March: *BSR* Ch. 10, "Nonreactive Research and Secondary Analysis"
- 10 March: Activity, "James Bond's Drinks" (Johnson et al.) or "Sword Swallowing" (Witcombe & Meyer)

Week 10: Interviewing Strategies

- 15/17 March: *BSR* Ch. 12, "Interviewing"

Week 11: Ethnography

- 22 March: *BSR* Ch. 13, "Field Research"
- 24 March: Activity, "Researching Crack Dealers" (Jacobs)

Week 12: Coding Data and Test 2

- 29 March: *BSR* Ch. 15, "Analysis of Qualitative Data"
- 31 March: Test 2

Week 13: Course Conclusion

- 05/07 April: Final project discussion (due date TBD)