

Lakehead University
Department of Sociology

Sociology 4305 YA
Honours Thesis Seminar

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2026-2027

Mondays 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

Messengill, 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

Sarabia, Heidy, ed. 2020. *Writing Sociology: From Start to Finish*. First Edition. Sacramento: CSU Sacramento. Available at <https://www.heidysarabia.com/writingmanual>

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 7th to be completed and handed in by January 4. 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 14th. 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 20 minutes 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 9, 2027. 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; Sarabia, Chpts. 7 and 8

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; Sarabia Chpts 10 to 12

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

Sarabia, Chpt. 4

Session 8 : Using the ASA format

Sarabia, Chpt. 15

Session 9: Major problems that can be encountered with a research thesis

Session 10: How to do a presentation

Sessions 11 and 12: Presentations

Term Two: Doing the research and writing it up

Session 1: Making sure you are collecting the right data

Harvard, Part 3; Berkeley, Chpt 6

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

Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs may request accommodations in accordance with the Senate Policy on Students with Disabilities. Such students should at the earliest opportunity advise the Student Accessibility Services (formerly the Learning Assistance Centre) and the instructor of such needs so that appropriate arrangements can be made to accommodate their needs. Those who encounter extenuating circumstances which may interfere with the successful completion of the course should, as soon as possible, discuss these circumstances with the instructor and the Student Accessibility Services.

Lakehead Policy on Academic Dishonesty

As academic integrity is crucial to the pursuit of university education, students are expected to uphold the academic honour code at all times and are advised to familiarise themselves with the university's policy on academic dishonesty, especially in relation, but not limited, to plagiarism, cheating, impersonation etc. In order to make sure that a degree awarded by Lakehead University is a reflection of the honest efforts and individual academic achievement of each

student, Lakehead University treats cases of academic dishonesty very seriously and severely penalises those caught in violation of the university's policy on academic honesty.

LAKEHEAD RESOURCES

If you find yourself having difficulty with the course material or any other difficulties in your student life, don't hesitate to ask for help! If it is about an issue beyond this class, please contact your academic advisors, or get help from any number of other support services on campus, including:

The Student Success Centre has many programs and support services in place to help you achieve your academic and personal goals while studying at Lakehead University. They provide academic support through tutoring services, career exploration, co-operative opportunities and leadership development. More information is available here <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-success-centre>.

The Lakehead Library provides access to resources, study rooms, and research support both online via chat and in person with more details available here <https://library.lakeheadu.ca/>.

Public Computer Labs are available on campus where you may write and/or print out your work. For more details go to <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/helpdesk/computer-labs>.

Student Life and Services offers health and wellness resources both on and off campus, as well as opportunities for involvement in health and wellness activities. More information is available here <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/or>.

Office of Human Rights and Equity. You have the right to an education that is free from any form of discrimination. A wide variety of resources are available here <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/human-rights-and-equity/resources>.