



**Western University  
SOCIOLOGY 2206-650  
Distance Studies  
Research Methods in Sociology  
Summer 2016**

**Instructor: Dr. Stephen Lin**  
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**Course Description:**

This online course is designed to introduce students the tools which scientists use to conduct research on society and produce knowledge – in other words, how to be sociologists. Many of the fundamental issues of research will be covered in this course, including the scientific method and research process, ethical dilemmas that may arise, and some of the procedures used to collect and analyze data, i.e., quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research. During the course, students will learn how to carry out a scientific investigation from the formulation of hypotheses, to the selection of an appropriate methodology, to the implementation of a study. Enhancing students' ability to critically examine sociological research is an important part of this course.

**Prerequisite:**

At least 60% average in 1.0 Sociology course at the 1000 level or First Nations Studies 1020E or Women's Studies 1020E, or enrolment in Honors Specialization in Human Resource Management, or Honors Specialization in Public Administration, or Specialization in Public Administration.

**Antirequisites:**

The former Sociology 231, Social Work 2207 or the former Social Work 2205, Health Sciences 2801A/B or the former Health Sciences 2800

**Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this course, students will:

- Identify key aspects of qualitative and quantitative research and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each.
- Distinguish between poor and well-crafted research methods in sociology
- Design a realistic research project that incorporates all elements of the research process
- Thoughtfully analyze and evaluate published research from a methodological perspective

## Required Text(s):

Neuman, L.W., & Robson, K. (2012). *Basics of Social Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian ed.). Toronto: Pearson Canada.

## Method of Evaluation:

Research Proposal Assignment	15%
Research Article Assignment	35%
Final Exam (multiple choice only)	50%

## Evaluation Breakdown:

### Research Proposal Assignment (15%): Due on Tuesday, June 7

In this assignment, you will exercise your sociological imagination by developing a suitable research question based on your own area of interest. You will begin by choosing a general research topic (it must be sociologically related) and then formulating a specific research question and a hypothesis. To complete this assignment, you need to give some thoughts on what variables you plan to use and show their interconnectedness in an explanatory model. Detailed instructions can be found in the assignment instruction folder on OWL.

### Research Article Assignment (35%): Due on Tuesday, July 26

After you develop your research topic and a specific question, your next step is to find a **peer-reviewed journal article** and analyze it thoroughly and critically. The purpose of this exercise is to apply your knowledge you have gained in the course by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a research study you chose from the existing literature. Detailed instructions for this final assignment can be found in the assignment instruction folder on OWL

### Final Exam (Between August 2-5)

The final exam is worth 50% of your total grade. It will be 2 hours in length and will be **cumulative** from the beginning of this course.

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## How to get important information:

Sakai OWL ([owl.uwo.ca](http://owl.uwo.ca)) will be used to post course information, content, and important instructions regarding deadlines, expectations, requirements, etc. It is expected that you check OWL regularly to ensure that you are kept up to date on new and revised course content. During the course, I may post or email additional content and/or materials that may aid in your learning and understanding of course topics.

## Important Policies

### **A Note on Plagiarism:**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

### **Plagiarism Checking:**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).

### **Policies on Examinations**

***You may not use any electronic devices during examinations.***

***Computer marked multiple-choice tests/exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating***

### **Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:**

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

### **Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness**

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation:

[http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

### **Accessibility Options:**

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

## Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western ([http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

## Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics	Readings
1	May 9-15	Doing Social Research Theory & Social Research	Ch. 1, 2
2	May 16-22	Designing a Study	Ch. 5
3	May 23-29	Conceptualization, Operationalization & Measurement	Ch. 6
4	May 30-June 5	Experimental & Survey Research	Ch. 8
5	June 6-12	How to Write Good Survey Questions <b>* Research Proposal Assignment Due (June 7)</b>	Ch. 9
6	June 13-19	Sampling	Ch. 7
7	June 15-19	Conducting A Literature Review	Ch.4
8	June 20-26	Interviewing & Field Research How to Use Library Resources (See Handout on OWL)	Ch. 12, 13
9	June 27- July 3	Nonreactive Quantitative Research & Secondary Analysis	Ch. 10
10	July 4-10	Ethics in Social Research Nonreactive Qualitative Research	Ch. 3, 14
11	July 11-17	A brief introduction to SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science – See Handout on OWL)	
12/13	July 18-24 / 25-31	Analysis of Quantitative & Qualitative Data <b>*Research Article Review Assignment Due (July 22)</b>	Ch. 11, 15
14	August 2-5	<b>Summer Final Exam Period</b>	None