



**The University of Western Ontario**  
**SOCIOLOGY 9003**  
**Research Design**  
**Fall 2025**  
**Monday 1:30-4:30pm.**

**Professor: Kate H. Choi**

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### **Enrollment Restrictions**

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Sociology

### **Course Description**

This course explores how social scientists design studies, conduct empirical analyses, and evaluate research, with a focus on topics of particular interest to sociologists. The milestones achieved in this study involve (a) learning how to develop research questions and (b) learning ways to effectively conduct sound empirical research to address these questions.

The course will expose students to a variety of methodologies used in Sociology. In particular, students should endeavor to learn about (a) sampling including issues related to sampling bias, (b) the creation of valid and reliable measures, (c) proper interpretation of results, (d) critical and constructive analysis of extant research, and (e) effective communication research findings to academic and non-academic audiences. To accomplish these objectives, we will read a variety of different articles published in top specialty journals of various subfields in sociology.

Each assignment is designed to serve as a subsection in the front end and methodology section of your MRP, dissertation chapter, or publication. Specifically, throughout the course, you will be asked to (a) come up with research questions, (b) learn how to conduct literature review, (c) derive hypotheses based on the literature review, (d) find data sources well-suited for the analyses, e) identify the proper methodology, and f) understand what the limitations of strengths of each analyses are.

The classes are designed to mimic the research process. In many classes, the instructor lectures on methodological concerns, considerations, or approaches. The second part will give students to (a) present their work and (b) offer/receive constructive critique of other people's work in groups.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Graduates of the **Master's / Doctoral programs in Sociology** will be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate competence in the research process by applying an existing body of knowledge in the development of a new question to contribute to the broader discipline of Sociology
- Conceptualize and design an evidence-based study to address research questions
- Gain expertise with numerous methodologies to use them to address these questions and to evaluate their applications in extant research.
- Understand and apply standards of academic integrity and appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct and presentation of research
- Hone their ability to present and discuss ideas clearly and articulately through effective oral and written communication
- Develop a capacity to recognize the limitations of different methodological approaches in the context of different lines of social inquiry.

## Course Material(s)

The Art and Science of Social Research, 2nd edition. 2021. By: Deborah Carr et al. W.W. Norton and Company. <https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393537529>

Other readings can be found in google scholar or can be downloaded from the lib.uwo.ca

### Optional:

Becker, Howard. S. Writing for Social Scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article. (Amazon Kindle, 21.99).

Becker, Howard. S. Tricks of the Trade. (Amazon Kindle, 14.39)

Miller, Jane E. 2005. *The Chicago Guide to Writing about Multivariate Statistics*. (Amazon Kindle, 66.09).

## Evaluation Breakdown

- Generating a research question.... 20%
- Justifying your analytical approach..... 20%
- Research proposal ... 40%
- Review... 6%
- In-class and group evaluation...14%

You will be graded on relative terms.

Submit all assignments on OWL Brightspace and submitted a printed copy in the departmental mailbox between SSC 5302 and 5304.

## GENERATING A RESEARCH QUESTION (20%)

Length: 750 words max (excluding references, figures, tables). Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, 12 fonts

Due date: September 29, 2025, at 1:30pm. Grace period: 48 hours.

Allocation of points: 60% for the written portion; 40% for the presentation.

- Read review articles from the Annual Review of Sociology, a leading journal in the field (e.g., ASR), or from a top specialty journal (e.g., *Demography*)
- Look at the references section of the review article and search Google Scholar to find 4-9 other relevant research articles.
- Provide a summary of the research findings in these articles.
- Identify an area of research that has previously been unexplored.
- Develop 1-3 research questions for your MRP, dissertation chapter, or publication.
- Indicate why these questions are important: a) for the field, b) for policy, and/or c) for the social good.
- Identify a faculty member in the department who specializes in your area of research and ask them about the novelty and feasibility of your research question. If yes, have them sign your 500-word memo. If not, please have them explain why this is not a feasible or viable research question.

#### Presentation

- Time: 10.6.25 and 10.13.25. (Sign-up sheets 2<sup>nd</sup> week; first come-first serve)
- Content: Produce 5-7 MS PPT slides summarizing your report and provide a 5-minute summary of your memo and the feedback you received from the faculty member of your choice.
- Length: PPT slides should have the fewest words possible. You should spend between 45 and 60 seconds per slide. Your presentation should be 5 minutes in length. You will lose 10 percentage points for every extra 30 seconds spent.

#### Late assignments:

- For additional delays beyond the grace period, you will lose 20% deduction for each late day. You will incur a 20-percentage point deduction at 10/1/2025 at 1:31pm; another 20% starting at 10/2/2025 at 1:31pm; etc.
- Nominal day  $\neq$  business day.
- You will receive a 0 starting on 10/6/2025 at 1:31pm. No need to submit the assignments.
- If you have documented excuse, please provide the documentation to the Graduate Affairs Assistant. Have the graduate chair make a recommendation about whether you should be accommodated. If they recommend accommodation, please receive the graduate chair's signature, as well as those of the chair and your temporary mentor.
- In the absence of a formal accommodation request with these three signatures, I will not permit extensions.
- You do not need to turn in this assignment. The course final grade will be reweighed so that your research proposal counts for 20 extra points.

#### Length requirements

- Length requirements ensure that students are graded fairly. A 500-word document cannot contain equal amounts of information as a 750-word document.
- You will lose 10% for every additional 75 words.

### **JUSTIFICATION OF YOUR ANALYTICAL APPROACH (20%)**

Length: 750 words max (excluding references, figures, tables). Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, 12 fonts

Due date: October 27 at 1:30pm. Grace period: 48 hours.

Allocation of points: 60% for the written portion; 40% for the presentation.

- Identify the population of interest and indicate why they are the focus of your study.
- Describe your sample. When you do describe how you restricted your sample and why you chose to do so.
- Identify the dataset that you will use in your project and indicate why the dataset is well-suited for your analyses.
- Describe your independent variable(s), dependent variable(s), and control variables.
- Depict the methodology that is best suited for your research project

Presentation

- Time: 10.27 and 11.10 (Signup sheet 4<sup>th</sup> week; first come-first serve)
- Content: Produce 5-7 MS PPT slides summarizing your analytical approach.
- Length: Provide a 7-minute presentation. You should spend roughly between 60 and 75 seconds per slide. You will lose 10 percentage points for every extra 30 seconds spent.

Late assignments:

- Policies are akin to those in generating research.

Length requirements

- Length requirements ensure that students are graded fairly. You will lose 10% for every additional 75 words.

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL (40%)**

Length: 2000 words max (excluding references, figures, tables). Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, 12 fonts

Due date: December 2, 2025, at 1:30pm. Grace period: 48 hours.

The research proposal must utilize principles of research design in the course and consists of the following:

- Introduction
- Research questions
- Literature review
- Hypothesis
- Data
- Sample
- Methods
- Contribution of this research

Late assignments:

- Policies about tardiness are akin to those for “Generating a Research Question” with one exception.
- If you cannot submit the proposal for a documented reason, you need to e-mail me with the Graduate Chair and Graduate Assistant on a note. You will receive an *Incomplete*. We will consult with *SGPS* regarding your accommodation and deadline for the assignment.

Length requirements

- Length requirements ensure that students are graded fairly.
- You will lose 10% for every additional 200 words.

### Presentation

- Time: 11.24 and 12.1 (Signup sheet 4<sup>th</sup> week; first come-first serve)
- Content: Produce 10-12 MS PPT slides summarizing your analytical approach.
- Length: 10-15 PPT slide. Provide a 10-minute presentation. Spend 30-45 seconds for front end. 60 to 75 seconds per slide for data onwards.
- You will lose 10 percentage points for every extra 30 seconds spent.

### REVIEWS

- Due date for draft: October 20, 2025, 1:29 pm EST. Grace period: 48 hours.
- Due date for reviews: October 27, 2025, at 1:29 pm EST. Grace period: 48 hours.
- Late assignments: If student has documentation, recommendation for extension from graduate chair, and signatures from the chair and faculty advisor, your participation mark will be reweighed to 20%. Otherwise, it is a 0 after the grace period.
- Purpose: Academics rely on peer review. Grants are written in teams. Disproportionately large shares of journal articles in Sociology are written with co-authors. Providing good feedback and working well with others are essential components of the groups.

### Process

- Sign-up sheet for groups will be posted on 2-4<sup>th</sup> week of school in my office door.
- Students should sign up for a group. Min: 2; Max: 4.
- No alterations possible following sign-up.
- E-mail draft of “justifying analytical section” to teammates by October 27<sup>th</sup> at 1:29pm EST. The e-mail needs to cc’ [kate.choi@uwo.ca](mailto:kate.choi@uwo.ca).
- Provide feedback on track changes. Upload feedback with track changes on OWL Brightspace.

FAQ: What if teammates do not turn in their draft? Answer: You will be graded based on the feedback you provide on drafts submitted on time.

### IN CLASS PARTICIPATION (20%)

- Attendance: At the beginning of class, login to OWL Brightspace and indicate if you attended classes. You are allowed to miss class once before reading week and after reading week. Otherwise, I expect you to be in class.
- Written report: Need to write a diary on what you said; need to take notes for your fellow individual.
- Participation is an important aspect of all my classes. It is also the part that students find very enjoyable. It also helps develop mastery in verbal skill sets necessary to help students perform better in other graduate courses, job interviews, conferences, and other places.
- Expectations: You will receive a rubric and will be graded before the beginning of the second class accordingly. Below are some noteworthy expectations:
- Length of participation: The skill set being developed is (a) accurate and concise description of a social phenomenon and (b) the construction of an effective argument. This is an important skill to develop for

job interviews or to get advanced degrees. If a person is verbose, they seldom can accomplish (a) or (b). I am going to ask that you stay within 2 minutes *unless* prompted to elaborate.

- Number of times students participate: There is no set amount the student needs to speak to receive a good grade. Nevertheless, active listening is an important element of participation. If a student seeks to dominate class discussion, I reserve the right to not call on the student when they raise their hand.
- How to provide constructive critique: We spend most of our lifetime as researchers receiving and giving constructive critiques. There are some rules on how to give constructive criticism. Recognize that research is never perfect. There are considerable trade-offs always. Indicate you appreciated about the paper. Make observations about the weaknesses of the paper in a balanced manner. All observations about weaknesses must be followed by a solution to how to solve them. Constructive critique seldom nit-picks.
- Disruptive behavior: I care a lot about all my students. Part of caring for my students is ensuring that the classroom is a safe environment for everyone. Although students may provide anecdotal evidence to make a point, most of their observations need to be based in the literature. The determination of what is/is not disruptive behavior is at the discretion of the course professor.
- Consequences to disruptive behavior: To ensure that our class is a pleasant learning environment for everyone, there is a zero-tolerance policy towards disruptive behavior in class. The first time - you will receive a 0 for that class meeting and a warning in writing; the second time- you will receive 50% for the course and a second warning. I will inform the chair and the graduate chair. The third time – you will be asked to leave the class, receive a 0% for participation markets, and I will make a request to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at Social Science and SGPS that the student be considered for disciplinary action. It is at my sole discretion to determine what is and what is not disruptive.

## **GRADING GUIDELINES**

- The Sociology Department has grading guidelines. For a graduate course, the class average is between 83-87%.
- Subject to some exceptions (e.g., exceptionally low grades from a student), I will curve so that the class average falls in the 85-87% range.
- For the student receive a grade in this course,
  - They need to complete one of the following combination of assignments
  - Complete the Research Proposal.
  - Attend 6 out of 13 classes and participate.
  - Otherwise, the student will receive an F or an incomplete.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

**Week 1 (9/8):** Introduction

No homework.

**Week 2 (9/15):** Data in Sociological Research.

- The Art and Science of Social Science Research: Chapter 1.
- Choi, K. H., Denice, P., Haan, M., & Zajacova, A. (2021). Studying the social determinants of COVID-19 in a data vacuum. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 58(2), 146-164.
- Kornrich, S., & Robbins, B. (2024). The rise of online dating and racial homogamy in marriage. *Social Science Research*, 119, 102976.

### **Week 3 (9/22): From concepts to Models, Hypotheses, Operationalization, and Measurement**

- The Art and Science of Social Science Research. Chapters 2, 4, and 5.
- Damaske, S., & Frech, A. (2016). Women's work pathways across the life course. *Demography*, 53(2), 365-391.
- Link, B. G., & Phelan, J. C. (2001). Conceptualizing stigma. *Annual review of Sociology*, 27(1), 363-385.

### **Week 4 (9/29): Sampling Strategies.**

- The Art and Science of Social Science Research. Chapter 6.
- Freese, J., & Jin, O. (2025). Online Nonprobability Samples. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 51.
- Reichman, N. E., Teitler, J. O., Garfinkel, I., & McLanahan, S. S. (2001). Fragile families: Sample and design. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 23(4-5), 303-326.

**Due: Research question; research question presentation**

### **Week 5 (10/6): Communicating Research Results**

- The Art and Science of Social Science Research. Chapters 13 and 14

**Due: Research question presentation**

### **Week 6 (10/13): Survey Research**

- The Art and Science of Social Research: Chapter 7.
- Campbell, M. E. (2007). Thinking outside the (black) box: Measuring black and multiracial identification on surveys. *Social Science Research*, 36(3), 921-944.
- Engelman, M. (2021). The Wisconsin Longitudinal Study: Overview, Data Linkages, and Future Plans. *Innovation in Aging*, 5(Suppl 1), 220.

### **Week 7 (10/20): In Depth Interviewing**

- The Art and Science of Social Research: Chapter 11.

- Manning, W. D., & Smock, P. J. (2005). Measuring and modeling cohabitation: New perspectives from qualitative data. *Journal of marriage and family*, 67(4), 989-1002.
- Edin, K. (2000). What do low-income single mothers say about marriage? *Social Problems*, 47(1), 112-133.

### **Week 8 (10/27): Group writing section**

Due: Draft of analytical section.

- Formulate a group of four students.
- Provide a draft of analytical section to group members.
- Present your ideas to your group members.
- Upload your feedback
- Provide feedback to one another.

### **Week 9 (11/3): Reading week**

### **Week 10 (11/10): Ethnography**

- The Art and Science of Social Research: Chapter 10.
- Jenkins, T. (2018). Dual Autonomies, Divergent Approaches: How Stratification in Medical Education Shapes Approaches to Patient Care. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 59(2):268-282.

Due: Justifying your analytical approach. Analytical approach presentation.

### **Week 11 (11/17): How to write for non-academic audiences.**

How to write for a non-academic audience

- <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/01/career-write>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR8PbUGRRks>

Analytical approach presentation.

### **Week 11 (11/24): Giving feedback and receiving feedback**

Presenting your research project.

### **Week 12 (12/1): Giving feedback and receiving feedback**

Presenting your research project.



## Important Policies

### Statement on Academic 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:

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

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the 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 (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### Completion of Course Requirements

Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall-December 31; Winter-April 30, Summer-August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook:

[http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate\\_handbook/course\\_information.html](http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html)

### Standards of Professional Behaviour

It is the responsibility of all members of the Department of Sociology to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- **respect for others** both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy)
- **active engagement in learning** and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best)
- **personal integrity** (following through on commitments; doing own work)

Students should also be aware of the **UWO Student Code of Conduct** found at

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

### Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted

literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

### **Health/Wellness Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### **Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:**

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

### **Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):**

Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for spelling/grammar and information gathering purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploring a topic, with students expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Essays, written assignments and/or lab reports should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and all them to produce original written contributions.

[As with many sociology journals, you need to include an AI statement in all assignments. This statement should list how you used AI in your work.](#)