



The University of Western Ontario
Department of Sociology

SOCIOLOGY 2206A
Section 001

Research Methods in Sociology
Fall 2025

Delivery Method: In-Person

Instructor: Professor Edward Bell

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This is a DRAFT copy only. Please see the course Brightspace site for the final version.

Course Description: An introduction to the research process and ethical dilemmas faced by sociologists, as well as a survey of the essential procedures used to collect sociological data, e.g. sampling, questionnaire design, and observational field research techniques.

Prerequisite(s): none

Anti-requisite(s): Social Work 2206A/B, Health Sciences 2801A/B, Political Science 3324F/G, or Political Science 2325F/G.

Course Overview

This course is designed to introduce you to the methodological tools used by sociologists to conduct empirically grounded and theoretically engaged research. It will cover the basic elements of research design, the role of theory in empirical research, the construction of sociological arguments, and ethics in social scientific research.

The main purpose of the course is to allow students to become acquainted with how knowledge is acquired in sociology and other social sciences, and how it is evaluated. You will become familiar with the leading research paradigms and their philosophical underpinnings, and will gain exposure to more specific topics such as causation, conceptualization, measurement, validity, reliability, ethnography, and qualitative interviewing.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

This course is designed to enhance your ability to:

1. Understand what sociological research is and how sociological questions can be answered;
2. Formulate sociologically relevant research questions and evaluate research designs that were created to answer them;
3. Know the basic elements of different methodological approaches and understand their merits and limitations;
4. Appreciate the challenges and complexity of sociological research; and
5. Understand the ethical considerations involved in doing research involving human participants.

Course Material:

Textbook: Edward Bell, Alan Bryman, and Steven Kleinknecht. (2023). *Social Research Methods (Sixth Canadian Edition)*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Note: Prof. Bell will donate to charity his share of the royalties earned from student purchases of this book for this course.

The Sixth Canadian Edition is required. Both hard-copy and electronic formats are available. Here is a link to information about the book, including the price and how to get it from the Western Book Store: https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2025A&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/SOC2206A

Used copies of the book are fine for this course (so long as they are the Sixth Edition).

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course [OWL Brightspace](#) site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students enrolled in the course.

How to contact the instructor:

By email: eabell@uwo.ca, and in-person during office hours.

I will endeavour to answer emails within 48 business hours. It is unlikely that you will receive a response during the evening or on a weekend. Generally, email is not suitable for questions requiring more than two or three sentences to answer. Questions requiring longer answers should be asked in person, during office hours or by appointment.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Component	Weight	Date
First in-class test	30%	October 14
Second in-class test	35%	November 18
Final exam	35%	To be announced by the Office of the Registrar

The two in-class tests and the final exam will be held in person, and are to be written without the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) programs, in fact without the use of any electronic devices.

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

Note: Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term (besides the final exam) as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. *For this course, the second in-class test has been designated as requiring supporting documentation.*

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or examination will be required to write a makeup test or exam. The course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup. Students should be aware that the makeup will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original.

Additional notes about Grading:

Consistent with departmental guidelines, it is expected that the class average for this course will be around 70-75%. Should the final overall grades yield a value significantly below this range, grades will be adjusted upward to ensure an appropriate average for the class.

Course Content

The content of the course will be broken down into seven modules. The time spent on each module will depend on the nature of the subject matter, and on the needs of the class. For that reason, the length of time we will spend on each module is not specified in advance.

The modules will be covered in the order listed. Students will be updated weekly on the course Brightspace site about our progress through the modules, and about the readings that have been assigned.

Module	Description	Readings
1	The nature of science, research, and theory a) Science vs. other ways of knowing b) Three approaches to social science: positivist, interpretive, and critical	Guide to the Book (pp. viii-ix); Preface (pp. xx-xxi); Chapters 1, 9, 10
2	A general introduction to causation and research design	Chapter 2, and p.133 on the ecological fallacy
3	Research ethics	Chapter 3
4	Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement: dimensionality; levels of measurement; reliability; validity	Chapter 4; and pp. 179, 181, 184
5	Survey research	Chapter 5
6	Quantitative sampling	Chapter 7
7	Qualitative interviewing, qualitative data analysis	Chapters 11, 13

Copyright and Intellectual Property:

Lecture slides and notes, lists of readings, in-class activities, assignment guidelines, and other components of the course materials are typically the intellectual property of the instructor. Unauthorized reproduction through audio-recording, video-recording, photographing, sharing on social media, or posting on course-sharing websites is an infringement of copyright and is prohibited. Such action may be considered a Code of Conduct violation and lead to sanctions.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):

As mentioned above, the two in-class tests and the final exam will be held in person, and are to be written without the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) programs.

Use of Electronic Devices in class:

Please do not use any electronic devices, including cellphones and laptop computers, for any reason other than to take notes.

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 website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

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.

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 (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

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

Copyright: Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use.

Absence from Course Commitments: Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration](#) – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request using the Student Absence Portal (SAP) https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html . Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is always required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described in the course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness must include the completed Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf> or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner. Students must request academic consideration as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

Once the request and supporting documentation have been received and reviewed, appropriate academic consideration, if granted, shall be determined by the instructor in consultation with the academic advisor, in a manner consistent with the course outline. Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam, unless otherwise specified in the course outline. The course instructor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup text/exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test/exam will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test/exam.

Note: missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty Academic Counselling Office.

Students who fail to write a make-up test or special examination will receive a grade of zero on that assessment. No other make-up opportunities will be provided unless further academic consideration is granted by the student's Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

Religious Accommodation: Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence or University approved emergency during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL Brightspace for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Code of Student Conduct: It is the responsibility of every student to read the Code and familiarize him or herself with its contents. The Code is available at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf. Sanctions for non-compliance range from a warning or reprimand to expulsion from the University.

Student Responsibility: Students in a degree program must select courses in accordance with the published requirements. Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and

that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) they may have taken. Students must familiarize themselves with the Student Responsibility for Course Selection policy https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/academic_counselling.pdf and the Registration and Progression policy https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/registration_progression.pdf. Students are responsible for the successful completion of the Graduation Requirements for their degree program https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/graduation.pdf.

Support Services:

Office of the Registrar Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

[Faculty Academic Advising](#) - Please visit your Home Faculty Academic advising webpage for information regarding adding/dropping courses, important dates, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html.

[USC services](#) offers information about student the health/dental plan, Bus Pass, food support services, Peer support Centre etc <http://westernusc.ca/services/>.

[Mental health](#) – 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.

[Health & Wellness Services](#) – Registered part-time and full-time students can book a physical health appointment at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/index.html>. Additional on-campus services are also available <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/services/index.html>.

[Accessible Education](#) provides supports and services to students with disabilities at Western, in all programs and faculties. Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

[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 experience GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: http://uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

[Western Libraries](#) – Visit the many library locations on campus. Western Libraries provide access to material in physical and digital formats <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/catalogue/index.html>. Research support is available <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/research/index.html>.

[Writing support](#) – Online writing resources, writing support and writing modules are available <https://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/>

Bookstore: Search for Textbook availability and cost <https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search>