

McMaster University
Department of Sociology
SOCIOLOGY 2Z03E:
Introduction to Sociological Research
Winter 2019

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Lin

Day & Time of Classes: Thursdays: 7:00pm-9:00pm

Class Location: MDCL 1110

Email: slin0899@gmail.com

Office Hours: after class or by appointment, Room KTH 607

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to 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.

Course Learning Objectives

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
- Understand the basic function of SPSS
- Design a realistic research project that incorporates all elements of the research process
- Thoughtfully analyze and evaluate published research from a methodological perspective

Textbook

Neuman, L.W., & Robson, K. (2016). *Basics of Social Research* (4th Canadian Ed.). Toronto: Pearson Canada.

Statistical Computing:

In this course, I will introduce you the software, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) available on computers located in most computing labs on campus. You do not need to purchase this software or any textbook. Instead, I will teach you its basics in the computer lab (see the timetable on page 4). It is important that you come to the lab to learn this new software.

Method of Evaluation

Group Assignment #1	5%
Midterm Exam (multiple choice)	35%
Final Group Assignment	25%
Final Exam (multiple choice)	35%

Reading and Participation

Students are expected to attend weekly lecture and designated tutorials to discuss the assigned material. There are no participation or attendance grades, but failure to attend classes regularly will put you at a disadvantage. Much of the course is cumulative, so missing one class can cause problems for comprehending the material in the following classes.

****Please note that there is no tutorial in the first week of the class and specific dates for the tutorial will be announced in class.**

Evaluation Breakdown (detailed information provided in class):

Group Assignment #1 (February 8) / Group Research Proposal (April 8)

For these assignments you will apply your skills towards designing a suitable research proposal, which normally includes proper research questions, a literature review, and an outline of the study's research methodology. For Group Assignment 1 (5%) you will begin by choosing a research topic and formulating a specific research question and hypothesis. For Group Research Proposal (25%), you will produce a full research proposal consisting of your research question and hypothesis from Group Assignment 1, a literature review, and a description of an appropriate research methodology that could be used to study your chosen topic. Comprehensive steps to implement this methodology and carry out your study should be included in your proposal.

**Instruction sheets of both assignments are posted on Avenue.

Mid-Term Exam (February 14)

The mid-term exam is worth 35% of your total grade and covers **chapter 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 and lecture materials (from Jan 10 to Feb 7)**. It will be 2 hours in length. This exam consists of multiple-choice questions only.

Final Exam (April Exam Period)

The final exam is worth 35% of your total grade. It will be 2 hours in length and will be **cumulative** from the beginning of this course. However, 20% of the questions will target on information before the midterm and 80% will cover information after the midterm. This exam will consist of multiple choice questions only.

Course Reading & Schedule

<i>Part I: The Fundamentals of Research</i>			
1	Jan 10	Introduction to the Course Theory & Social Research (Group Formation: 3 people as a group)	Ch. 1, 2
2	Jan 17	Theory & Social Research (Continued) Designing a Study	Ch. 1, 2, 5
3	Jan 24	Conceptualization, Operationalization & Measurement	Ch. 6
<i>Part II: Modes of Observation</i>			
4	Jan 31	Experimental & Survey Research How to Design Good Survey Questions	Ch. 8, 9
5	Feb 7	Sampling ** Group Assignment # 1 Due on Feb 7 by 4:00pm (Avenue Dropbox Submission)	Ch. 7
6	Feb 14	2-hour in-Class Midterm Exam	None
7	Feb 21	Reading Week (No Class)	None
8	Feb 28	Interviewing & Field Research	Ch. 12, 13
9	March 7	Nonreactive Quantitative Research Secondary Data Analysis **Literature Review Workshop	Ch. 4, 10
10	March 14	Ethics in Social Research Nonreactive Qualitative Research	Ch. 3, 14
11	March 21	SPSS Lab (Location to be Announced) Research Proposal Workshop (Q & A session)	Handout on Avenue
<i>Part III: Data Analysis</i>			
12	March 28	Analysis of Quantitative Data	Ch. 11

13	April 4	Analysis of Qualitative Data ** Final Research Proposal Due on Monday, April 8 by 11:59pm (Avenue Dropbox Submission)	Ch. 15
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ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>
The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

(If applicable) In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES:

Do NOT fax assignments. Please see your instructor for the most appropriate way to submit assignments. The Sociology staff do NOT date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers.

The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period.

You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent more than 3 days or exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean's Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence. Students should check the web, the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin board

outside the Sociology office (KTH-627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (eg. class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA job postings, etc.).

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes. It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.