

SOCI 217A-004: Research Methods
2015-2016 Winter Term 1 (3 Credits)
M/W/F: 11:00 - 12:00 PM ANSO 207
University of British Columbia

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COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

This course is an introduction to empirical research methods in sociology. Through lectures, in-class activities, readings and assignments you will be introduced to the concepts, approaches and procedures of sociological research, including survey research, field research, content analysis, experiments and evaluation research. The knowledge and skills that you will develop during this course are critical to any future work you pursue in academia and are similarly highly transferable to the workplace. It is designed to develop your skills as conscientious scholars who can decipher and produce knowledge about the social world.

By the end of this course, I expect that you will be able to:

- Differentiate between lay, conventional and social scientific research questions and knowledge;
- Find, read and understand published research;
- Formulate sociologically relevant and empirically testable research questions and hypotheses;
- Critically analyze and evaluate the basic components of social research;
- Write about research; and
- Be able to develop a sociology research project that is ethical, logical, robust and systematic.

Throughout the course we will focus on how different methods are appropriate for different types of research questions, and how the methodological approach can affect the answers that we arrive at.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Babbie, Earl and Luca Benaquisto. 2014. *Fundamentals of Social Research: 3rd Canadian edition*. Nelson Education.

The text is available at the UBC Bookstore and is on reserve in Koerner Library for 2 hour loan.

Additional course readings will be made available on the course connect website or will be retrievable through the UBC Library website.

CLASS TIME AND LOCATION

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 11:00am -12:00pm, ANSO 207

Classes commence on 9th of September and the final class will be held on the 4th of December. There is no class on Monday October 12th (Thanksgiving) or Wednesday November 11th (Remembrance Day).

COURSE EVALUATION

The assessment of this course will consist of several components: (1) In-class activities; (2) two one-hour midterms; (3) three short written assignments; and (4) a final exam. The breakdown of course marks allocated to each of these components is as follows:

In-Class activities	10%
Midterm 1:	15%
Midterm 2:	15%
Short Written Assignments (3)	30% (10% each)
Final Exam:	30%
Total 100%	

(1) In class activities

Class participation will not be assessed by attendance, as it is expected that you will attend all classes. It is expected that everyone will come to class having engaged with the assigned readings PRIOR to class and will be prepared to discuss the materials during each class.

Throughout the term I will periodically have you do in-class activities that are evaluated as part of your final grade. I will not be telling you when these activities will take place. If you are not present during the class you will not receive credit for these activities or be given an opportunity to do a make-up assessment. These activities are both formative assessments to give you a sense of whether or not you understand the material and concepts, as well as allowing me to gauge periodically who is (and is not) attending class.

(2) Midterms (October 7th and November 4th)

There will be two multiple choice/short answer format midterms during the term. These midterms will not be cumulative, i.e., Mid-term 1 will only cover the material from the beginning of term to the **October 7th** and Mid-term 2 will cover the material from October 9th to **November 4th**. The midterms will include questions that cover both the readings and activities in class.

Each of them will be worth fifteen per cent of your final grade, and will take place during one full class session.

(3) Short Written Assignments

These three short written assignments will each cover a key aspect of research design covered in the course and will give you an opportunity to apply the concepts that we learn to a research question or area of empirical inquiry of your choice. Further detail will be covered in class.

Each of these assignments does not have a minimum or maximum word count, but must be typed using a word processing program (e.g., Word, Pages), fit on one printed sheet of paper, and be readable. I'd suggest typing up the paper, however long (3-6 double spaced pages, max), and when you are done, "stuff" it into one single-spaced page. Use a smaller font, narrower margins, and don't listen to your printer. It can print almost to the top and almost full width, it only has a problem printing within 1/2 inch of the bottom. Any quotes (which should be minimized) should be within the body of the text. If you can't fit it on one page and remain legible to the naked eye the paper is too long. Use a title, and think of it as something that can be framed. Points will be deducted for going over the one page limit, as it is important to write concisely. More is not necessarily better. For example, if one example works, why use two? Each written assignment will be worth 10% of your final grade.

a. Operationalization assignment

This assignment requires you to take a sociological concept (e.g., inequality, religiosity, stigma, etc.) and choose a specific dimension of that concept that you will operationalize. You will then develop a research question and hypothesis related to that dimension of the concept, optionally outline (briefly!) how an existing theory might be relevant to your research question and identify how you would like to measure that concept, including determining what your dependent and independent variables will be. In your description of how you plan to measure your concept, be sure to include what the unit of analysis will be, what the level of measurement is, and one strength and one weakness of your operationalization in terms of its validity and reliability.

b. Sampling and research methodology

For the sampling and research methodology assignment you are going to use the same concept that you explored in the first written assignment. Your task is to begin to design a study that applies your concept operationalization to actual research on the topic, outlining the key components of the study methodology that you could use. You'll pay particular attention to the type of method you would like to apply (qualitative – focus groups, in-depth interviews, observation, or quantitative- survey, experimentation, etc) who and how you would collect data from research participants (your sampling strategy) and how you might go about finding those individuals. You will need to pay particular attention to whether your concept operationalization and measurement is compatible with your sampling strategy, justify your choice of the method and outline any strengths or weaknesses of the approach that you have chosen.

c. Presenting data effectively

The last written assignment will require you to take output from a data analysis, build a table using this data and write a brief commentary interpreting the analysis results. The data analysis will come from an actual data set, and I will provide you with the data analysis in a raw format as output from a statistics software program. This assignment will be assessed for your ability to interpret statistical output correctly and your capacity to demonstrate knowledge of the strengths and limitation of statistical inference.

(4) Final Exam

The final exam for the course will be comprised of two parts. The first half will contain the equivalent of a third mid-term on the materials of the course covered after the second midterm on November 4th through to the end of term. The second half of the final will cover key materials from the entire course. The final exam date and time will be set by the university.

SOCI 217 on UBC Connect

All students enrolled in the course will have access to the UBC Connect site for SOCI 217 (login at: <http://elearning.ubc.ca/connect/> using your CWL login) where you will find course materials, readings that are unavailable through the UBC online resources, supplementary materials, spaces for course discussions, announcements and other course-related matters.

ALL WRITTEN COURSE MATERIALS will be submitted via the Connect website so please make sure that you are familiar with how to use Connect. Student resources for using connect can be found on the UBC website at <http://elearning.ubc.ca/connect/student-resources/>.

If you encounter any issues in using UBC connect, please contact Arts ISIT support staff in Buchanan A105, at arts.helpdesk@ubc.ca, or at 604-827-2787. Please do not contact the course instructor or TA unless the course Connect site is malfunctioning and requires attention.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Date	Topic	Readings
09-Sep	Course Introduction and Overview	Course syllabus (all)
11-Sep	Inquiry in social science	
14-Sep	Basics of Research	B & B, pp. 4-29
16-Sep	Social Theory	B & B, pp. 30-59
18-Sep	Ethics	B & B, pp. 60-81
21-Sep	Ethics	*CSA 2012 Professional Ethics Statement
23-Sep	Research Design and Causality	B & B, pp. 83-110
25-Sep	How to design a research project	B & B, pp. 110-121
28-Sep	Reading and reviewing academic literature	*Chapter TBD One of five articles from the list on Connect
30-Sep	Conceptualization	B & B, pp. 122-135
02-Oct	Operationalization	B & B, pp. 135-144
05-Oct	Measurement	B & B, pp. 144-157
07-Oct	Midterm Exam # 1	
09-Oct	Non-probability Sampling	B & B, pp. 158-166
12-Oct	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK	
14-Oct	Probability Sampling	B & B, pp. 166-181
16-Oct	Types of Sampling Designs	B & B, pp. 181-199
19-Oct	Unobtrusive Research	B & B, pp. 268-297
21-Oct	Field Research	B & B, pp. 298-323
23-Oct	Field Research	*Goffman, pp. 745-765
26-Oct	Qualitative interviewing and focus groups	B & B, pp. 324-342
28-Oct	Qualitative interviewing in practice	
30-Oct	Qualitative data analysis	B & B, pp. 372-393
02-Nov	Qualitative data analysis	*Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Ch. 6 pp. 171-199
04-Nov	Midterm Exam #2	
06-Nov	Designing Surveys	B & B, pp. 228 - 243
09-Nov	Administering Surveys	B & B, pp. 243 - 267
11-Nov	NO CLASS - REMEMBERANCE DAY	
13-Nov	Evaluation Research	B & B, pp. 344-369
16-Nov	Quantitative data analysis	B & B, pp. 394-410
18-Nov	Quantitative data analysis	B & B, pp. 411-419
20-Nov	Multivariate analysis	B & B, pp. 420-434
23-Nov	Multivariate analysis	*Multivariate analysis case study - TBD
25-Nov	Social Statistics	B & B, pp. 436-459
27-Nov	Experiments	B & B, pp. 204-227
30-Nov	Experiments in practice	**"Cheque Day" Study Case Study
02-Dec, 04-Dec	Catch up/review/Course Summary	
TBA	Final Examination	date/time set by university

*starred readings will be available on the course connect website

SUBMISSION OF COURSE MATERIALS

All written class materials must be submitted ELECTRONICALLY on the UBC Connect website for the course by the deadline provided. Please ensure that your name, student number and the name of the course and the instructor are included on all submitted assignments.

Directions on submitting assignments on UBC Connect are located here:

<http://elearning.ubc.ca/connect/student-resources/submit-assignments-how-to/>

Barring technical problems with the UBC Connect system (which have been known to happen occasionally in the past), trouble using the connect site will not be considered a justifiable reason for late submission. Please familiarize yourself with UBC Connect if you have not already done so and make sure that you are able to submit course materials. A “test” assignment has been set up on the Connect site for you to verify your ability to submit materials.

Late Assignments

No late assignments will be accepted without penalty. Extensions of the due date for the written assignments will be considered on a case-by-case basis in advance of the deadline and pending extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstance include documented medical issues, deaths of loved ones, unreasonable exam schedules, etc. In general, accommodations of this nature will require a letter from Arts Advising.

Quality of Written Work

Quality of writing will be evaluated and scored for all written work (e.g., grammar, style, clarity) and it is crucial that you proofread your work thoroughly. Good writing generally takes several revisions to produce, and it is often very helpful to ask friends or colleagues to proofread your work, which I strongly encourage you to do. Also, The inappropriate use of language (e.g., ageist, gendered, racist, homophobic, ableist or otherwise) is not acceptable.

A fun set of tips to improve your writing can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/mqqtat>.

D: ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION AND POLICIES

1. **I am here to support you and your academic development.** If you are having a hard time understanding course content or have questions related to the materials we cover in class, please do not hesitate to come speak to me after class, during office hours or by appointment. I generally will not respond to substantive questions or engage in substantive debates over email but endeavour to make myself available to answer your questions or discuss content-related issues on an in-person basis.

2. **Missed classes.** Attendance will not be taken for the course because attendance at each class session is expected of all students. If you miss a class, please get the notes from a classmate. The powerpoint slides and lecture notes used for each class will NOT be made available, though the material included in this material WILL be covered on exams and it WILL be expected that you consider this material for your written assignments. Your colleagues in the class are exceptional resources and I STRONGLY encourage you to get the contact information of multiple classmates and to turn to your colleagues to discuss any issues you find unclear, confusing or would like to engage further with.

With the exception of religious observances, I will not excuse class absences. Please DO NOT send me emails about why you are missing a class unless you feel it is critical that I am aware (note that your sister's wedding, while exciting, is not critical for me to be aware of). Students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other personal or professional commitments cannot assume that they will be accommodated. I am sympathetic to illness and do not think it is a good use of your or out medical personnel's time to require a note from a doctor if you are ill. However, if you miss a key component of the course (e.g. a midterm or final exam) I will require a letter from Arts Advising in order for you to make up the missed assessment. If you are experiencing circumstances that will require that you be away from class for a period of time and would like to discuss this with me, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

3. **Respect.** The highest standards of respect will be upheld inside the SOCI 217 classroom. This includes respect for each other, respect for me, respect for you by me, and respect for those outside the classroom.

4. **Laptop and handheld device use.** I do not want to see or hear cell phones, cameras, or other electronic equipment in the classroom. I consider common courtesy related to laptop and handheld device use to be a key component of respect for your colleagues and the classroom environment. While I understand that common practice for many students now involves the use of laptops for the purposes of taking notes, the use of laptops and handheld devices can be distracting for other students. While laptops will be allowed in the classroom, please refrain from using laptops for purposes unrelated to the class. Please also refrain from using your handheld devices during class time entirely and remember to put these devices on silent mode and store them out of sight prior to the start of class.

5. **Academic Honesty.** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes lying, cheating and plagiarism. I strongly recommend students retain copies of drafts and final versions of all assignments. All students should be familiar with UBC's policies on academic honesty and academic misconduct, which can be found on the university website here:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0>

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

6. **Plagiarism.** Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism, that plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct, and that such misconduct is subject to penalty. Please review the Student Discipline section of the 2015-2016 UBC Academic Calendar <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>), which includes the following:

“Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.”

7. **Grading Guidelines** - The UBC guidelines for grading and reporting grades attempt to ensure that all students are assessed fairly in relation to other students in the same class, students in other sections of the same course and students in other courses. The guidelines for grading practices are as follows:

Percent	Grade	Level	Grading Criteria
90-100	A+	exceptional	Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
85-89	A		
80-84	A-		
76-79	B+	competent	Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
72-75	B		
68-71	B-		
64-67	C+	adequate	Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.
60-63	C		
55-59	C-		
50-54	D		
00-49	F	inadequate	Inadequate performance: little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

8. **Marking Rubrics.** For all assessed work I will make use of marking rubrics to outline the grading criteria for each assignment. In some cases these will be distributed in advance of

the due dates and will be posted on the course connect website (attached to the assignment in question). These are designed to help make clear the expectations around the content and quality of your written work.

9. **Review of grades.** If you disagree with a mark you have been assigned in this course, you may contact me to discuss this further. Please keep in mind that I base my grades on your performance in the course and not your previous track record, and that I make every effort to be clear about performance expectations for the course (See “Marking Rubrics” above). If following our discussion you remain dissatisfied you may apply for a Review of Assigned Standing. Please refer to the UBC calendar for additional information.
10. **Disability.** The University accommodates those individuals living with disability or ongoing medical conditions that may affect their academic success. I strongly encourage students living with disability or ongoing medical conditions to register with Access & Diversity and to access the university resources around academic accommodation found here: <http://students.ubc.ca/success/student-supports/academic-accommodations>.
11. **Academic Concession.** UBC strives to support students in their academic pursuits, including circumstances that may require academic concession. Students are invited to familiarize themselves with the university documentation around academic concession, which includes information on policies in place to enable students and members of faculty and staff to observe the holy days of their religions. Further information on the academic concession can be found here: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0>.

If you encounter medical, emotional or personal problems that affect your attendance or academic performance, please contact the Faculty of Arts Academic Advising Office, located in Buchanan D111, phone 822-4028, <http://students.arts.ubc.ca/advising/contact-us/> as soon as possible. **I will not incorporate leniency for late assignments or missed exams without a letter from the Arts Advising Office.** There are a wide range of university resources available to support individuals who face challenges inside and outside the classroom. If you are in need of help and unsure of what resources are available to you, please come and see me and I will be happy to connect you with available resources.

12. **Early Alert.** During the term, I will do my best to reach out and offer support if I am concerned about your academic performance or wellbeing. I also encourage you to come and speak with me if you need assistance.

In addition, I may identify my concerns using Early Alert. The program allows academic, financial, or mental health concerns to be identified sooner and responded to in a more coordinated way. This provides you with the earliest possible connection to resources like academic advising, financial advising, counselling, or other resources and support to help you get back on track. The information is treated confidentially and is sent because I care about your academic success and wellbeing. For more information, please visit earlyalert.ubc.ca.

13. **Feedback.** I aim to make this class engaging, challenging and informative. I value any feedback you have for me to improve the class throughout the term, and will solicit your feedback with anonymous mid-term feedback forms at the mid-point of the course in addition to regular course evaluations at the end of term.