

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Sociology 217A -005
Research Methods

Instructor: Oral Robinson

Office: AnSoc 2202

Office Hours: Mon. 3:30 -4:30pm or by appointment

Email: oral.robinson@ubc.ca

Time: MWF 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Telephone: TBA

Class Location: IBLC 261

Course Description

Welcome to SOCI 217A! In this course, you will gain insights into the tools and methods that social researchers use to gather data and answer questions about the social world. This includes providing you with an introduction to research design, techniques of data collection, methods of measurement, the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research, and the philosophical and theoretical assumptions underpinning each. In addition, you will learn how to design a research project, specifically how to: pose sociological questions, conceptualize and operationalize ideas, choose appropriate samples, test hypotheses, develop analytical strategies, evaluate results, present findings and assess the ethical dimensions of research. This will culminate in your developing the skills to design a basic sociological project drawing on your own position about methodology.

Prerequisites

One of SOCI 100, SOCI 101, SOCI 102, SOCI 200 or the instructor's permission.

Learning Outcomes

By the completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Explain the relationship between theory and method; and distinguish between conventional and social scientific research.
- Demonstrate competence in locating and evaluating sociological research.
- Evaluate and analyze components of social research, including concepts, sampling procedure and hypotheses.
- Conduct analyses of qualitative and quantitative data.
- Design a research project taking into account theoretical, methodological, ethical and logistical issues.

Required Texts

Babbie, Early 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. Please check the course's Connect page regularly for additional reading/resources. Optional readings are at the end of this course outline.

Teaching Methods

The class is primarily organized around lectures, individual and group activities, discussions, and case studies analyses. I will often incorporate popular media in my lessons to demonstrate how ideas, concepts, theories and skills apply to the real world. This will include, inter alia, news and video clips on the course page. I also encourage you to send to me or post contents from your day-to-day life, which are related to the course, on Connect. My goal is to help you to develop your own position towards research, and facilitate the exchange of ideas by exposing you to different sociological perspectives as well as those of you peers. Please feel free to share your opinions in an appropriate, respectful manner during class and on the Connect page. I might also use the interactive tool Tophat (<https://www.app.tophat.com>) for certain exercises in class. Login instructions will be provided.

I also encourage me to share your opinions on the direction of the course and make suggestions on how to improve your experience in the course. From time to time, I will be collecting your feedback and incorporate them in the course. Outside of this, feel free at any time to speak to me one-on-one or send me an email to discuss your course experience.

University Academic Courses Policy

Criteria to Pass: Students must submit all their assignments and must achieve a minimum of 50% overall to pass this course. The following grading system will apply in this course as adapted from the Faculty of Arts “Grading Guidelines”:

| Grade | Comment | Detailed Description |
|---|-------------------|---|
| A+ (90 - 100%) A (85 – 89%) A- (80 – 84%) | Exceptional | Exceptional student performance. Strong evidence of original thinking and sound critical evaluation. Very good organization and capacity to analyze and synthesize information. Superior grasp of the literature and/or subject matter. |
| B+ (76 - 79%) B (72 - 75 %) B- (68 – 71%) | Very Competent | Very competent student performance. Evidence of original thinking and critical evaluation. Good organization, analytic ability and synthesis of information. Very reasonable understanding of the literature and/or subject matter. |
| C+ (64 - 67%) C (60 - 63%) C- (55 - 59%) | Adequate | Adequate student performance. Able to provide simple solutions to critical and analytical problems. Adequate organization, analysis and synthesis of information. Some understanding of the literature and/or subject matter. |
| 50% - 54% (D) | Pass | Passing student performance. Serious weaknesses in organization, critical, and analytic skills. Little evidence of understanding of the literature and/or subject matter. |
| 0% - 49% (F) | Fail | Failing student performance. Severe weaknesses in organization, critical and analytic skills. No evidence of understanding the literature and/or subject matter. |

Returned Assignments and Marks: Aside from computational or other minor errors on our part,

all marks assigned are final. We will not discuss assignments in the first 24 hours after they are returned so that students can spend that time considering the comments or going over the assignments themselves.

Course Expectations

- **Be informed:** You should check the course site frequently to view announcements, lecture notes, assignments, additional readings, videos, and related contents. I reserve the right to make changes to this course syllabus. If I do, I will announce the change on Connect, where the most up-to-date version will always be posted.
- **Reading Expectations:** You are expected to read the assigned material prior to class, during which we will engage in group discussions and other activities.
- **Attendance & Participation Expectations:** You are expected to attend all classes. It is important to do so because much of the material in this course is structured around class discussions and activities. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain missed lecture notes and other information from a course mate. During class, a satisfactory and consistent level of participation is expected, including within groups and in general class discussions. Your contribution to the virtual classroom (Discussion board on Connect) is also expected. Feel free to post content related to the course that you come across in your everyday activities. Be sure to also comment on your classmates' posts.

Summary of Evaluation Components

| Evaluation Component | Weight | Due date |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Midterm | 25 | Oct. 3 |
| Article Review | 15 | Oct. 24 |
| Research proposal | 20 | Nov. 18 |
| Participation and Attendance | 10 | Ongoing |
| Final Exam | 30 | TBA |
| Total | 100% | |

Details of Evaluation Components

Article Review

Value: 15% of final grade

Due Date: October 24, 2016.

Description: This assignment is designed to get you accustomed to thinking critically about the secondary materials that you will be reading in this course, in future courses and in your general academic endeavours. It is hoped that by critiquing the work of others, you will become an even a better critique of your own work through an increased sense of awareness of how others might

perceive your work. You will be given a choice of three articles/chapters to review. You are only required to write a review on ONE. The article review should be no more than **three pages** double-spaced. Please use 1 inch margins, Times New Roman 12-point font. The actual assignment, guidelines and grading rubric for this assignment will be posted on the course page by the end of the first week of class.

Midterm Exam, 2016

Value: 25% of final grade

Date: October 3, 2016 (in-class)

Description: The midterm exam will comprise multiple choice/short answer questions, covering materials from the required reading, lectures and activities in class. The midterm will take place during one full class session. Further details will be discussed in class.

Research Proposal

Value: 20% of final grade

Due Date: November 18, 2016

Type & Description: The goal of this assignment is to help you develop your skills as a social researcher based on the knowledge you acquire in this course. It requires that you identify a social problem of interest to you, conduct a brief literature on the issue and justify the need for research on the issue. You are then to propose how you would go about conducting that research paying attention to ethical, theoretical and methodological considerations, including levels of measurements, sampling and relevant hypotheses. You must justify your methodological selection, which will demonstrate your understanding of strengths and limitations of each. Finally, your report should briefly discuss the analytical strategies that you would employ to make sense of your data. You must discuss your proposed topic with your teaching assistant and obtain approval before you proceed (preferable by week 5). Further details of this assignment, including a sample format and the grading rubric will be posted on Connect by the end of the first week of class.

Participation & Attendance

Value: 10% of final grade

Description: You are expected to attend and participate in class fully. Class activities will allow you to explore issues deeper than presented in the text, and will cover some of the issues that you will need to address in your research proposal. Attendance and participation will be evaluated as follows:

- **In-class assignments:** These will include your individual responses to questions and the completion of activities in class. You must complete these assignments during the designated time to earn the attendance/participation grade. I will not be telling you when these activities will take place so your attendance is important. There will be 6 activities and your grade will be based on your best 5 grades. There will be no make-ups for missed activities. These will be worth 5 points.

Final Exam

Value: 30% of final grade

Date: TBA

Description: The final exam will have specific focus on topics covered after the mid-term exam, and will follow the format of short-answer and essay questions. Please note that in order to adequately answer essay questions, you will need to draw on insights gained from the beginning of the course. The final date and time will be set by the university.

Midterm and Final Examination Scheduling: Midterm and final examinations must be written on the date scheduled. Final examinations may be scheduled at any time during the specified examination period; students should therefore avoid making prior travel, employment, or other commitments for this period. If a student is unable to write an exam through no fault of his or her own for medical or other valid reasons, documentation must be provided and an opportunity to write the missed exam may be given. Students are encouraged to review all examination policies and procedures at: <http://students.ubc.ca/success/academics-ubc#final-exams>

Important information about your written assignments

Submission: Assignments must be submitted electronically via the course webpage by midnight of the due date. If you have questions about this, please feel free to consult with me in advance of the due date.

Referencing: Several sociological academic sources should be used to explore the topic/question outside of the textbooks (usually, a minimum of 5 sources). Sources for ALL ideas and quotations used are to be properly referenced using the APA format. Penalties will result if this referencing is not undertaken. No more than 50% of sources can be internet sources (unless the source is from an online academic database). A guideline for how to cite different types of texts using the APA format will be uploaded to the course page.

Late Assignment: All assignments must be turned in by the assigned due dates unless extenuating circumstances arise or if you have made prior arrangements with me. A new due date may be negotiated depending on the situation. Otherwise, late work may be penalized with a 5% deduction of your grade for each day that the assignment is late.

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

Access & Diversity: The University accommodates students with disabilities or ongoing medical condition or challenges that may affect their academic success. Some examples of accommodations are: alternate format for print materials; extended time on exams; classroom captioning. The university also accommodates students whose religious obligation conflict with that course, including attendance, submission of assignments or the completion of tests and examinations on specific dates. It is your obligation to inform me in advance of any accommodations that you may require. For more information on accommodations offered by the university, please visit the Access and Diversity Centre on campus or their website at: <http://students.ubc.ca/success/student-supports/academic-accommodations>

Integrity Defined: The University is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. Please review the UBC calendar on Academic regulations for the university policy on cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Please visit the student services website for tips and resources to help you stay compliant to the university regulations at <http://students.ubc.ca/success/academics-ubc>

Plagiarism (taken from UBC Course Calendar): The university defines plagiarism is the act of submitting the intellectual property of another person as your own. It is one of the most serious of academic offences. Penalties for plagiarism may range from a failing grade in a course to suspension from the University. Acts of plagiarism include:

- Copying all or a part of another person's work and presenting it as your own
- Purchasing a paper from someone (or a website) and presenting it as your own
- Re-submit your work from one course to fulfill a requirement in another course

Citation

Intellectual property includes ideas, arguments, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or results of research. When you use excerpts from someone else's work in your essay, paper, or presentation, you must acknowledge the original author in a footnote or another accepted manner of citation. The UBC Library can help you with proper citation.

University Regulations

It is your responsibility to be aware of University regulations. A complete listing of academic regulations that apply to every student at UBC can be found in the "Policies and Regulations" chapter of the UBC Calendar at <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,0,0,0>

Early Alert: If at any time, I become concerned about your academic performance or wellbeing, I will do my best to teach out to you. I also encourage you to speak to me if you need assistance. I may also identify my concerns using Early Alert, a program which 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 and support to help you. The information is treated confidentially and is sent out of my concern for your academic success and wellbeing. Please visit earlyalert.ubc.ca for more information.

Student Feedback: Formative feedback will be used on an ongoing basis to evaluate how things are working for you. Please feel free to be honest and open. The course will also be evaluated at the end of the term.

CALENDAR OF TOPICS & READINGS

| Date | Lecture Topic | Readings | Assignments |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Week 1 | | | |
| Wed. Sept. 7 | Introduction to class | Read Syllabus | |
| Fri. Sept. 9 | Basics of Research | Chapter 1 | |
| Week 2 | | | |
| Mon Sept 12 | What is Theory | Chapter 2 | |
| Wed. Sept. 14 | Ethics in Research | Chapter 3 | |
| Fri. Sept. 16 | Ethics in Research | Chapter 3 | |
| Week 3 | | | |
| Mon Sept. 19 | Research Design | Chapter 4 | |
| Wed. Sept. 21 | Research Design | | |
| Fri. Sept. 23 | Research Design | | |
| Week 4 | | | |
| Mon Sept 26 | Measurement | Chapter 5 | |
| Wed. Sept 28 | Measurement | | |
| Fri. Sept. 30 | Measurement | | |
| Week 5 | | | |
| Mon Oct 3 | MIDTERM | | MIDTERM |
| Wed. Oct 5 | Sampling | Chapter 6 | |
| Fri. Oct 7 | Sampling | Chapter 6 | |
| Week 6 | | | |
| Mon Oct. 10 | THANKSGIVING -NO CLASS | | |
| Wed Oct 12 | Experiments | Chapter 7 | |
| Fri Oct 14 | Experiments | Chapter 7 | |
| Week 7 | | | |
| Mon Oct 17 | Survey Research | Chapter 8 | |
| Wed. Oct. 19 | Survey Research | | |
| Fri. Oct. 21 | Survey Research | | |
| Week 8 | | | |
| Mon Oct 24 | Quantitative Data Analysis | Chapter 13 | ARTICLE REVIEW |
| Wed Oct 26 | Quantitative Data Analysis | | |
| Fri Oct. 28 | Quantitative Data Analysis | | |
| Week 9 | | | |
| Mon Oct. 31 | Multivariate Analysis | Chapter 15 | |
| Wed Nov 2 | Social Statistics | Chapter 16 | |
| Fri Nov 4 | Social Statistics | | |
| Week 10 | | | |
| Mon Nov. 7 | Unobtrusive Research | Chapter 9 | |
| Wed Nov 9 | Field Research | Chapter 10 | |
| Fri Nov 11 | Field Research | Chapter 10 | |
| Week 11 | | | |

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|----------------|---------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Mon Nov 14 | Qualitative Interviewing | Chapter 11 | |
| Wed Nov 16 | Qualitative Interviewing | | |
| Fri Nov 18 | Qualitative Interviewing | | PROPOSAL DUE |
| Week 12 | | | |
| Mon Nov 21 | Qualitative Data Analysis | Chapter 13 | |
| Wed Nov 23 | Qualitative Data Analysis | | |
| Fri Nov 25 | Qualitative Data Analysis | | |
| Week 13 | | | |
| Mon Nov 28 | REVISION | | |
| Wed Nov 30 | REVISION | | |

****THE END****