

The Logic of Social inquiry

Sociology 200H1F- L0201

2012



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Class time: Wednesdays from 2:00 – 4:00
Classroom: KP 108
Website: ??

Course Description: In this course, you will be introduced to the research process used in social science. Research we read or hear about reflects the outcomes of a process which involves a series of decisions. In this course, you will learn the major steps of social science research, including how to ask sociological questions, develop testable hypotheses, define and measure concepts, design samples, and how to collect information. You will learn that different methods are suited to answering different questions and that the methods chosen affect the answers we are able to see.

Course Objectives

- To develop skills in formulating researchable questions
- To develop skills in selecting appropriate methods of research design, measurement, and data collection approaches, knowing their merits and limitations, to conduct sociological research
- To improve skills in critically evaluating the quality of evidence in sociological research

Classroom Philosophy: Class time is an opportunity for us to talk with each other about sociological research. For this class to be successful, students must be committed to active learning. Students are expected to take an active role in class activities and discussions. To facilitate this and to create a community of learners in our classroom, class time will be devoted to discussions, interactive lectures, films, and in-class writing.

Students with disabilities: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please approach the instructor and the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Students with documented disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and seeking available assistance in a TIMELY manner.

Required reading:

Fundamentals of Social Research, 2nd Canadian Edition by Babbie and Benaquisto and

selected articles as assigned in class. When assigned, students will be responsible for obtaining these readings from the online collection of journal articles through the library.

Course Requirements and Student Evaluation:

Test 1	25%
Final Exam	30%
Assignment 1	20%
Term Paper	25%



Test and Final Exam: The test and exam will be based on readings, lectures, films, and other class activities. They will consist of any combination of the following: essay, short-answer, matching, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, and multiple choice questions. Students who miss a test or exam will be assigned a mark of zero for that course requirement unless they satisfy the conditions as laid out in the Academic Handbook.

Course Schedule:

Week	Topic	Reading-- Chapter
Sept 12	Introduction	
Sept 19	The nature of social science research	1 and 2
Sept 26	Literature review; Causality and hypothesis testing	4 and Appendix A
Oct 3	Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement	5 and 6
Oct 10	Sampling	7
Oct 17	Research ethics	3
Oct 24	TEST (Note that November 4 is the last day to drop courses with F section codes from academic record and GPA.)	
Oct 31	Assignment 1 DUE; Experiments and quasi-experiments	8
Nov 7	Survey research	9
Nov 14	Qualitative interviewing	12
Nov 21	Field research	11
Nov 28	Term Paper DUE; Unobtrusive measures	10
December 10 – 21, 2012	FINAL EXAM	

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change. It is your responsibility to be aware of any changes announced in class.

All course marks are tentative until approved by the department chair and Dean's office and recorded in the Office of the Faculty Registrar.

Grading Scale:

%	Grade	Grade Definition
90-100	A+	Outstanding
85-89	A	Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
80-84	A-	
77-79	B+	
73-76	B	Good 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.
70-72	B-	
67-69	C+	
63-66	C	Intellectually adequate performance: student who is profiting from her or his university experience; understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
60-62	C-	
57-59	D+	
53-56	D	Minimally acceptable performance: some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
50-52	D-	
0-49	F	Inadequate performance: little evidence of even superficial understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.

Academic Integrity: The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at the U of T. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that your U of T degree is valued and respected as a true signifier of your individual academic achievement.

The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).
 - U of T encourages students to exchange ideas with each other. This is an essential part of the learning process and is not considered cheating or plagiarism. However, while you

may generally discuss an assignment with your class mates, AFTER such discussions, you are expected to go away and write up your own work separately. Ensure that any work which you submit is entirely your own work. Do not provide a copy of work to another student in case s/he is tempted to use it inappropriately in completing his/her own work. If s/he does, you too may face an allegation of academic misconduct under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*.

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the College Writing Centers, the Academic Success Centre, or the U of T Writing Website.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

If you haven't already done so, please set up an account on Turnitin.com

Class ID number:

Enrollment password:

Course Policies:

1. Come to class prepared, having done the assigned reading prior to coming to class.
2. Late arrivals and early departures are disruptive and are thus not acceptable. Class is in session from 2:00 until 4:00. If you cannot dedicate this time to the course, please take the course when it is offered another time.
3. Please turn off cell phones, pagers, etc. during class time. You may bring a laptop to class, but do not use this as a time to play games, check your e-mail, etc. If your computer use is disruptive, I will ask you to sit at the side or the back of the classroom.
4. Every person in this classroom deserves a voice. To foster a respectful learning community, we need to set some discussion ground rules. First, everyone has the right to speak and to be heard, so none of us should be talking while someone else has the floor. Second, you may disagree with what the instructor or another student in the class is saying, but you must do so in a respectful manner. This means you should direct your comment towards substantive, not personal, rebuttals. Also, students are encouraged to play the role of the "devil's advocate" to enliven class discussion. Third, students should cite evidence from class readings or other reliable sources to support arguments.
5. Attendance at all lectures is a required part of this course. The instructor reserves the right to sanction poor attendance by reducing your final grade. If serious situations arise in regards to attendance students are asked to contact the instructor as soon as possible. If you are absent, you remain responsible for all class materials. Please arrange a "buddy system" for this purpose. The instructor's lecture notes will not be available to students.

Names and contact information (phone, e-mail) for two colleagues:

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6. Test/assignment dates are fixed and non-negotiable: plan your schedule around them.
 - a. You are responsible for ensuring that the instructor receives your assignments on time. **All assignments will be collected in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due date specified. Papers must be uploaded to turnitin.com by 5pm on the day it is due.** Do not mail or email your papers, place the work on the floor outside the instructor's door, or "slip them under the door". If you must turn in something late, time-stamp your assignment with the automatic date/time stamp machine in Room 225 in 725 Spadina and place it in the box labelled "2" (for 200-level courses). You must advise the instructor that you have placed something in the drop-box. Please note: this room is only open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday.
 - b. If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline or writing a test, you **MUST** get (1) a letter from your college registrar, (2) a U of T Student Medical Certificate, (3) a Student Health or Disability Related Certificate, or (4) an Accessibility Services Letter. These are the only acceptable forms of documentation.

Further, you must talk to the instructor within one week after returning to class. Extensions are granted only when students present compelling reasons for their inability to meet a deadline, with satisfactory documentation in support of the request.

- c. Assignments will be considered late if **either** the hard copy or the turnitin.com upload are not submitted on time. The late penalty is as follows: If you hand the hard copy assignment in on the day it is due but not before/during class, it is 10% off. One day late is 20% off. Two days late is 40% off. Three days late is 60% off. Four days late is 80% off. And five days late is 100% off. Late turnitin.com uploads will be penalized an additional 5 percentage points per day.
7. Re-mark requests for assignments must be accompanied by a specific outline of the areas where the student disagrees with the grading and why. Re-mark requests must include this and the original assignment and must be submitted to back to the TA within one week of the assignment being returned. This deadline applies to all students including those who missed the class when the test/assignment was returned and picked up his/her test/assignment at a later date. It is the responsibility of the student to pick up their tests/assignments on time in class. Re-marked assignments can be graded up or down. Further appeals will be directed to the professor.
8. When emailing your professor or TAs, you must use your utoronto.ca address, as this is the only address we can be sure is yours. Please also be sure to include "SOC200" in the subject line. All students are responsible for checking their official utoronto.ca email addresses regularly, including the evening before class.
9. I will respond to emails within 48 hours of receipt, except during emergencies. For topics that will take some time to sort through or discuss, I encourage you to drop in to chat with me during office hours.

The university provides a range of specialized professional services. These may be of some help:

Counselling & Psychological Services	(416) 978-8070; Koffler Centre, 214 College St. 1st floor middle
Academic Success Centre	416-978-7970; Koffler Center, 214 College St, 1st floor south

Assignment #1

Analyses of research article

Select one article from a list that the professor will make available. Students must write a brief paper about their article, addressing the following questions:

1. Was the study primarily qualitative or quantitative, deductive or inductive? Explain your answer.
2. How do the research questions asked by the authors affect their choice of methods?
3. How do the hypotheses posed by the authors affect their choice of methods?
4. What was the unit of analysis for the study?
5. Describe the measurements used in the study, offering your critique of the measures.
6. Describe the sampling procedures used in the study and include a critique.
7. How were the data collected? What were the limitations of the approach(es) to data collection? (Typically, the authors list the limitations in the conclusions or discussion section of the paper.)
8. Were the hypotheses supported or not supported? Explain your answers.
9. What ethical problems, if any, were presented by the research design?

Please note that these are questions for you to think about in order to help you form your argument and write your paper. Your paper should not consist of a list of answers to these questions; every question may not be relevant to every paper, and there may be other areas you choose to consider.

Format

Your paper should be printed in 12 pt. Times New Roman font. Double space and set your margins to one inch all around. Number your pages. Papers should be about 5-7 pages, not including title page and appendices.

Evaluation

Your paper will be evaluated based on

1. The understanding you show of the reading and the relationship between research methods and the assumptions and theory underlying research questions, hypotheses, and findings.
2. The logic and clarity of your argument.
3. The quality of your writing.

Additional Information and Instructions

- The readings are not provided by the professor or TAs. Obtaining the reading from the library is part of the assignment.
- You are not required to use sources outside of your selected readings and the course materials.
- You should not be summarizing the reading. Though you will probably need to refer to parts of the readings, you should assume that the professor and TA have read them. Quote only if absolutely unavoidable.
- Give your paper a title. This title should not be "SOC200 Assignment".
- Remember that this is a methods course, so although you will be talking about theory, questions, hypotheses, and findings, you should always relate these back to the methods.
- I strongly encourage you to make an appointment with your college writing centre and bring a draft of your paper to consult with a writing tutor.

Term Paper

Short Research Proposal

Your assignment is to write a 5-7 page proposal to conduct a study that would answer a sociological question.

Topics

Your paper will propose a research project designed to answer a sociological question. You may choose any sociological question of interest to you, within a few limits. An important part of the research planning process is learning how to do good research given the constraints of reality. Often the research design best-suited to answering a question is not feasible because it requires the investment of more time, money, or resources than are available for a project. Therefore, every research design is a compromise, and all researchers – including you – must learn to answer their questions *with the best data they can get, not the best data imaginable*. Therefore, your choice of research questions (and research methods) is limited by the requirement that the research you propose should be **feasible** for **you** to carry out. This means your project should be realistically do-able by you in 3 months, with a budget of under \$100 and with resources actually available to you. Of course, in order to conduct the research you would need clearance from an ethics board. To minimize ethical concerns with your research, you may not propose to do research on minors or other vulnerable populations and you may not study illegal behaviour.

Paper Structure

Your paper should include the following:

Title: You should have a title and it should not be “research proposal” or “SOC200 Assignment 1”.

Research Question: Explain your research question. Make sure that in this section you state your research question directly. You should also explain briefly why this question is sociologically interesting.

Hypotheses: Explain what you think the answers to your questions are. You should state these explicitly and provide some theoretical justification of why you believe your answers are likely to be correct.

Research Setting: Among what population will you conduct your research? Why is this a suitable setting in which to answer your research question?

Sample: How will you select your sample from your population? Why is this sampling method suited to answering your question? What drawbacks are there to your sampling method? Remember, your research should be feasible, so do not propose a larger sample than you could collect and analyze, and do not propose a random sample unless this is actually possible.

Data Collection: Explain how you will collect your data. (E.g. will you do a survey? Analyze the content of documents? Conduct interviews?)

Concepts and Measures: Define each of the concepts in your research question and your hypotheses, both theoretically and operationally. Describe your measures. Explain why your

operationalizations are well suited to measuring your theoretical concepts (i.e. justify their validity and reliability) and also explain any potential problems with reliability and validity in your measures.

Discussion: This is the section in which you discuss the overall strengths and weaknesses of your research design. You have already discussed the strengths and weaknesses of individual components of the design (sample, measures, etc.); therefore, much of this section will likely pertain to ethical issues that might arise with your research and your plan for dealing with those issues.

Conclusion: Briefly summarize your research question, hypotheses and proposal. Explain how you would know whether your hypotheses were supported. Explain what benefit(s) would come from conducting the research you propose.

Appendix: Include here any research instruments required for your research (e.g., surveys or interview questions).

Format

Your paper should be printed in 12 pt. Times New Roman font. Double space and set your margins to one inch all around. Number your pages. Papers should be between 5-7 pages, not including title page and appendices.

Evaluation

You will be evaluated based on

1. The fit between different aspects of your project (including your research question, hypotheses, measures, and sample) and how persuasively you argue it.
2. Your understanding of the advantages and limitations of your methods, including the validity and reliability of your measures, the quality of your sampling strategy, and any ethical concerns your research raises.
3. The quality of your writing.

Additional Information and Instructions:

- You are not required to use outside sources for this assignment.
- You are not required to collect data as part of this assignment
- Under no circumstances may you collect data as part of this assignment.
- I strongly encourage you to talk with me or one of the course T.A.s about your proposal topics.
- I strongly encourage you to make an appointment with your college writing centre and bring a draft of your paper to consult with a writing tutor.