

Logic of Social Inquiry – SOC200H1F - Summer 2013

Instructor: Athena Engman athena.engman@utoronto.ca
Office hours: Wednesday 2-4, Rm. 225, 725 Spadina Avenue

TA: tbd

Course Description: This course reviews the basic issues that concern all types of data collection methods used by social scientists to test theory. Key topics include selection, sampling, and measurement. The course explores how error affects the data gathered in experiments and non-experimental studies, and in qualitative and quantitative research. The course emphasizes critical thinking about the empirical research presented in everyday life, as well as preparation for more advanced research courses. Enrolment is restricted to sociology majors and specialists.

Prerequisites: SOC101Y1Y or both SOC102H1 and SOC103H1. Students without the prerequisite will be removed at any time discovered, and without notice.

Required Reading: We will not be using a textbook for this course. The weekly readings are composed primarily of empirical studies that deal with a wide variety of substantive topics. A course pack is available at the U of T bookstore.

Attending Lectures: Because we are not using a textbook for this course, attending lectures is very important. During lectures, we will address both the practical and theoretical aspects of research methods. Lecture slides will be made available on blackboard. Neither the instructor nor TA is responsible for providing information about missed lectures.

Evaluation: survey completion – 5%
3 position papers (4-6 pages) – 25% each
in-class test (multiple choice) – 20%

Plagiarism: Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices accepted by teachers in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters” in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Submitting the same work for more than one course: Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters says it is an offence “*to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.*”

Late Assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted without documentation from a physician or college registrar. Extensions will not be granted for computer malfunctions or heavy course loads, so make sure you plan ahead and save your work often.

Make-up tests: Students who miss a test will receive a mark of zero for that test unless reasons beyond their control prevent them from taking it. **Within three days** of the missed test, students who wish to write the make-up test must send or give their TA written request for special consideration which explains why the test was missed. A request should be accompanied by contact information (the student's telephone number and email address) so the date, time and place of the make-up test can be communicated to the student. At the make-up test a student must submit **proper documentation from a physician or college registrar in an envelope addressed to the instructor**. A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for a valid reason will not have a third chance to take the test.

Documentation: If you miss a test or a paper deadline, **do not** contact the instructor or a TA unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor or TA why you missed a deadline or a test probably will not help.

- In case of **illness**, you must supply a duly completed University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate. A doctor's note is not acceptable. There is a blank Certificate in the Faculty of Arts and Science Registration Handbook & Timetable. Attach this Certificate – filled out by your physician – to your work and then hand it in during class.
- If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). You can hand this letter in with your assignment during class.

Accessibility: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

Office hours: My office hours on Wednesdays are designated specifically for helping students with this course. You are welcome to come for help with assignments, help with studying for the test, or help with understanding the material covered in lectures or in the readings. You do not need to make an appointment to attend my office hours.

The TA's office hours will be by appointment. If you want to meet with the TA about the assignment or for another purpose, you will need to arrange to meet them via email.

Email: Both myself and the TA will also be available by email. However, we will not be answering emails in the evenings or on the weekends, so please

begin your assignments well in advance so you can receive the help you need from myself or the TA. Please put “SOC200” in as the subject for the correspondence for this course.

These emails will not be answered:

- emails without a subject heading
- questions to which the answer is written on the syllabus
- questions about the content of a lecture you have missed
- questions about an assignment that are sent less than 24 hours before it is due
- e-mails sent from any account other than your utoronto e-mail

May 14: Course Overview

- Overview of course themes, assignment and exam expectations, communication logistics

- Deduction and induction, objectivity and subjectivity, reliability and validity (these themes will re-appear throughout the course)

Readings:

None

May 16: Epistemological perspectives

- Positivism, realism, critical realism, postmodernism
- The relationship between theory and data

Readings:

C. Wright Mills (1959). *The sociological imagination*. Chapter 1, "The promise."
Max Weber (1935). Science as a vocation. In Gerth & Mills, *From Max Weber*.

Optional Readings:

W. V. Quine (1951). Two dogmas of empiricism. *The philosophical review*, 60(1), 20-43.

May 21: Quantitative Analysis 1: Probability Theory and Descriptive Statistics

- Description and inference
- Theories of probability
- Central tendency
- Levels of analysis and variable typology

Readings:

Armstrong, E. G. (2001). Gangsta misogyny: a content analysis of the portrayals of violence against women in rap music, 1987-1993. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 8(2), 96-126.

May 23: Quantitative Analysis 2: Inferential Statistics

- Bivariate and multivariate analysis using chi-square, correlation, and OLS regression

Readings:

Kimberly A. Davies (1997). Voluntary exposure to pornography and men's attitudes toward feminism and rape. *Journal of Sex Research*, 34(2), 131-137.

Erik Schneiderhan & Shamus Khan (2008). Reasons and inclusion: The foundation of deliberation. *Sociological Theory*, 26(1).

May 28: Quantitative Analysis 3: Data Collection

- Survey design
- Sampling
- Designing experiments

Readings:

Norman M. Bradburn et al. (2004). *Asking Questions*. Chapters 1 & 5.

May 30: Qualitative Analysis 1: Interview Design and Coding

- What can qualitative interviews address that quantitative analysis can't?
- Creating an interview schedule
- The interviewer/interviewee relationship
- Grounded theory

Readings:

Neale, J. (1998). Drug users' view of drug service providers. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 6(5), 308-317

Charmaz, K. (1983). The grounded theory method: an explication and interpretation. In R. M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary Field Research*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

June 4: Qualitative Analysis 2: Discourse Analysis

- The thematic analysis of texts
- Making judgements about the influence of media

Readings:

Thomas, Sari. 1994. "Artifactual Study in the Analysis of Culture: A Defence of Content Analysis in a Postmodern Age." *Communication Research* 21:683-697

Josee Johnston & Judith Taylor (2008) Feminist Consumerism and Fat Activists: A Comparative Study of Grassroots Activism and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign. *Signs*, 33(4).

June 6: Qualitative Analysis 3: Participant Observation and Ethnography

- The continuum of participant observation
- What can ethnography achieve that other methods can't?
- The unique problem of "going native"

Readings:

Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2004). Parts unknown: Undercover ethnography of the organs-trafficking underworld. *Ethnography*, 5(29).

June 11: The "Qualitative/Quantitative Divide"

- evaluations of qualitative and quantitative research
- mixed methods approaches

Readings:

Hammersley, M. (1992). Deconstructing the qualitative - quantitative divide. In M. Hammersley (Ed.), *What's Wrong with Ethnography* (pp. 159-173). London: Routledge

June 13: Ethics I

- Development of research ethics boards in response
- REB standards for social science research

Readings:

Alston Chase (2000). Harvard and the making of the Unabomber. *The Atlantic Monthly*. [online]

van den Hoonaard, W. C. (2001). Is research-ethics review a moral panic? *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 38(1), 19-36

June 18: Ethics II

information from this week will not be tested

- Power relations between researchers and their subjects
- Sociology and activism
- Participatory action research

Readings: None

Optional Readings:

Dorothy Smith (1991). *Conceptual practices of power*.

Robertson, L., & Culhane, D. (Eds.). (2005). *In Plain Sight: Reflections on Life in Downtown Eastside Vancouver*. Vancouver: Talonbooks.

Taylor, Judith and Matt Patterson (2010) "Autonomy and Compliance: Understanding Differences in How Qualitative Sociologists Respond to Institutional Ethical Oversight." *Qualitative Sociology* 33(2): 161-183.

June 20: In-class Test

The final in-class test will evaluate the material from **lectures May 14-June 13**, as well as the **required readings** for this course. The test will involve both multiple choice and short answer questions.

ASSIGNMENTS

Position Paper requirements:

Title page
 4-5 pages (double spaced)
 1 inch margins
 Times new roman font
 No subheadings

**All assignments will be submitted via blackboard.

Position Paper 1: Epistemological Perspectives

This paper is due on **May 26th at 5:00PM.**

In this paper, you will summarize and evaluate two articles that discuss positivist methodology in the social sciences: Bryant (1992) and Turner (1992). Your position paper should briefly summarize the arguments made by both authors, and then engage critically with these arguments. Which author is more convincing? What is your conclusion about the usefulness of positivism as an epistemological perspective in sociology? Is there any important information that these articles leave out?

The full articles are available on Google Scholar:

Lenski, Gerhard (1988). Rethinking macrosociological theory. *American Sociological Review*, 53: 163-171.

Joseph M. Bryant (1992). Positivism redivivus? A critique of recent uncritical proposals for reforming sociological theory (and related foibles). *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 17(1), 29-53.

Position Paper 2: Quantitative Methods

This paper is due on **June 9th at 5:00PM**

In this paper, you will evaluate an academic article that employs inferential statistics. A list of possible articles will be made available on May 28th.

Position Paper 3: Qualitative Methods

This paper is due on **June 21st at 5:00PM.**

In this paper, you will summarize and evaluate an academic article that employs qualitative methods. A list of possible articles will be made available on May 28th.