Queen’s University  
Department of Sociology  

SOCY 210: Social Research Methods  
Course Outline:  

Fall Term 2016  
Mondays (2:30 PM) & Thursdays (4:00 PM)  
Dunning Auditorium  

Instructor: W. Andrew Silver  
Email: was3@queensu.ca  
Office: D-421 (Mac-Corry)  

Office Hours: Thursdays (2:00 PM – 3:00 PM), or by appointment  

TAs:  
Vincenzo Alaimo (va14@queensu.ca)  
Marsha Rampersaud (14mr15@queensu.ca)  
Vanessa Vernick (15vjmv@queensu.ca)  
Zina Zaslawski (15zz22@queensu.ca)  

Course Description and Objectives:  
Social science research helps people make sense of the social world. This course provides students with an introduction to social research methods. Social research methods are skills essential to the construction of knowledge, development of sociological theories, and the design of effective and progressive social policy. Students will learn how sociological theories are developed, tested, confirmed, modified, or discarded. In addition to gaining a general understanding of sociological methods, students will also learn how to engage in their own research, and to be critical and informed readers of published research.  

Topics and issues explored in this course include (but are not limited to): the relationship between theory and research; developing a research project; research ethics; quantitative and qualitative research approaches; and analyzing data. The course format will consist of lectures, class discussions, videos, and tutorials.  

Skill Development:  
By the end of the course, students should be able to:  
• Engage in critical thinking and evaluate the applicability, strengths, and limitations of various research methodologies  
• Demonstrate an understanding of the linkages between sociological theory and research methodology  
• Demonstrate an ability to evaluate and constructively criticize social research results  
• Develop a sampling frame, questionnaire, and interview schedule  
• Demonstrate an understanding of sociological concepts related to social research such as validity and reliability  

Required Texts:  

*Additional readings may be posted on onQ.
Course Requirements/Evaluation:

- **Mid-Term Exam – October 20th**  
  - 20%
- **Research Journal Assignment**  
  - 30%
- **First submission due October 13th**
- **Second submission due November 24th**
- **Final Exam – during Fall exam period, time/location TBD**  
  - 30%
- **In-class written reflections (5, worth 2% each)**  
  - 10%
- **Tutorial attendance and participation**  
  - 10%

The **mid-term** exam will comprise of a combination of multiple choice and short answer/definition questions. The **final** exam will comprise of a combination of short-answer/definition questions and one essay question. The mid-term will cover the course content prior to the date of the exam. The final exam will cover all course content, with an emphasis on material covered after the mid-term. Exams will be based on the required readings as well as material covered in class. Further details regarding the exam format and structure will be discussed in class prior to the exam.

The instructions for the **research journal assignment** will be posted on onQ and discussed in class. Electronic copies of assignments should be **submitted to onQ by the start of class on the due date**. Late assignments may be submitted via email (late penalties will be applied – see “Submission of late assignments” section below).

Students will be required to write 5 short (1-page) in-class written reflections based on course readings, class discussion, and/or videos (worth 2% each). These reflections will not be scheduled in advance and must be **submitted to onQ by the end of class**. You will have the opportunity to write 6 reflections throughout the term (with the top 5 counted).

Participation in large class discussions and smaller group discussions is strongly encouraged. However, students are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity. Comments or opinions that are derogatory in nature or express discriminatory positions will not be tolerated.

**Tutorials:**

Throughout the semester there are four scheduled tutorials. **Students will be assigned to specific tutorials by surnames.** Tutorial assignments, including room locations, will be announced and discussed in class.

Tutorials will be lead by the instructor and the teaching assistants. They will provide students with the opportunity to discuss course material, ask questions, explore research design, and work on social research methods exercises in a small forum.

**Grading:**

Grades will depend on a student’s knowledge of both assigned readings and the material covered in class. Staying up to date on the readings, attending class, and participating in class discussions will help students do well in this course.

The two exams and essay assignment will each receive a grade out of 100%. At the end of the term, the final grade you receive for the course will be delivered by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to the Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale.
Grades will be posted to the onQ site as soon as possible.

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<td>80 – 84</td>
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<td>Failure</td>
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Class Schedule and Readings:

**Date**

September 12 (Mon)  
**Topic:** Introductions; What are social research methods?  
**Assigned readings:** n/a

September 15 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** General research orientations  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 1)

September 19 (Mon)  
**Topic:** Research designs  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 2)

September 22 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** Research ethics  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 3)

September 26 (Mon)  
**TUTORIAL I**  
**Topic:** Research design and ethics  
**Assigned readings:**  
Venkatesh (Chapters 1-3)

September 29 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** Quantitative research  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 4)
October 3 (Mon)  
**Topic:** Survey research
**Assigned readings:**
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 5)

October 6 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** Asking questions
**Assigned readings:**
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 6)

October 10 (Mon)  
**THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS**

October 13 (Thur)  
**Topic:** Structured observation
**Assigned Readings:**
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 7)

**RESEARCH JOURNAL (I) DUE**

October 17 (Mon)  
**Topic:** Other sources of data
**Assigned Readings:**
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 8)

October 20 (Thurs)  
**MID-TERM EXAM**

October 24 (Mon)  
**TUTORIAL II**
**Topic:** Surveys
**Assigned readings:**
Venkatesh (Chapters 4-6)

October 27 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** Qualitative research
**Assigned readings:**
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 9)

October 31 (Mon)  
**Topic:** Ethnography & participant observation
**Assigned readings:**
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 10)

November 3 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** Interviewing in qualitative research
**Assigned readings:**
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 11)

November 7 (Mon)  
**TUTORIAL III**
**Topic:** Qualitative research
**Assigned readings:**
Venkatesh (Chapters 7 & 8)
November 10 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** Sampling  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 12)

November 14 (Mon)  
**Topic:** Quantitative data analysis  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 13)

November 17 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** Qualitative data analysis  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 14)

November 21 (Mon)  
**Topic:** Breaking down the quantitative/qualitative divide  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 15)

November 24 (Thurs)  
**Topic:** Content analysis  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 16)

**RESEARCH JOURNAL (II) DUE**

November 28 (Mon)  
**Topic:** Writing up social research  
**Assigned readings:**  
Bryman & Bell (Chapter 17)

December 1 (Thurs)  
**TUTORIAL IV**  
**Topic:** Writing up social research & review

**The FINAL EXAM will be scheduled during the Fall term exam period.**

**Communication:**
Throughout the course please feel free to contact me via email with questions and/or concerns that you may have. I will endeavour to reply to all emails in a timely manner; however, please do not expect responses during the evening or on weekends. If you have longer questions about class material (e.g., course readings, lectures), exam preparation or essay writing, it is best that you visit during my office hours or make an appointment.

We will also be using the onQ website. Please check this site regularly for supplementary course readings, course material, links to videos and news items, and grades.

**Class Conduct:**
I remind you that cell phones, tablets, computers, arriving late and leaving early, as well as having private discussions during class, can all be highly disruptive to your fellow students. When in class please be
mindful and aware of those around you and work hard to contribute to a positive and encouraging learning environment.

Audio or video recording of lectures is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan.

**Students with Disabilities or Special Needs:**
Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Disability Services Office (DSO) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the DSO website at: [http://www.queensu.ca/hcls/ds/](http://www.queensu.ca/hcls/ds/)

**Absences from Exams:**
Excused absence for a missed exam is not automatic and is granted at the discretion of the instructor. Deferred examinations are intended to accommodate students who have experienced an incapacitating illness or severe domestic affliction. When a student is absent from a term or final exam without acceptable excuse, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of zero for the exam missed. If you miss an exam and would like to apply for an excused absence be sure to notify me by e-mail within two working days of the missed exam. In addition, you will need to provide me with supporting documentation pertaining to the absence within two working days of the exam. If you miss the exam because of an incapacitating illness, a medical note may be required. Travel plans are not an excusable reason for failing to attend an exam. At my discretion, students who miss the mid-term exam will either be offered an opportunity to write a make-up exam or have the weight of the missed midterm exam transferred to the final exam.

**Submission of Late Assignments:**
Late assignments will be marked down a third of a letter grade per day (including weekends). For example, a B essay received one day late would receive a B-.

**Academic Integrity:**
Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see [www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org)). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the “freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas” essential to the intellectual life of the University.

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar ([http://www.queensu.ca/calendars/artscl/Academic_Regulations.html](http://www.queensu.ca/calendars/artscl/Academic_Regulations.html)), on the university’s academic integrity website ([http://www.queensu.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.queensu.ca/academicintegrity/)), and from the instructor of this course.

Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen’s. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.