SOCIOLOGY 210*
Social Research Methods
Fall 2014

Location: Chernoff Auditorium
Time: Tuesdays 4:00-5:30 PM & Thursdays 2:30 – 4:00 PM
Term: September – December 2014

Professor: Dr. F. Kay
Office: Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D-527
Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 to 2:00 PM (or by appointment)
Telephone: 613-533-6000 ext. 74486
E-mail: kayf@queensu.ca

Course Description:

Sociology 210 introduces students to social research as an enterprise in which theories are developed, tested, and then confirmed, modified, or discarded. Social research methods are skills essential to the construction of knowledge, development of sociological theories, and the design of effective and progressive social policy. To critically evaluate the validity and quality of findings derived from social research requires a basic knowledge of the fundamentals underlying different research strategies available to social scientists. The goal of this course is to provide students with a general comprehension of sociological research methods, with the ultimate aim of training students to engage in their own research and to be critical and informed readers of published research.

Prerequisites:

Sociology 101 (Introductory Sociology).
Required Reading:


And, choose one of the following 2 books (available in paperback):


These books are available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore and for loan at the Reserve Desk at Stauffer library. The Newman and Robson book is the textbook for the course. The two books by Sudhir Venkatesh provide interesting discussions of research which you will be asked to critique in a written assignment.

All students will need to read the W. Lawrence Newman and Karen Robson textbook. Students are free to select which of the 2 books by Sudhir Venkatesh they wish to read for their assignment.

Please be advised that the literature on sociological methodology is vast and students are encouraged to read widely. I will be happy to recommend additional readings to you relevant to specific interests which you might develop in the class.

Textbook Website:

The textbook also offers an outstanding website ([www.mysearchlab.com](http://www.mysearchlab.com)). This site includes resources to assist with the practicalities and problems students confront when conducting research projects. The online supplement offers useful resources, including practical quizzes and activities, video clips, supplementary information and research samples, and more (See preface of textbook, page xiv for website information).
Course Moodle:

The course uses Moodle to share Powerpoint slides outlining lecture presentations, as well as the course outline and teaching assistants’ office hours and contact information.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

The final grade for the course will be based upon the following:

1. Three in-class tests. Tests consist of multiple-choice formatted questions. Tests will be based on required readings and lecture material.
   
   Test 1 (worth 25%): Thursday 25 September  
   Test 2 (worth 25%): Thursday 30 October  
   Test 3 (worth 20%): Thursday 27 November

2. Book analysis essay assignment. Essay is due Thursday 6 November 2014 by Moodle prior to class. Essay is worth 30% of the final grade.

Tips for Success: This is a challenging course and students will need to apply themselves. Be responsible for your learning: attend classes, take detailed lecture notes, complete assigned readings, participate actively in your learning, and develop good study habits. Do not undermine your learning by multi-tasking during class. Failure to follow this sound advice will negatively impact grades.

Grading

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale:
Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Course Average (Range)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>49 and below</td>
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CLASS POLICIES AND INFORMATION:

Policies regarding Course Requirements:

With respect to these course requirements, please note:

1. Students will not be allowed to replace or supplement assignments with alternative work or additional work.

2. It is assumed that students have read and are familiar with the Queen’s University policy on academic integrity.

3. Students must complete ALL of the course work in order to pass the course.

Class Etiquette:

Smart phones, internet, watching videos, playing computer games, checking e-mail, text messaging, and listening to music are disruptive to other students in class. These behaviours are also disrespectful toward the professor. Please be courteous to your classmates and professor and turn off all such devices before the class starts. Notebook/laptop computers are to be used for the purposes of taking notes during class and other electronic devices may be used with the permission of the professor.
Contacting your SOCY210 Teaching Team:

If the designated office hours do not fit with your class schedule, you are welcome to approach your teaching team (Professor and teaching assistants) to request an appointment. Please feel welcome to contact us in person after class, by telephone or by e-mail.

When sending e-mail messages remember to be professional: address the recipient by name, sign the e-mail note with your name, use your Queen’s e-mail account, and use full words and sentences for clarity of expression.

Academic Accommodation:

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Counseling and Disability Resource Centre. Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. It is a student’s responsibility to register with the Counseling and Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.

Academic Integrity (short version): You do not need to cheat. You do not want to cheat. Bad things will happen if you cheat. Do not cheat.

Academic integrity (more comprehensive version) is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org/ica/resources-2.php). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive (See http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/academic-integrity). 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 (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities at http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/policies/senateandtrustees/principlespriorities.html).

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 (See Academic Regulation 1) on the Arts and Science website (see http://www.queensu.ca/calendars/artsci/Regulation_1_Academic_Integrity.html), 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.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments and exams from a public place (e.g., outside a professor’s office, the department office, etc.) or posting grades on office doors or via e-mail. Examination results must be returned to students individually, during class or during the professor’s office hours.

Copyright of Course Materials (Moodle):
This material is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in SOCY210. This material shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in SOCY210. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate’s Academic Integrity Policy Statement.

Goals of the Course:
Upon completion of the course you should be able to:

- identify both the applicability and limitations of various research methodologies;
- demonstrate a solid knowledge of research-related issues, such as validity, reliability, and measurement error;
- delineate important linkages between sociological theory and research methodology;
- have the ability to formulate research problems and manageable projects;
- design a questionnaire instrument or semi-structured interview schedule;
- develop a sampling frame;
- demonstrate an understanding of complex ethical issues regarding social research;
- undertake a small-scale study and provide assistance in conducting large-scale social research; and,
- read and constructively criticize social research results.

The responsibility for learning these skills falls on you. Class lectures and assignments are designed to provide a foundation for conducting social research. Assigned readings serve as reference sources to further ground your research enterprise.
DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE

This course is divided into two major subsections. The first section involves a discussion of several important rudimentary issues involved in the study of sociological methodology (Topics 1 to 6 inclusive). The second section describes specific research approaches that are widely used in Sociology (Topics 7 to 15, inclusive).

All references are to the textbook by Newman and Robson (2nd edition).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to the research process</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Theory and social research</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Research ethics</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Research design and causation</td>
<td>Chapters 4 &amp; 5</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Survey research</td>
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<td>Experimental research</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nonreactive quantitative and secondary analysis</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Analysis of quantitative data</td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Qualitative interviewing</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Nonreactive qualitative research</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Analysis of qualitative data</td>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Mixed methods</td>
<td>Chapter 16</td>
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Sociology 210
Written Assignment #1: Book Analysis

Due: Thursday 6th November 2014.

Length: Not to exceed 8 double-spaced typewritten pages (exclusive of cover page and references). The grader will not read beyond 8 pages.

With respect to the completion of this assignment, please note:

The paper has a clearly specified due date. However, there is a 4 day grace period without penalty. Students can submit papers until Monday 10 November 2014 at 12:00 Noon. Beyond this point, papers are treated as late and will incur a 10% penalty. After 13 November 2014 (one week after the deadline) papers will not be accepted. The penalty cannot be waived because other assignments or tests are due in the same week. Extensions will only be granted for medical or compassionate reasons and it will be essential in all cases to supply documentation. Please note that extensions will only be granted based on illness or emergency that transpired prior to the grace period.

Papers submitted on time (6 November 2014) will be graded first and evaluations returned more quickly to students.

Style, citation and references must be consistent with American Sociological Association (ASA) formatting. See the ASA website or review a recent volume of the journal, American Sociological Review, for examples.

Feel free to consult me or your teaching assistant regarding this assignment.

Papers are to be submitted by uploading the document to the course Moodle site prior to class.

Content of the assignment:

This assignment involves a critical review of a book. Students are invited to choose one of two books for their assignment:


Both books are available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore. If you have a strong preference, it is best to make your way to the bookstore earlier than later. I have also placed both books on reserve at Stauffer Library.

Your task, in general, is to answer the question: “What would a sociologist who is knowledgeable about research methodology think of this book?” There are several interesting questions you could focus your attention on, including:

- What, if any, are the ethical problems with this study?
- Do you think the research employed by the author is appropriate?
- How generalizable do you find the results of this study to be?
- Did the author make any major errors?
- If a similar study were conducted in a Canadian city, for example, Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, Vancouver, Halifax or Edmonton, would you expect the researcher to reach similar conclusions?
- Do you think that the author’s conclusions follow logically from the research method employed?
- What criticisms might you offer of the approach taken by the author?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions, nor is it necessary for you to address each of these questions. However, you do need to focus your review on methodological questions and issues.

You should be able to complete this assignment by using course materials only. If you do use any additional materials, please be sure to cite them properly.

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