

Research Methods in Sociology

Sociology 2206A

Section 531
Fall, 2014

Brescia University College, at
Western University

Prof. E. Bell
Office: 213 Merici Wing

Classes: BR 204
Mondays 12:30-2:30 pm
Wednesdays 1:30-2:30 pm

Office Hours:

Mondays 2:30-3:30 pm
Thursdays 2:30-3:30 pm
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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the research methods used in sociology. The basic question to be addressed is: How is knowledge acquired in the social sciences, and how is it evaluated? We begin with a discussion of the leading research paradigms and their philosophical underpinnings, then move on to more specific topics such as causation, conceptualization, measurement, validity, reliability, research ethics, ethnography, qualitative interviewing, and sampling.

Student learning outcomes

This course is designed to create a learning environment in which students can develop their ability to:

- 1) think analytically about the world around them;
- 2) understand and explain to others how science differs from other ways of knowing;
- 3) compare and contrast three approaches to social science: positivist, interpretive, and critical;
- 4) comprehend the notion of causation and how it may be established;

- 5) appreciate the importance of conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement in social research;
- 6) assess the reliability and validity of empirical data;
- 7) conduct social research in an ethical manner;
- 8) recognize the need for sampling in social research, and gain a working knowledge of sampling procedures;
- 9) use library resources to locate scholarly books and articles, and assess their value as sources of knowledge; and
- 10) use all of the above to:
 - a. pose a sociological research question of some public significance;
 - b. provide a thorough explanation of how appropriate research methods could be used to answer it; and
 - c. communicate, both in writing to the instructor and verbally to an audience of their peers, what their research question is and how it could be researched.

Textbook

Bryman, Alan, Edward Bell, and James J. Teevan
 2012 *Social Research Methods: Third Canadian Edition*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements*

- 1) An in-class examination to be held on Monday, October 20, 2014, worth 40% of the final grade.
- 2) Written assignment due in class on Wednesday, November 26, 2014, worth 20% of the final grade. A separate handout will be provided outlining what is required.
- 3) A registrar-scheduled exam to be held in the December exam period, worth 40% of the final grade. See posting for exact date.

*Notes:

- a) Normally, absences from examinations will be excused only on the basis of serious illness documented by a note from a physician. **In such cases, students are to contact the**

instructor before the exam is held. Students will receive a score of zero for any unexcused absence from an examination. *The policies governing requests for academic accommodation applicable to this course are outlined in the Academic Policies and Regulations section of this course outline, which begins on p.5.*

- b) It is possible to get a final grade ending in "9," e.g., 69%. Grades ending in "9" will not be "bumped up," e.g., a final grade of 69% will not be changed to 70%.

Classroom Etiquette

PLEASE:

Do not use computers in class *for any reason* except to take notes.

Do not send or read e-mails or text messages during class time.

Turn off cell phones and other electronic devices (putting them on vibrate is not allowed), and **place them out of sight.**

Refrain from speaking to a neighbour during class time, especially if someone (either the instructor or a fellow class member) is speaking to the class.

Topics to be Covered

- 1) The nature of science, research, and theory
 - a) Science vs. other ways of knowing
 - b) Three approaches to social science: positivist, interpretive, critical
- 2) A general introduction to causation and research design
- 3) Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement: levels of measurement; reliability, validity
- 4) Writing up social research, completing

Textbook Readings

Guide to the Book (pp. x-xii);
Introduction (pp. xxiii-xxv);
Chapters 1, 8, 9

Chapter 2

Chapter 3;
Chapter 13 (pp.235-238 only)

Chapters 17, 18

research projects

5) Research ethics	Chapter 11
6) Survey research	Chapters 4, 5
7) Structured observation, other sources of data	Chapters 6, 7
8) Qualitative research: ethnography, qualitative interviewing	Chapter 10; Chapter 14
9) Sampling	Chapter 12
10) Merging quantitative and qualitative approaches	Chapter 15

Course Antirequisites and Prerequisite

Antirequisites: The former Sociology 231, Social Work 2205, Health Sciences 2801A/B or the former Health Sciences 2800.

Prerequisite: At least 60% average in 1.0 from: Sociology 1020, 1021E, 1025A/B, 1026F/G, or 1027A/B.

BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are not grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded under the Medical Documentation heading of the following website: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm> . If it is not possible to have an SMC completed by the attending physician/nurse practitioner, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student "was seen for a medical reason" or "was ill" is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation. All documentation is to be submitted to an Academic Advisor.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full statement of University policy regarding extensions of deadlines or makeup exams can be found at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2014/pg117.html>

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website,

www.registrar.uwo.ca, for official dates). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory.

3. ABSENCES

Short Absences: If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

Extended Absences: If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course 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 in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Computer-marked Tests/exams:

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar.

6. PREREQUISITES AND ANTIREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Similarly, you will also be deleted from a class list if you have previously taken an antirequisite course unless this has the approval of the Dean. These decisions may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course because you have taken an antirequisite course.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar_services/index.html . The Western Registrar's website is at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/index.cfm> . The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/> . Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a

summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.