

**Sociology 313.01 - Introductory Social Research Methods**  
**University of Calgary**  
**Winter 2018**

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**Class:** Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 – 12:15  
**Location:** SB 105  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday/Thursday 3:30 – 4:30 or by appointment  
**Sociology Website:** [www.soci@ucalgary.ca](http://www.soci@ucalgary.ca)

**Teaching Assistant:** Daniel Stefulic  
**Office:**  
**Office Hours:**  
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**Labs:**

**Course Prerequisite:** Sociology 201

**Course Description:** A frustrating aspect of the social world is that few situations are black and white. Why does one thing happen and not another? Does A cause B? Research helps provide answers to some of those questions and can help us to understand the social world.

This course aims to introduce the student to the basic skills and resources needed to conduct systematic and high-quality academic research. The course covers an array of research methods to help the student identify, plan, execute, analyse and report findings from a research endeavour. Student are given an grounding in various processes of sociological inquiry including quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Knowing the components of social inquiry is important but one must also appreciate the larger issues affecting the research process. A number of extraneous issues such as research ethics, data ownership, and researcher bias will also be explored and discussed. For example, to what extent should personal values affect the research process and research findings?

**Course Objectives:**

1. To introduce the student with terminology, goals, logic, techniques of data collection and procedures for data analysis.
2. To provide students with the skills to identify and analyze the key components of the research process.
3. To investigate the principles and precautions that guide ethical research practices
4. To provide an opportunity for students to learn and practise an array of research methods.

In addition, the student will learn the best use of each methodology.

5. To have students learn the complexities of organizing and drafting various research projects.
6. To help students learn the critical and analytical skills to report research findings that offer accurate evidence and convincing solutions.
7. To provide students an opportunity to gain skills in visual and oral presentation by designing and presenting a poster presentation

Please remember that is this a learning experience and that the research process rarely moves in a straight line from determining a research topic, stating a thesis, data collection, analysis, and reporting results. In reality, the research process moves forward and backwards, goes off on tangents and loops back upon itself. At times you will feel frustrated but hitting dead ends and making mistakes is expected and all part of the learning experience. The research process is meant to not only explore the topic at hand but to discover errors and pitfalls and to unearth topics for future exploration by detecting gaps in the information.

**Course Format:** Class sessions will combine several formats: lectures; large and small group discussions; in-class group and individual assignments, videos, text readings and labs. **Please Note:** You are expected to attend all classes and have read the assigned readings prior to class. You must be on time all classes. **Please be ready to answer or discuss course-related questions posed by me at any time throughout the class.**

**Required Texts:** Bryman, Alan and Edward Bell. 2016. *Social Research Methods (Canadian 4<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*. Oxford University Press. Don Mills: University Press.

The assigned readings will *generally (but not exactly)* correspond with the topics covered in the class. Thus, lecture topics should serve as a tentative guide and may be adjusted by me.

**Evaluation:** Each exam and assignment will be worth 100 points. Feel free to consult me if you have any questions or concerns regarding grades. Final grades will be assigned according to the University of Calgary's 4-point grading system based on the following percentage distribution:

| Percentage | Grade | Meaning      |
|------------|-------|--------------|
| 95+        | A+    | Outstanding  |
| 89 - 94    | A     |              |
| 86 - 88    | A-    | Very Good    |
| 82 - 85    | B+    |              |
| 79 - 81    | B     |              |
| 76 - 78    | B-    | Good         |
| 72 - 75    | C+    |              |
| 68 - 71    | C     |              |
| 64 - 67    | C-    |              |
| 60 - 63    | D+    | Minimal Pass |
| 55 - 59    | D     |              |
| 0 - 54     | F     |              |

The A+ grade became an official grade at the University of Calgary in fall 2002. The A+ grade is described as an honorific grade having the same grade point value as an A grade (4.0). It will be used to indicate outstanding performance in a subject area but does not result in a higher grade point average.

**Lab:** The lab is not meant to be a lecture. It is designed to complement course materials and to further discuss topics and concepts introduced in the lectures. It provides a venue for students to discuss, plan, prepare assignments and organize for exams.

**NOTE:**        **Receiving credit in all components of this evaluation is mandatory to obtain a passing grade in this course.**

## **Course Evaluation:**

### **1. Examinations**

**50%**

There will be 1 mid-term examination and 1 final examination. The examinations will cover lectures, guest lectures, videos, class discussions, and assigned reading materials scheduled up to the exam. This means that students will also be responsible for readings and topics **not covered** in class.

Examinations will be a combination of any or all of the following: multiple choice, true/false, definition, short answer and essay questions. This manner of testing allows the student to demonstrate varying methods of academic skill. I do not expect the student to rely solely on rote memory. I expect application, analysis, synthesis, and **integration of course materials** into your reasoned and concise answers. Therefore, you must be **specific** rather than **general** in your responses. The short answer and long answer questions require a reasonable standard of writing. Poor spelling, disjointed or incomplete sentences, poor grammar and punctuation, inadequate sentence and paragraph structure will only detract from the ideas you are trying to express and will negatively impact your mark.

The final exam is **non-cumulative**. This means that the mid-term will cover only materials from the first class to the class prior to the mid-term exam. The final exam will cover materials from the mid-term to the last day of class. Although the final exam is non-cumulative, students might find reviewing the mid-term exam valuable in preparation for the final. In other words, do not forget everything you learned prior to the mid-term. **Examination dates are strictly enforced.**

The dates and assigned weights for exams are as follows:

|                            |                             |             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Midterm Examination</b> | <b>February 15</b>          | <b>25 %</b> |
| <b>Final Examination</b>   | <b>Registrar Controlled</b> | <b>25 %</b> |

If you miss the midterm for a documented and legitimate reason **you must contact me within 48 hours** of the missed exam. Your reason must be documented (a note from your doctor, etc. is required) and legitimate. Please speak with about a date for the makeup exam. If you miss the final exam for a valid reason, **contact the Sociology Department Office at 403 220 6502 within 48 hours** to apply for a deferred exam no later than the deadline indicated in the University of Calgary Calendar. University regulations require that you receive a score of zero on the final exam if you do not follow this procedure.

**Note:** Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department and are only available online.

**2. Research Projects 35%**

**A. Individual: Data Collection Project 10%**

During this exercise the student must watch television for two 1/2-hour sessions. Each session must be a different time slot, day/night and channel. You must design a tally sheet for a data collection project (with the help of the professor and the teaching assistant). You must record the time, date, channel, and program. During this time, you must record the content of the television commercials. What are the products, messages, target audiences, primary actors, secondary actors, activity levels, dress, and backgrounds? After the data is collected, the student will analyze the information and then write it up and submit the research findings in a report. The analysis can include information about the ads themselves; what is the intent; how are ads different or similar; who is the target market; what is the (un)spoken message and how are the networks different or similar. What explanations can you give for the messages and actions in the ads and by the actors? The report must be at least 7-pages long (excluding your title page and tally sheets), double-spaced, 12-point font, stapled and have 1-inch margins. This report is due on March 29. Late projects are penalized 10% for each day over the due date. Please do not ask for an extension!

**B. Group Poster Presentation 25%**

This project has three parts: a proposal, a poster presentation and a colleague assessment.

**i) Proposal 5%**

Students must jointly submit a 3-page research proposal that details the topic you plan to research and how you plan to complete the project. The proposal is due February 10.

**ii) Poster Presentation 15%**

The research project will be presented in a poster presentation held during classes in mid- March. Students will present their project and their research findings to their classmates for 25 minutes and then answer questions about their topic. Students must also provide handouts to their classmates for study purposes. Students are expected to incorporate easily readable text, photographs, maps, graphs, etc into their poster presentation. Be creative!

*iii) Colleague Assessment 5%*

You must pull your own weight as a group member. This means you must do your part of the work and make yourself available to work on the project. Failing to do could have dire consequences for you since each of your group members will evaluate your contribution to the group project on a scale from 0 – 5. If you receive a participation grade of "0" from all of your fellow group members then you will not receive a grade for the poster presentation, and thus, FAIL THE COURSE. The colleague assessments will occur after all the presentation are completed. I may require you to justify the grades you give to your research partners.

**3. Lab Participation 10%**

This grade will be assigned by the teaching assistants for participation in various lab activities and assignments.

**4. In-class Assignments/Pop Quizzes 5%**

Throughout the course I will give five in-class assignments or pop quizzes worth 1% each. This assessment will be based on information from that day's class. Your answers must be turned in at the end of the class. **You must be present on these days to receive the marks.**

**NOTE:** The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.

**Grade Reappraisal:** Within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is returned, students seeking reappraisal of examinations or assignments must submit a written response to the instructor explaining the basis for reconsideration of one's mark. The instructor will reconsider the grade assigned and will then book a time with the student to discuss his or her work and rationale. It should be noted that a re-assessed grade may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.

**Deferrals:** When possible, please provide advance notice if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements, misreading the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a "make up" test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

**Deferred Final Exam Form:** Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where

paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:  
<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-forms>

**Deferred Term Work Form:** Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at  
[https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred\\_termwork15\\_0.pdf](https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf)

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

**Email:** Feel free to contact me over email at any time. Please put your course number and section in your email's subject line, and include a proper salutation, your full name, student ID, and a proper closing in the body of your email. All emails violating customary email conventions will be ignored. All other emails will be answered within one business day. I do not answer emails over the weekend. Please take that into account when emailing me questions pertaining to assignments or exams. If you have a course-related question, please check the course outline first. Questions that can be answered by consulting the course outline will not be answered. Please email me for administrative purposes only, for example, to set up an appointment. Please do not use email as a replacement for an office visit, if there is something you want to discuss. Questions about the course content and readings, concerns about grades, or any other personal issues should be dealt with in-person during my office hours.

**Ethics Research:** Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. **In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.**

**Safewalk:** The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

**Academic Misconduct:**

Cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty, with definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>

**Handing in Papers and Assignments:**The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.

**Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

**Student Representation:** The 2017-18 Students' Union VP Academic is Tina Miller ([suvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca)). For more information, and to contact other elected officials with the Student's Union, please visit this link: <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/> You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>

**Academic Accommodation:** The student accommodation policy can be found at: [ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy](http://ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy).

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy).

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

**Emergency Evacuations:** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at the Professional Faculties Food Court. Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

**Technology Use and Electronic Classroom Etiquette:** Technology can be both a blessing and a curse. In recent years, electronic devices have been the cause of a tremendous amount of disturbance and distraction in the classroom. Please get the most out of your (or your parents') hard-earned tuition dollars by devoting your class time exclusively to classroom activities. Please ensure that your cellphones, pagers, or any other electronic devices are turned off and remain off for the duration of the class.

For those taking notes on a laptop please be aware that your screen is visible to both those beside you and behind you. I have received many complaints from fellow classmates who have been forced to endure distracting, offensive and otherwise unsuitable images from others' laptops. Please remember that laptops are to be used exclusively for the purposes of taking notes during class.

Checking emails, texting, social media, or engaging in any other type of internet/or electronic activity during this class is not permitted. Those who choose to ignore this rule will be asked to leave my classroom immediately. Students who have been asked to leave my classroom must meet with me before returning. Students taking class notes on a laptop computer will be asked to close their laptops from time to time to answer questions and/or engage in classroom discussion throughout the class.

**Please be on time for class.** Arriving late for class is very distracting to me and your fellow students. The door will be closed at the beginning of class, if you are late please quietly find a seat near the back of the room.

**My Teaching Philosophy:** I love to teach and I hope it shows. I believe that learning is an active rather than a passive activity. I want to assist you in your learning journey. Although attendance is not mandatory, I urge you to attend class regularly. I will not post my lecture materials or give you my lecture notes if you are absent. Class discussions, issues raised in class and information obtained from videos, lectures and other class activities can be give you some valuable insights and help you with assignments and exams. You will not have access to that information unless you attend class. I strive to provide a safe and non-competitive learning environment but one that periodically takes students out of their comfort zone. I encourage class discussion as a means of exploring topics, ideas, and sometimes controversies. We may be dealing with sensitive and sometimes contentious issues in class. Your point of view is important but may be challenged by your fellow students or me during this course. Your opinion may differ from those of your classmates. So please, remain open-minded and remember to be respectful of opinions that differ from your own.

**Proposed Course Schedule**  
 Sociology 313:1: Introductory Research Methods  
 Winter 2018

| <b>Week:</b> | <b>Topic</b>  | <b>Readings</b>           |
|--------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1            | January 8<br>Introduction<br>Research Orientations  | Introduction<br>Chapter 1 |
| 2            | January 15<br>Research Ethics   | Chapter 3                 |
| 3            | January 22<br>Research Design   | Chapter 2                 |
| 4            | January 29<br>Sources of Data   | Chapter 8                 |
| 5            | February 5<br>Sampling<br><b>Presentation Proposal Due Thursday</b>                                   | Chapter 12                |
| 6            | February 12<br>Interviewing and Questionnaires<br><b>Midterm Exam on Thursday</b>                     | Chapter 5 & 6             |
| 7            | <b>February 19</b><br><b>Reading Week</b>   | <b>No Readings</b>        |
| 8            | February 26<br>Quantitative Research  | Chapter 4 & 13            |
| 9            | March 5<br>Qualitative Research   | Chapter 11 & 14           |
| 10           | March 12<br>Ethnography and Observation<br><b>Presentations Begin</b>                                 | Chapter 7 & 10            |
| 11           | March 19<br>Content Analysis<br><b>Presentations Cont'd</b>   | Chapter 16                |
| 12           | March 26<br><b>Presentations Cont'd (if needed)</b><br><b>Data Collection Project Due on Thursday</b> |                           |
| 13           | April 2<br>Writing the Report<br>Conducting a Research Project  | Chapter 17<br>Chapter 18  |
| 14           | April 9<br>Residual/ Course Wrap-up   | No Readings               |