

McGill University
Department of Sociology

SOCI 211: SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY
Fall 2017

Instructor: Alex Miltsov

Office & hours: Lea 822a, Tue., 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

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Office & hours: TBA

Session: September 5 – December 1, 2017

Meet time: Tue., Thur., Fri. 8:35 AM – 9:25 AM

Location: STBIO N2/2

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the various methods commonly used in sociological research. This course is intended to equip you with the necessary tools to be able to determine the method(s) most appropriate for addressing a given research question and to be able to evaluate the research of others on methodological grounds. To accomplish these goals, we will examine (1) the various steps involved in planning and designing a research study, keeping in mind that theoretical interests (and also practical considerations) often influence the design of our study; (2) common quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting data, with a special emphasis on the strengths and weaknesses of each method and thus the suitability of each method for particular types of research questions; and (3) basic ways of analyzing data. This course is designed to provide a foundation for future learning, and is not intended as an in-depth study of any one type of research design, research method, or technique for data analysis in particular.

Upon successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- (1) Demonstrate an understanding of which method(s) is/are most appropriate for addressing a given research question keeping in mind theoretical interests and practical constraints;
- (2) Critically evaluate sociological research based on methodological grounds including research presented by the mass media as well as academic articles.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Conferences	5%	Throughout the semester
Quiz	10%	Tuesday, September 26 th , in class
Midterm	40%	Tuesday, October 24 th , in class
Final exam	45%	TBA (during the final exam period)

- 1) *Conferences:* **5 conferences** will be held throughout the term. They will serve as opportunities for in-depth discussions of the material and the course's major themes. Conference attendance will be marked and is worth **5%** of your final grade. You are allowed to miss 1 conference without any penalty, however every absence beyond

this will result in a **-1%** penalty off your final grade. The first conference for all students is on Friday, September 22nd.

- 2) *Quiz*: The in-class quiz, worth **10%** of your grade, will take place on **Tuesday, September 26th**. It will include multiple-choice questions related to the first three weeks of the course.
- 3) *Midterm Exam*: There will be one in-class midterm exam (true/false, multiple-choice, and short-answer questions), worth **40%** of your grade, on **Tuesday, October 24th**. This exam will focus on the material studied during the first 7 weeks of the course.

Make-up exam policy for quiz and midterm: Students cannot make it up unless they have a legitimate reason recognized by McGill as excusable, such as illness, family emergency, and natural disaster. Individuals who miss it because of health reasons must submit a note from a doctor (a note from health services will not be accepted). A make-up quiz/exam will have a different format from the regular examination.

- 4) *Final Exam*: The final exam (true/false, multiple-choice, and short-answer and long-answer questions), worth **45%** of your grade, will be held during the exam period. This examination will focus on the material studied during the last six weeks of the course. Information on the location and hours of the final exam will be posted on MINERVA approximately two weeks before the start of the final exam period. According to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams. Please consult the Calendar, section 4.7.2.1, General University Information and Regulations at www.mcgill.ca.

Important: there will be **no** “extra credit” assignments available in this course.

Note: in the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND RIGHTS

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Students are expected to attend all classes, to arrive on time and to conduct themselves respectfully. Students who miss class are responsible for all announcements made during class, including slight changes to the course syllabus. I ask students to join me in creating a classroom space that is safe; that celebrates the diversity of everyone present; and one that is free from discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, age, ability, or any other basis for discrimination.

Students requiring special accommodations are encouraged to discuss their needs with me during the first week of class. Students with disabilities should also contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (phone: 514-398-6009; e-mail disabilities.students@mcgill.ca; website: <http://www.mcgill.ca/osd>).

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

All students are expected to complete the readings prior to the period for which they have been assigned so as to have a better grasp of the subject matter and participate in class.

The following required textbook is available online:

Blackstone, Amy. (2012). *Principles of sociological inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative methods, v. 1.0*. [[PDF with images](#)] [[Online Textbook Library](#)] [[Flatworldknowledge.com](#)] [[2012 Book Archive](#)].

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I: FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Week 1 (September 5, 7, 8) – **Overview of the course; Introduction to social research; Theory & methods**

 Ch. 1: Introduction

 Ch. 2: Linking Methods with Theory

PART II: PLANNING FOR AND DESIGNING A RESEARCH STUDY

Week 2 (September 12, 14, 15) – **Theory & methods; How to design a research project**

 Ch. 4: Beginning a Research Project

Week 3 (September 19, 21, 22) – **Research Design**

 Ch. 5: Research Design

Friday, September 22 – Conference 1 (in class)

Week 4 (September 26, 28, 29) – **Quiz; Measurement, conceptualization, and operationalization; Sampling strategies**

 Ch. 6: Defining and Measuring Concepts

 Ch. 7: Sampling

Tuesday, September 26 *** QUIZ (in class)*******

Week 5 (October 3, 5, 6) – **Research ethics**

 Ch. 3: Research ethics

Friday, October 6 – Conference 2 (in class)

PART III: RESEARCH TECHNIQUES & DATA ANALYSIS

Week 6-7 (October 10, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20) - Survey research



Ch. 8: Survey Research: A Quantitative Technique

Friday, October 20 - Conference 3 (in class)

Week 8 (October 24, 26, 27) - Midterm exam; Interviewing



Ch. 9: Interviews: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Tuesday, October 24 ***MIDTERM EXAM (in class)*******

Week 9 (October 31; November 2, 3) - Field research



Ch. 10: Field Research: A Qualitative Technique

Friday, November 3 - Conference 4 (in class)

Week 10 (November 7, 9, 10) - Unobtrusive Research



Ch. 11: Unobtrusive Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Week 11 (November 14, 16, 17) - Focus groups, experiments, and ethnomethodology; Sharing your work



Ch. 12: Other Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

PART IV: RESEARCH AS PUBLIC ACTIVITY

Week 12 (November 21, 23, 24) - Sharing your work



Ch. 13: Sharing Your Work

Friday, November 24 - Conference 5 (in class)

Week 13 (November 28, 30; December 1) - Sociological research in everyday life; Review



Ch. 14: Reading and Understanding Social Research



Ch. 15: Research Methods in the Real World

*******Final exam: During the final exam period*******

See MINERVA website for information on exam location and hours. Good luck and have a wonderful winter break!