



MRPE 9100A · Research Design

Fall Term 2021
The University of Western Ontario

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Class: SSC 6210
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Although this academic year might be different, Western University is committed to a thriving campus. We encourage you to check out the [Digital Student Experience](#) website to manage your academics and well-being. Additionally, the following link provides available resources to support students on and off campus: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.

Course Description

The objective of this course is to provide students with an understanding of the fundamental principles that underlie research inquiries in the social sciences. Beginning with the importance of understanding previous research and conducting effective literature reviews, students will learn how to design projects to evaluate research questions. By the end of the course students will be able to recognize the value of using different approaches to address research questions and critically evaluate the appropriateness of distinct empirical strategies. Each student will gain a clear understanding of which tools and approaches can be used to conduct a variety of qualitative and quantitative research projects.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand experimental, quantitative, and qualitative methods, their differences, and their uses.
- Understand the difference between description, correlation, and causality.

- Collect articles and interpret an existing body of literature
- Understand and evaluate research, the method used, the findings, and their limits.
- Understand the steps of research design.

Course Materials

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press.

Course Evaluation

Participation – 10%

Short Assignments – 45%

- 1) Article Comparison - 15%
- 2) Research Element Identification – 15%
- 3) Project Proposal - 15%

Report – 45%

- 1) Policy Report – 30%
- 2) Report Presentation – 15%

Details on the length and content of the assignments will be provided in class.

Participation: To promote engagement and ensure everyone has the best learning experience possible, students are strongly encouraged to become active participants in class and online. Students will be expected to prepare questions on readings and take part in group discussions.

Short Assignments:

- 1) **Research Element Identification:** Students must choose an article in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal and identify its key parts: the research question, the hypotheses, the method, the data source, and the main conclusions. Students also need to evaluate the article's method and findings.

Due Date: October 11, 2021

2) Article comparison: Students must choose two articles from a peer-reviewed scientific journal that address the same topic. They must identify and compare the author(s) methodological approach, their findings, and the way they address the literature.

Due Date: November 1, 2021

3) Project Proposal: Students must select a research topic and put together a research proposal to answer a question raised by the literature. They must formulate hypotheses, select a method, explain its relevance, and address ethical concerns.

Due date: November 15, 2021

Report:

1) Policy Report: Students must select a public policy question (based on a real-life situation) and answer it by presenting an exhaustive review of the literature. They must notably pay attention to the method used by authors, the nature of the data, and the particularities of the case they chose. They must then use this knowledge to formulate a policy plan that addresses the public policy question they selected.

the Due date: December 6, 2021.

2) Report Presentation: Oral presentation of the report's content. Students will be evaluated on their capacity to explain their plan effectively and accurately in plain language (accessible to their colleagues as well as non-specialists).

Date: December 6, 2021

How to Contact Me

jbouch22@uwo.ca

Important Policies

Assignment Deadlines. Students must submit their assignments by the date and time stated in the course outline and on the OWL website. Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day they are late. Any assignment not received within 5 days of the due date will not be accepted, except in the event of a documented medical or family emergency. If a student anticipates an issue with an assignment, they are recommended to speak to the professor as early as possible to make alternative arrangements.

Plagiarism. Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea 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 scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar). All required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for 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 (www.turnitin.com).

Standards of Professional Behaviour. It is the responsibility of all to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- Respect for others both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy).
- Active engagement in learning and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best). Take responsibility for your own learning by: relating course content and projects to your own professional interests; monitoring your own understanding; seeking clarification and assistance when necessary.
- Personal integrity (following through on commitments; doing one's own work).

Students should also be aware of the UWO Student Code of Conduct found at: <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

Copyright of Lectures and Other Course Materials. Any materials created by the instructor (e.g., videos, notes, handouts, summaries, slide decks, assignments, exams, etc.) are protected by copyright law and may not be copied or distributed in any form without the explicit permission of the instructor. Any non-authorized use of these materials constitutes an academic offence.

Scholastic Offences. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence (https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsgrad.pdf).

Accommodation. Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their graduate programs (normally

their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction. For more information, see <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>.

Completion of Course Requirements. Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall–December 31; Winter–April 30, Summer–August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the graduate program office.

Accessibility Options. Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2111, x82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html.

Mental Health. Students in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Health and Wellness. As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. The Wellness Education Centre (lower level UCC) assists students in finding mental health and other related resources best suited to their needs (<http://se.uwo.ca/wec.html>). Western's School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' Living Well website provides tips for thriving at grad school and other helpful information (http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/living_well/index.html). Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Also, we encourage you to check out the Faculty of Music web page (<http://www.music.uwo.ca/>), and our own McIntosh Gallery (<http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>).

Disputing a Grade. Students who wish to dispute an assignment, exam, or course grade must write a one-page explanation justifying why their work should be re-evaluated. Work will not be re-evaluated on the basis that students were sick or feeling stressed when completing the assignment. Please be advised that a student's mark may go up or down upon re-evaluation.

Extraordinary Circumstances. The content and/or evaluation of this course is subject to change in the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's or instructor's control.

Course Schedule

Please note: This schedule is subject to change over the course of the term in order to meet the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced through our OWL course website. Further readings may be added to this list.

Readings must be done before class.

September 13th: Research in Social Science: Worldview and Approaches

Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. in *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications. P. 5-10

September 20th: Description and Causality

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press. P. 14-30; 63-84; 101-116; 353-370

Marini, M. M., & Singer, B. (1988). Causality in the social sciences. *Sociological methodology*, 18, 347-409.

Arend Lijphart. (1975). "The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research," *Comparative Political Studies* 8(2): 158-177.

September 27th: Research Question and Hypotheses

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press. p. 85-99

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications. P. 133-145

Bryman, A. (2007). The research question in social research: what is its role?. *International journal of social research methodology*, 10(1), 5-20.

October 4th: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press. p. 118-165

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications. P. 11-21

Seawright, J. (2016). *Multi-method social science: Combining qualitative and quantitative tools*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-2

October 11th: Holiday

October 18th: Literature Review I: Identifying Relevant Literature and Understanding Research

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press. p. 169-181

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications. P. 23-46

Jeffrey W. Knopf, 2006, "Doing a Literature Review," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127-132.

Jesson, J., Matheson, L., & Lacey, F. M. (2011). *Doing your literature review: Traditional and systematic techniques*. Chapters 1 and 3

October 25th: Literature Review II: Evaluating Articles and Comparing Conclusions

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press. p. 182-192

Shehadeh, A. (2015). Doing a literature review and creating your research niche. *The Cambridge guide to research in language teaching and learning*, 169-175.

November 1st: Reading Week

November 8th: Research Ethic

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press. p. 262-268

Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, chapter 1 (Ethics Framework). <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy/politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>

Jessica Ball and Pauline Janyst, 2008, "Enacting Research Ethics in Partnerships with Indigenous Communities in Canada: 'Do It in a Good Way'," *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 3(2):33-51.

O'Sullivan, E., Rassel, G. R., Berner, M.. 2008. *Research Methods for Public Administrators*. Pearson Longman, 5th edition. Chapter 8

November 15th: Collecting Data

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press. p. 193-228

Jason Seawright and John Gerring, 2008, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294-308.

O'Sullivan, E., Rassel, G. R., Berner, M. 2008. *Research Methods for Public Administrators*. Pearson Longman, 5th edition. Chapters 6 and 7

November 22nd: Analyzing Data

Gerring, J., & Christenson, D. (2017). *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge University Press. p. 230-260

November 29th: Assessing a Project's Limits and Sharing Results

O'Sullivan, E., Rassel, G. R., Berner, M.. 2008. *Research Methods for Public Administrators*. Pearson Longman, 5th edition. Chapters 15

Perez, C. C. (2020). *Invisible women: exposing data bias in a world designed for men*. Chapter 1

Choo, H. Y., & Ferree, M. M. (2010). "Practicing intersectionality in sociological research: A critical analysis of inclusions, interactions, and institutions in the study of inequalities". *Sociological theory*, 28(2), 129-149.

December 6th: Report Presentation