



MRPE 9100A · Research Design

Fall Term 2022
The University of Western Ontario

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Class: Mondays, 1:30PM – 4:30PM, Room SSC 6210
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1PM – 3PM & by appointment
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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

This course aims to provide students with an understanding of the fundamental principles underlying research inquiries in the social sciences. Beginning with the importance of understanding previous research and conducting effective literature reviews, students will learn how to formulate research questions and design projects to answer their respective questions. By the end of the course, students will be able to recognize the value of different research approaches 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 will be able to:

- Understand 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
- Develop practical research proposals

Course Materials

Textbook. Carr, D., Boyle, E. H., Cornwell, B., Correll, S. J., Crosnoe, R., Freese, J., & Waters, M. C. (2021). *The art and science of social research* (Second edition). W.W. Norton & Company.

The textbook is available for purchase at the UWO Bookstore. Both in hard-copy and electronic formats are available. Students are also welcomed to purchased used books, but please make sure that the access code to online materials is active and valid. You must have the access code to use the online resources (InQuizitive and writing tutorials)

Additional Materials. Additional readings and materials will be made available through the course website on OWL.

Announcements and Other Important Information. You will find course content and announcements posted to our OWL website. I will also announce any upcoming deadlines or changes to the course schedule both in class and on the website. If you miss a class, check with a classmate for any notes or other materials.

Course Evaluation

General Expectations. Attendance is expected each week for the full scheduled class time. The course is designed to be collaborative and interactive, and we use the full scheduled time each week to be present and engaged. As such, be sure to arrive in class on time and ready. Students are allowed to use electronic devices such as laptops and cell phones, however, be mindful that you'd need to step out of the class for any personal issues (e.g., responding to an emergency call).

Two Short Assignments (40%). Each short assignment is worth 20% of the final course grade. The short assignments are designed to help students develop skills in identifying and summarizing research elements from original research papers.

- **Assignment 1 (20%):** 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 2, 2022.
- **Assignment 2 (20%):** 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 14, 2022.

Research Proposal (60%). Students must select a research topic and put together a research proposal to answer a research question. The research question(s) must be grounded in relevant literature, specifying how the proposed project build on and expand existing knowledge. Students must also formulate hypotheses, select a method, explain its relevance, and address ethical concerns. Students will work on the proposal throughout the term, with four components required at different points:

- **Topic Selection (10%):** Students first propose a topic relevant to their interests and experience. Within the topic, the students then propose a set of research questions that can help fill the gap(s) in existing literature. Due date: September 19, 2022.
- **Reading List (10%):** Using the tools and strategies discussed in class, students will conduct a search for literature relevant to their research question(s) and put together a reading list of at

least 15 sources (scholarly articles, books, or reports). The reading list will serve as a basis for the proposal's literature review. Due date: October 24, 2022.

- **Presentation (15%):** Oral presentation of the research proposal. 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). Students are also expected to take feedbacks from the presentations and incorporate them into the final research proposal. Presentation date: November 28, 2022.
- **Final Proposal (25%):** The final proposal is due on the last day of classes for the Fall term, December 8, 2022. There is no word limit, however, I strongly recommend that students keep their proposal within 10 pages, double-spaced.

Tips for succeeding in this course:

- Treat learning like a job (in other word, professionalism will serve you well!). Develop strategies and tools for time management. For example, invest in a planner or similar digital application to keep track of your courses. Then populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized.
- Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
- Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively than just reading.
- Connect with others. Try forming an online study group and try meeting on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards or contact your instructor and/or teaching assistant.
- Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.

How to Contact Me

If you have course-related questions that may be relevant for the whole class, it is best to ask the questions in class or to post them on our OWL course site's Forum. If you have a specific question for me, you may contact me through OWL Messages, or send me an email (at jasmine.ha@uwo.ca.) Students are also encouraged to meet with me individually or in small groups by appointment.

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 (including weekends) 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.

Week	Monday	Topic	Readings	Assignment
1	12-Sep	Introduction: Research in Social Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook (TB) Chapter 1 • Bryman 2007 • Luker 2008 - Chapter 4 	
2	19-Sep	Theory as Foundations for Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TB Chapter 2 • Czaika & de Hass 2014 • Vidovich 2013 	Proposal_Topic due.
3	26-Sep	Research Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TB Chapter 3 • Tri-Council Policy Statement • Ball & Janyst 2008 	
4	3-Oct	Conceptualization and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TB Chapter 4 • TB Chapter 5 	Assignment 1 due.
5	10-Oct	Thanksgiving holiday	No class & No reading	
6	17-Oct	Research Approaches & Literature Review I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creswell & Creswell 2017 • Jesson et al. 2011 • Luker 2008 - Chapter 5 	
7	24-Oct	Literature Review II: Evaluating Articles and Comparing Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gurevitch et al. 2018 • Hunter et al. 2015 	Proposal_Reading list due.
8	31-Oct	Reading Week	No class & No reading	
9	7-Nov	Student's choice (choose any two): Survey, Experiment, Evaluation Research, Ethnography, In-depth interview, or Materials-based Methods	Materials TBD	
10	14-Nov	Assessing a Project's Limits and Sharing Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TB Chapter 14 • Perez 2020 • Springer 2020 	Assignment 2 due.
11	21-Nov	Mixed methods & Case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seawright & Gerring 2008 • Small 2011 	
12	28-Nov	Research Proposal Presentation & Intersectionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choo & Ferree 2010 	Presentation
13	5-Dec	Looking forward: New types of data & research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fritz et al. 2019 • Lazer & Radford 2017 • Yoshida et al. 2022 	Final Proposal due on December 8 th , 2022 (Thursday).

Course Readings (will be made available on OWL)

- Ball, J. & Janyst, P. 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.
- Bryman, A. 2007. The research question in social research: What is its role? *International journal of social research methodology* 10(1): 5-20.
- 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.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. 2017. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications. Chapter 1.
- Czaika, M., & de Haas, H. 2013. The Effectiveness of Immigration Policies. *Population and Development Review* 39(3): 487–508. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2013.00613.x>
- Fritz, S. et al. 2019. Citizen science and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. *Nature Sustainability* 2(10): 922–930. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0390-3>
- Gurevitch, J., Koricheva, J., Nakagawa, S. et al. 2018. Meta-analysis and the science of research synthesis. *Nature* 555: 175–182. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature25753>
- Hunter, L. M., Luna, J. K., & Norton, R. M. 2015. Environmental Dimensions of Migration. *Annual Review of Sociology* 41(1): 377–397. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112223>
- Jesson, J., Matheson, L., & Lacey, F. M. 2011. *Doing your literature review: Traditional and systematic techniques*. Chapters 1 and 3.
- Lazer, D., & Radford, J. 2017. Data ex Machina: Introduction to Big Data. *Annual Review of Sociology* 43(1): 19–39. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053457>
- Luker, K. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Chapter 4: "What is this a Case of, anyway?" & Chapter 5: "Reviewing the Literature"
- Perez, C. C. 2020. *Invisible women: exposing data bias in a world designed for men*. Chapter 1
- Seawright, J. & Gerring, J. 2008. Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294-308.
- Small, M. L. 2011. How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature. *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:57-86.
- Springer, E. 2020. Bureaucratic Tools in (Gendered) Organizations: Performance Metrics and Gender Advisors in International Development. *Gender & Society* 34(1): 56-80.
- 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/>

Vidovich, L. 2013. Policy Research in Higher Education: Theories and Methods for Globalising Times. *International Perspectives on Higher Education Research* 9: 21–39). [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628\(2013\)0000009005](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628(2013)0000009005)

Yoshida, Y, Haan, M, Schaffer, S. 2022. Administrative data linkage in Canada: Implications for sociological research. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 59 251– 270.