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## Geography 3250 - Social Science Research Methods in Geography

page last changed **today** (0 hours and 0 minutes ago)



[HOME](#) | [Publications](#) | [Education](#) | [2152](#) | [3432](#) | [9108](#) | [9300](#) | [Marking](#) | [GEOGRAPHY](#)

### GEOGRAPHY 3250

[News](#)

[Grades](#)

[Description](#)

[Contact](#)

[Evaluation](#)

[Exam](#)

[Readings](#)

[Lectures](#)

[Lab/Tutorial](#)

[Owl-Sakai](#)

[Assignments](#)

[Peer Review](#)

[MISCELLANEOUS](#)

[Critical Appraisal](#)

[Marking](#)

## SYLLABUS Fall 2013

### Social Science Research Methods in Geography

This syllabus is "dynamic", it will change throughout the term (if you are reading a printed version, it is likely already out of date!). Though the basic structure of the course (e.g., weighting of evaluation components) will not change, topics, readings, labs may need adjusting along the way. Please return to this section - and Owl - for important updates.

2 lecture hours, 2 lab/tutorial hours, half course, Fall term

#### Prerequisite

Two full courses in Geography and third or fourth year status at the University

#### Antirerequisite

The former Geography 2250A/B (the former 237a/b).

#### News

##### July 26/13

Welcome - If you are not enrolled you are still more than welcome to come to the first class to determine if the class indeed fits your needs. (see pre and anti requisites above).

Yes a Tutorial in week 1! - This will be for an ice-breaker and organization into research groups. See the schedule below.

Owl - Owl Sakai will be used to post grades and readings. I may post notices there and participate in the forums (if you do), but I will use this news section (the one you are looking at now, right here) to post important information too, so come back to this page often.

#### Description

This course is designed to help students to learn some geographic and other social science research methods to address real-world problems. The focal point of the course will be a group research project that will allow students to examine an issue of interest using skills and ideas gained in the course. A range of social science methods will be covered, both qualitative and quantitative and they will be juxtaposed against traditional experimental scientific methods. Students will learn about research design and the implications of choosing particular research questions methods, and designs.

#### Format

This course consists of two lecture hours per week and one two hour tutorial per week. The "lecture" hours will consist of a mixture of lectures and discussion. Some lecture class time may even be devoted to tutorial-style discussion. The lab/tutorial will involve a combination of the following: practical aspects of using various research methods, data analysis, reporting results as well as discussion of selected readings. These readings may be unique to the tutorial (see tutorial schedule) but often they will overlap with the lectures (see lecture schedule). Though students are responsible for completing readings prior to each lecture *and* lab/tutorial, this is especially true for the latter since this is where most of the participation marks will be awarded. The format of the lab/tutorials is described below (prior to the tutorial schedule).

#### Course objectives

1. To introduce students to geographic research methods in the social sciences, including:
  - o how to distinguish and formulate research problems and questions;
  - o research design;
  - o measurement and sampling;
  - o qualitative and quantitative data collection;
  - o data analysis and interpretation;
2. To encourage critical thinking and analysis of research activities and understand the limitations and advantages of different approaches;

3. To improve your writing skills;
4. To enhance your ability to work collaboratively on a group project; and
5. To promote self-awareness of your ability to carry out research and ways to address real-world problems.

## Contact Information

Instructor/TA	Room	Email	Office Hour
Jamie Baxter	SSC 1407	<a href="mailto:jamie.baxter@uwo.ca">jamie.baxter@uwo.ca</a>	Tues. 13:30-14:30 or by appointment
Josh Tobias?	SSC3107	<a href="mailto:jtobias@uwo.ca">jtobias@uwo.ca</a>	by appointment
Karen Ross?	SSC2231	<a href="mailto:kross44@uwo.ca">kross44@uwo.ca</a>	by appointment

## Timetable and Turnitin Information

Once logged in to [Turnitin](#) copy the id and pass from the table below (for YOUR TA) to the appropriate fields at the Turnitin website. The user id does *not* get copied when you click the link. If you are not registered with Turnitin, you will have to do that first.

Lect/Tut	Day	Duration	Start Time	End Time	Room	Instructor/TA	Turnitin ID	Turnitin Pass
Lecture	Monday	2hrs	12:30	14:30	NS-7	Jamie Baxter	N/A	N/A
Lab/Tutorial 1	Wednesday	2hrs	10:30	12:30	<a href="#">AH 101</a>	Josh Tobias?	tba	bell
Lab/Tutorial 2	Thursday	2hrs	11:30	13:30	<a href="#">WL 259</a>	Karen Ross?	tba	teevan

## Evaluation

Component	Weight
Participation (tutorial <i>and</i> lecture)	10%
Lab assignments	20%
Study: proposal	10%
Study: final report	30%
Final exam	30%

You must complete all course components to pass the course.

No electronic devices - e.g., phones, calculators are allowed at the exam.

## Final Exam

**Weight:** 30%

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Date:** TBA

**Location:** TBA

**Format:** mixed, all answers on exam paper. (100 marks)

- i. Multiple choice and true/false - (15 marks)
  - MC usually 1 of 5 choices (a - e)
  - NOT scantron, circle on exam paper
  - no "correction factor" (i.e., NO subtraction of incorrect answers from correct answers)
  
- ii. Definitions  
(25 marks)
  - 5 marks ea.
  - choice - you will choose 5 from at least 7
  - identify what the thing is, why it is important, how it relates to other things in the class and provide an example(s)
  - I have been told by students in the past that I, "expect a lot in a definition". I agree.
  - only those definitions that include an example will receive full marks
  - space - use only the space provided - approximately 1/5 of a page
  
- iii. Short Answer  
(30 marks)
  - 10 marks ea.
  - choice - you will choose 3 from at least 5
  - address the question directly and include at least one example
  - examples- only those short answers that include at least one example will receive full marks
  - space - use only the space provided - approximately 1/3 of a page
  
- iv. Essay  
(30 marks)

- one essay, no choice
- address the question directly and include examples
- space - use only the space provided - approximately 2 1/2 pages
- outline - though there are no marks explicitly awarded for this, sketch an outline in the box provided - use of the outline box shows planning and pre-organization.

### Material Covered:

All lectures and readings. The labs/tutorials will reinforce lectures but no reading that is specific only to a tutorial will be on the exam. You are also responsible for material you might use in an essay answer. That is, the essay question will be quite general and will allow you to draw on material from the entire course. The focus will be on lectures, but the readings typically overlap the lectures considerably. Generally speaking you need to know the strengths and limitations of each design and method we cover. Compare things when you study to help reinforce these strengths and limitations. For example, think about the strengths of participant observation as ways to overcome the limitations of surveys and/or in-depth interviews.

### Readings

#### Course Text:

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

Any additional readings will be made available via [Owl Sakai](#). The text chapters will NOT be made available on Owl.

### Lecture Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading
Sept. 9	<a href="#">Scope of Course</a>	None
Sept. 16	<a href="#">Research Problems and Research Questions</a> <a href="#">Discussion of project</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 1
Sept. 23	<a href="#">Ethics</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 11
Sept. 30	<a href="#">Research Design</a> <i>Field camp week - some students will be absent</i>	Bryman et al. Ch 2, 18
Oct. 7	<a href="#">Quantitative Research I: Overview, observations</a>	
Oct. 14	THANKSGIVING	Bryman et al. Ch 3, 6
Oct. 21	<a href="#">Quantitative Research II: Surveys</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 4, 5
Oct. 28	<a href="#">Sampling</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 2, 12
Nov. 4	<a href="#">Qualitative Research I: Nature of qualitative enquiry, interviews, focus groups</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 8, 10
Nov. 11	<a href="#">Qualitative Research II: Case studies, ethnography, participatory research</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 8, 9
Nov. 18	<a href="#">Analysis and Interpretation I: Quantitative</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 13
Nov. 25	<a href="#">Analysis and Interpretation I: Qualitative</a> <a href="#">Course instructor evaluation</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 14
Dec. 2	Review	

### Lab/Tutorial Format Schedule

Each student is required to **complete the readings or any other preparatory steps** prior to lab/tutorial. All are expected to participate in tutorial discussions. See the [assignments](#) page for details of labs that will be handed in for grades.

Date	Topic	Reading
Sept. 11/12	Introduction, ice-breaker, groups, critical appraisal <a href="#">Lab assignment 1</a> Bring your <b>laptop</b> if possible!	<a href="#">critical appraisal form</a>
Sept. 18/19	<a href="#">Research problems and questions</a> <a href="#">Lab assignment 1 due to TA</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 1, <a href="#">Cutter, 2003</a>
Sept. 25/26	Ethics	<a href="#">Tricouncil Ethics CORE tutorial (2hrs)</a>
Oct. 2/3	No Tutorial - field camp week	
Oct. 9/10	Observation <a href="#">Lab assignment 2</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 6

Oct. 16/17	Focus on writing your proposal!	
Oct. 23/24	Survey design I <a href="#">Lab assignment 3</a> Lab assignmet 2 due to TA	Bryman et al. Ch 4, 5
Nov. 6/7	Survey design II	Bryman et al. Ch 4, 5
Nov. 13/14	In-depth interviews, complete ethics forms Lab assignment 3 due to TA	Bryman et al. Ch 8, 10
Nov. 20/21	Quantitative analysis <a href="#">Lab assignment 4</a>	Bryman et al. Ch 13
Nov. 27/28	Qualitative analysis of "text" Lab assignment 4 due to TA	Bryman et al. Ch 14

## Handing in Material

### I cannot get it in on time! (Accomodation for Illness, Family Death etc.)

For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and a downloadable SMC see:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed graded course components must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

And now some messages from our lawyers...

### Mental Illness

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for more information on these resources and on mental health.

### Plagiarism

The Department of Geography has a zero tolerance policy towards plagiarism. If a student commits plagiarism, the instructor will assign a grade of zero to the assignment. A second instance of plagiarism is regarded as a scholastic offense and will be dealt with according to The University of Western Ontario policy for Scholastic offenses - [more on the department's policy on plagiarism via this link](#). The most common offense is failing to cite properly - if you quote directly, cite the author! You do *not* get the benefit of the doubt (you are not presumed innocent until proven guilty) when such offenses are committed. That is, the burden of proof is reversed. Can you prove "it was an accident" (this is a rhetorical question)? The following is an excerpt from the university secretariat:

"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/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)"

**Not citing the work of others is generally the main violation - ignorance is no excuse!** See next...

### Turnitin.com

**Unfortunately turnitin has "caught" several offenders in my classes**, please do not be the next one - it is awkward for everyone involved. If you do original work and write and cite properly you have nothing to worry about. The university has provided this mandatory wording: "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 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](#)"

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