

University of Western Ontario
Geography 3250: Research Methods in Geography
Fall 2017 Syllabus

Course calendar description

A survey of a range of social scientific methods for studying humans (e.g., interviews, questionnaires); with an emphasis on research designs involving human interaction. Topics include identifying research problems, questions and designs, sources of error, ethics and values in research, methods of data collection, data analysis and presentation of findings.

Overview

Research is the systematic pursuit of answers to questions that fascinate us. Social science research investigates a vast range of problems related to inequality, prejudice, mobility, social behaviour, cultural identity, and more. This course is designed to help students learn and apply all the concepts and skills needed to conduct a small social science research project. It also aims to equip students to critically assess research conducted by others.

Role	Name	Office	Office hours	Email
Instructor	Dr. Carol Hunsberger	SSC 2409	Thurs 1:30-3:00	chunsber@uwo.ca
TA	Rebecca Ellis	SSC 2310	Tues 1:00-2:00	rellis23@uwo.ca
TA	Siera Vercillo	SSC 1424	Wed 3:00-4:00	svercill@uwo.ca

Timetable

Lecture: Mondays, 2:30-4:30, SSC 3006

Tutorial 1: Wednesdays, 10:30-12:30, WL 257*

Tutorial 2: Wednesdays, 12:30-2:30, SSC 3026*

*On some dates tutorials will be held in the library or a computer lab – see the schedule below.

Format

The course includes a two-hour lecture and a two-hour lab/tutorial each week. Lectures will build on the readings and involve discussions and activities, so please finish all assigned readings before class and come ready to participate. Tutorials will involve activities, discussions and assignments designed to help students apply the course concepts and practice using specific research tools.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe major research approaches, their relationship to theory and to each other;
- Formulate effective problem statements and research questions;
- Discuss advantages and disadvantages of various methods and research designs for investigating different kinds of questions;
- Find, critically review, and synthesize academic literature on a given topic;
- Anticipate possible benefits and risks of research and plan how to fairly handle them;
- Create research instruments (e.g. surveys, interview guides) and use them to collect data;
- Apply basic concepts in sampling and probability;
- Collaborate, divide tasks and manage time effectively as part of a research team;
- Perform basic quantitative and qualitative analysis using appropriate software; and
- Write a convincing research report that clearly communicates the contributions and limitations of the findings.

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

Readings

Course text: Bryman, Allan and Edward Bell (2016). *Social Research Methods* (Fourth Canadian Edition). Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

The text is available in the University bookstore. The E-book format is cheaper and can be ordered via [this link](#) (the price is in US dollars). The Third Canadian Edition (2012) is very similar and may be used, though chapter and page numbers differ. The digital resources sold with the book are not necessary. Any additional readings will be posted on OWL.

Lecture schedule (may be adjusted as needed, with notice)

Date	Topic	Notes	Readings: 4 th (3 rd)
Sep 11	Course introduction		None
Sep 18	Research problems and questions		Ch. 1 (1)
Sep 25	Research design		Ch. 2, 18 (2, 18)
Oct 2	Ethics		Ch. 3 (11)
Oct 9	NO CLASS: Fall reading week		
Oct 16	Quantitative research I: Overview, observation		Ch. 4, 7 (3, 6)
Oct 23	Quantitative research II: Surveys		Ch. 5, 6 (4, 5)
Oct 30	Sampling	Proposal due (25%)	Ch. 2, 12 (2, 12)
Nov 6	Qualitative research I: Overview, interviews, focus groups		Ch. 9, 11 (8, 10)
Nov 13	Quantitative analysis		Ch. 13 (13)
Nov 20	Qualitative analysis		Ch. 14 (14)
Nov 27	Qualitative research II: Ethnography, participatory research		Ch. 10 (9)
Dec 4	Course Review and Project Showcase	Final report due (30%)	

Lab/tutorial schedule (may be adjusted as needed, with notice)

Dates	Topics	Notes	Readings: 4 th Ed. (3 rd Ed.)
Sep 13	Icebreaker, form groups		
Sep 20	Research problems and questions	Write 400-word summary in lab (due next day)	Ch. 1 (1)
Sep 27	Literature review skills Lab 1: Critical appraisal	Meet in Library	
Oct 4	Ethics	Lab 1 due (10%)	Ch. 3 (11) CORE tutorial
Oct 11	NO LAB: Work on your proposal		
Oct 18	Observation Lab 2: Observation	Ethics due	Ch. 7 (6)
Oct 25	Research instrument design I	Lab 2 due (10%)	Ch. 5, 6 (4, 5)
Nov 1	Research instrument design II	Bring research instrument	Ch. 5, 6 (4, 5)
Nov 8	Independent work time		
Nov 15	Quantitative analysis	Meet in SSC 1425	Ch. 13 (13)
Nov 22	Qualitative analysis	Meet in SSC 1425	Ch. 14 (14)
Nov 29	Independent work time SSC 1425 is available		

Expectations

These are my expectations for student performance:

- **Prepare:** Read all readings before the class for which they were assigned.
- **Show up:** Come to all lectures and tutorials.
- **Be fully present:** Do not distract yourself and those around you.
- **Participate:** You will learn more if you actively engage in discussions and activities.
- **Respect others:** Create a positive environment in lectures, tutorials and your project group.
- **Seek help** when you need it: If you don't understand something, ask. If your project runs into a problem, talk to a TA. For help with your writing, visit the writing centre.
- **Do your best work:** Before handing something in, make sure you have followed all the guidelines and paid attention to the quality of your writing.

In turn, as an instructor I strive to:

- **Engage:** Provide an active learning environment that helps students apply knowledge.
- **Care:** Set a positive example that includes, respects and values diverse perspectives.
- **Be fair:** Clearly communicate expectations, including the criteria used to assess student work, and apply standards consistently.
- **Respond:** Answer questions promptly and act on feedback as appropriate.

Methods of evaluation

Task	Due date	Weight
In-class quizzes	Ongoing	25%
Lab 1: Critical appraisal	Oct 4	10%
Lab 2: Observation	Oct 25	10%
Project: Proposal	Oct 30	25%
Project: Final report	Dec 4	30%

Lab assignments (2 x 10% = 20% total)

Students will complete two lab assignments, each worth 10%. You will have some time to work on these assignments during the lab session. Due dates are shown on the lab/tutorial schedule. Detailed instructions will be provided on the dates shown.

Research project (25% proposal + 30% final report = 55% total)

Students will complete a research project as a focal point of the course. This involves working in small groups for some stages of the process – e.g. designing a research instrument, collecting data – but each student will write up their own report to be submitted individually. Completing the proposal is a mandatory part of the project. Detailed instructions will be provided separately.

In-class quizzes (5 x 5% = 25% total)

Instead of a cumulative final exam there will be a series of small quizzes throughout the term on dates to be determined. Since you are expected to read the readings, attend all classes and come prepared anyway, this should not add 'extra' work. **There will be six quizzes; your best five will be counted.**

A note about "unmarked" lab tasks

Most weeks in the lab you will work on one of the steps involved in the major project. Sometimes you will hand these in for feedback from the TA or instructor. Other times you will give and receive peer feedback. While these tasks are not marked at the time, **they are marked later** when they become embedded in the proposal and report. **In 100% of cases, the feedback you get along the way leads to a better mark than you would receive without the feedback.** Therefore, these tasks are not "unmarked" (work for no credit) – they are "bonus marked" (marked after you have a chance to improve). I guarantee this system leads to higher grades!

Submission Policy and Late Policy

Material will be handed in at the beginning of class or lab on the due date. The penalty is 5% per day for material handed in late (weekends count as one day; the clock "starts" at the end of class/lab on the due date). I will no longer accept assignments after they have been handed back to the rest of the class. Material should be printed on letter size paper and stapled. Please do not use folders or protective covers – they are bulky. Late assignments should be placed in the drop box outside SSC 2322. Make sure the course name, instructor's name and TA's name are on the front page.

Additional Information

Mental Health: If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit [this site](#) for more information.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: See the [UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and a downloadable SMC](#). Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for missed exams and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Students seeking accommodation for missed work worth less than 10% of their final grade should speak with the instructor. Again, medical documentation should be submitted to the Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor.

Statement on Electronic Devices: Using electronic devices in class for purposes other than taking notes distracts you and everyone around you. Please do not surf, text, tweet, shop, etc. in class.

Special Examinations: A special examination is any examination other than the regularly scheduled exam. Special exams will be allowed only on receipt of medical documentation verifying a serious illness that kept the student from writing the exam as scheduled. Such documentation is confidential and kept in the student's file. In the case of missing a final exam for documented medical reasons, a special exam will be set within 30 days. Special exams will not be granted for occasions such as employment interviews, weddings, family reunions, vacations, misreading an exam timetable, oversleeping, or booking flights home for holidays.

Accessibility: UWO is committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons studying, visiting and working at Western. Please contact Dr. Hunsberger if you require material in an alternate format or any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. Please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 with any specific questions.

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 information via this link](#). The most common offense is failing to cite properly. If you quote directly, you must cite the author! Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, [here](#).

Turnitin.com: If you do original work and write and cite properly you have nothing to worry about. The university provides this mandatory statement: "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](#)."