

Geography 3250: Research Methods in Geography Course Outline: Fall 2018

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. (0.5 course)

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.

Place and Time

Lecture: Mondays, 2:30-4:30, UC-1225

Tutorial 1: Wednesdays, 10:30-12:30, P&AB-36* (TA: Becky)

Tutorial 2: Wednesdays, 12:30-2:30, SSC-1004* (TA: Moses)

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

Teaching team

Role	Name	Email	Office	Office hours
Instructor	Dr. Carol Hunsberger	chunsber@uwo.ca	SSC 2409	Thurs 1:30-3:00
TA	Rebecca Ellis	rellis23@uwo.ca	SSC 2310	Mon 10:00-11:00
TA	Moses Kansanga	mkansang@uwo.ca	SSC 1424	Fri 12:00-1:00

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; and
- Write a convincing research report that communicates contributions and limits of the findings.

Format

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

Prerequisites: Two full courses in Geography and third or fourth year status at the University. Senate regulation: “Prerequisite checking is the student’s responsibility. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

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, with notice)

Date	Topic	Notes	Readings: 4 th (3 rd)
Sept 10	Course introduction		None
Sept 17	Research problems and questions		Ch. 1 (1)
Sept 24	Research design	Quiz 1	Ch. 2, 18 (2, 18)
Oct 1	Ethics		Ch. 3 (11)
Oct 8	NO CLASS: Fall reading week		
Oct 15	Quantitative research I: Overview, observation	Quiz 2	Ch. 4, 7 (3, 6)
Oct 22	Qualitative research II: Surveys		Ch. 5, 6 (4, 5)
Oct 29	Sampling	Proposal due (20%)	Ch. 2, 12 (2, 12)
Nov 5	Qualitative research I: Overview, interviews, focus groups	Quiz 3	Ch. 9, 11 (8, 10)
Nov 12	Quantitative analysis		Ch. 13 (13)
Nov 19	Qualitative analysis	Quiz 4	Ch. 14 (14)
Nov 26	Qualitative research II: Ethnography, participatory research		Ch. 10 (9)
Dec 3	Course Review and Project Showcase	Final report due (30%)	



Lab schedule (may be adjusted, with notice)

Date	Topic	Notes	Readings: 4 th (3 rd)
Sept 12	Icebreaker, form group		
Sept 19	Research problems and questions	Write 400-word summary in lab (due next day)	Ch. 1 (1)
Sept 26	Literature review skills Lab 1: Critical appraisal	Meet in Library	
Oct 3	Ethics	Lab 1 due (10%)	Ch. 3 (11) CORE tutorial
Oct 10	NO LAB: Work on your proposal		
Oct 17	Observation Lab 2: Observation	Ethics due	Ch. 7 (6)
Oct 24	Research instrument design I	Lab 2 due (10%)	Ch. 5, 6 (4, 5)
Oct 31	Research instrument design II	Bring research instrument	Ch. 5, 6 (4, 5)
Nov 7	Independent work time		
Nov 14	Quantitative analysis	Meet in computer lab	Ch. 13 (13)
Nov 21	Qualitative analysis	Meet in computer lab	Ch. 14 (14)
Nov 28	Independent work time		
		Computer lab is available	

Methods of evaluation

Evaluation Components	Percentage of Course Grade	Assignment Schedule
In-class quizzes	30%	Sep 24, Oct 15, Nov 5, Nov 19
Lab 1: Critical appraisal	10%	Oct 3
Lab 2: Observation	10%	Oct 24
Project: Proposal	20%	Oct 29
Project: Final report	30%	Dec 3

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 (20% proposal + 30% final report = 50% 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 (3 x 10% = 30% total)

Instead of a final exam there will be a series of quizzes throughout the term. Each quiz will be based on the material covered since the previous one. **There will be four quizzes; your best three will count.**

A note about “unmarked” lab tasks

Most weeks in the lab you will work on one of the steps in the major project. Sometimes you will hand it 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. **The feedback you get along the way ALWAYS leads to a better mark than you would get without the feedback.** Therefore, these tasks are not “unmarked” (work for no credit) – they are marked after you have a chance to improve. I guarantee this 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 beginning 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 double-sided on letter size paper and stapled. Do not use folders or covers. 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.

Medical Issues: 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.

Statement on Electronic Devices: To enhance student engagement and learning I propose a **laptop-free classroom** during lectures. Lecture slides (with blanks to be filled in) will be posted on OWL before class. Please do bring your laptop to tutorials as you will often need to do online research or writing.

Accessibility: The Department of Geography strives to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. 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 519-661-2147 with any questions regarding accommodation. More information about [“Accessibility at Western”](#) is available.

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



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 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](https://www.turnitin.com).”

Support Services

[Student Support Services](#)

[Student Development Services](#)

Important Dates

September 6: Classes resume

September 14: Last day to add a full course or a second term half course

October 8: Thanksgiving Holiday – Department Office Closed

October 9-23: Fall Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

November 12: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

November 30: Last day to drop a full course without academic penalty

December 7: Classes end

December 8 and 9: Study days

December 10-21: Examination Period

December 21: Fall term ends