

University of Manitoba
Department of Sociology
SOCIOLOGY 077.229 RESEARCH METHODS SECTION L04 403 TIER
COURSE OUTLINE 2004-2005
INSTRUCTOR K.W. TAYLOR

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This document along with course policies and details on grade calculations and assignments can be found on the internet. Go to the UM webpage > Current Students tab > WebCT > my WebCT > Enter User Name and Password > 077.229 Sociology Research Methods.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Taylor, K.W. *Social Science Research: Theory and Practice*. Toronto: Nelson. 1990

Taylor, K.W. *Required Readings for 77.229 L01: Social science research reports*. 2004

Optional Textbook

Optional: SPSS Supplement Student Version 12.0 CD-ROM. Students who want to do their data analysis at home on their own computers should consider purchasing this disk. Those who are happy working in the campus student computing labs need not make this purchase. The student version on the CD-ROM has some limitations on numbers of cases variables built into it, but it will be adequate for assignments in this course. DO NOT BUY Version 11, which is also on sale in the Bookstore.

COURSE WORK

In the fall term, we study research design by looking at a variety of example projects and research reports and doing design exercises. The class will design and complete a simple survey study and a trend study.

In the winter term, students will design and complete individual projects using existing public use data sets.

First term

Exams (Oct 5, Nov 2)	20%
SPSS computer assignments #5, #12 (Usually Nov)	10%
Class survey assignments (Oct and Nov)	10%

Second term

Project design (Feb 1) and completion (Mar 3)	30%
Follow-up assignments (April 5)	12%
Poster presentation (April 7, 12)	8%

Both Terms: class participation (Every meeting) 10%

Final grades: Senate policy #1307 requires "a post-examination review of final grades in multisectioned courses that will ensure an equitable correspondence between grades and level of performance in all sections." Accordingly, the final grade distribution in this course may be raised or lowered to achieve this equity and, therefore, your final grade may be changed.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to teach problem solving, research, questioning and communication skills in social science methods. The course intends to communicate the excitement of social investigation, the satisfactions of demonstrating the accuracy/inaccuracy of hypotheses and the fascination of contributing to the solution of social problems through the application of research findings.

Sociology and social science are viewed as means of protecting, promoting and expanding human rights through the critical examination and reform of existing social organization and innovation of institutions and other organizational forms.

The instructor believes that effective learning occurs in a context where teachers and learners respect each other, where individual students control the way they learn and demonstrate mastery of skills, and where both teachers and learners are committed to doing their best.

It is assumed that students who enroll in this course are committed to becoming the best social investigators and social critics they can become. Student's active involvement in the form of questions, a willingness to debate issues, humor, creativity, and suggestions for improvement is welcome and necessary for the course to be an effective learning experience.

Both students and teachers in classrooms are involved in a process of increasing their ability to exercise good judgment through a process of trial and error--making mistakes, debating facts and judgments, using constructive criticism and correcting errors.

To accomplish the above, **SKILL MASTERY GRADING** will be followed for most assignments and exams. This means that work can be redone and regraded until the grade satisfies the student. Second and third assignments will be accepted for regrading only when (a) the original assignment is turned in by the due date and (b) all earlier attempts are also turned in. For the exams, SPSS and some other assignments there may be a further requirement that new data sets and/or new problems be undertaken: demonstrating skills mastery means more than the ability to correct mistakes and may mean demonstrating the ability to solve a similar problem on a variety of written materials and data sets.

However where re-dos involve only corrections, students are expected not only to correct the errors and shortcomings of the first attempts, but to make all changes and integrate them into the entire assignment. i.e. each attempt is a try at completing the assignment in a thoroughgoing way, not merely correcting the most glaring errors, and ignoring the relationships of the error to remainder of the assignment.

Note that **SKILLS MASTERY GRADING** may consume a considerable amount of instructor's and TA's time **so some patience may be required.**

COURSE CALENDAR

Each of the lettered topics below should take about 1 week to complete. Where more or less time is required, it will be announced in class.

FALL TERM

- A. Social research overview: interests, information, applications
Reading social science textbooks and research reports
RR: 3, 26, 31. SSR: Chapter 1, Chapter 2 Sections 2.1-2.5
- B. Social research design overview: patterns and recognition
RR: 1, 6, 17, 21
Errors and minimizing them: replication and triangulation
SSR: Ch 5.1-5.6
- C. Communicating About Research: Goals (testing theory and hypotheses) and results (findings)
RR: Articles already assigned; SSR Ch. 1, 2.6-7, 3, 4,
- D. Risks to participants and researchers: What risks? How avoid them?
RR 23, 29 Research Services Ethical materials on UM webpage. Exam: October 3
- E. Practical applications of research: of what, for what, by whom?
RR: 7, 10, SSR: Ch 2.1-2.5 (again)
- F. Research design again: pattern recognition in design phases Sample, measurements, variation, data analysis in use.
RR: 5, 8, 16, 30
SSR: Ch 5.7-5.10, 6
- G. Minimizing error: replication and triangulation; sample bias and measurement error
RR: Articles already assigned SSR: Chapter 7, 8
- H. Practical project design: select problem, choose hypotheses, visualize evidence, then work backwards. SSR 5.7-5.10 again
Exam: October 31
- I. Designing surveys: sampling and sample assessment, measurement (questionnaire) and error assessment, variation, data analysis.
RR: 27, 28
The class will design and carry out a simple survey, replicating and/or triangulating an existing survey.
- J. Designing trend studies: sample design, measurement design, variation design, data analysis design
RR: 18, 19. The class will design and carry out a simple trend study.
- K. Doing data analysis and describing research findings
SSR Chapter 9. See the course SPSS manual for assignment instructions.
This will be continued in the winter term

WINTER TERM

January: Individual research projects: students will select a topic, and design a study. Due date: Feb 1. A list of possible projects for which data exists will be provided by the instructor.

February: Complete the project and write a research report. Due date Mar 3 See the course webpage > course outline > Report Assignment, for complete instructions.

March: Complete project follow-up assignments (Due date April 5) and do a poster presentation of the findings (April 7, 12). See the course webpage > course outline > Follow-up Assignments, for complete instructions. Separate short follow-up assignments are required for dealing with the practical applications of the project findings, the statistical significance of the results and research funding and costing.

Class meetings in the winter term will be concerned with the details of the design and execution of the project. Students are expected to share their problems and solutions with the class for each step in the design and execution process.

Student Responsibility and Academic Integrity

If a test is missed for a legitimate medical reason the student must get in touch with the professor, present their medical certificate, and arrange for a make-up test. Under normal circumstances, the student is required to inform the professor of their request for a make-up test within one week of the original test date. Failure to request a make-up test within the expected time frame may result in ineligibility for a make-up test and a mark of zero for that test.

Cheating is a serious offense with grave consequences. Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on 'plagiarism and cheating' and 'examination impersonation' found in the University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar.

Disruption due to excessive talking or early departures from the classroom are especially distracting to large classes. Please be considerate and respectful of the needs and rights of others in the class. Students should be aware that persistent disruption may result in disbarment from the course. Any student who has a legitimate reason for leaving class early should inform the instructor at the beginning of the class.

The following numerical scores are used for averaging letter grades: A+=87, A=82, B+=77, B=72, C+=67, C=62, D=55. Grades are averaged upward if the score is less than .5 away from the next category. For example, a score of 79.50 would be graded as B+; a score of 79.51 would be graded as A.

An A+ grade in the context of SKILLS MASTERY GRADING means an assignment completed without any conceptual, technical, computational, writing or presentation errors. Improvements will result in improved grades, but A+s will be assigned ONLY when you 'get everything right'.