

# Sociology 077.739 (L01) Survey Research Methods

Department of Sociology  
University of Manitoba  
Winter 2006  
3 Credit Hours

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Instructor: Dr. Lori Wilkinson  
Office: 331 Isbister Building  
Phone: 474-8491

Class time: Wednesday 1pm to 4pm  
Class location: 401 Tier

Email: [Lori\\_Wilkinson@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Lori_Wilkinson@umanitoba.ca)

Website: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/sociology/faculty/wilkinson.shtml>

Office hours: TBA

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociology 077.739 is a graduate level course providing a general overview of survey research and includes the conceptualization of the research question, design of the survey, sampling, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation. The intention is to guide graduate students through all phases of a major survey research project. The course includes lectures, student projects, and student presentations. A public opinion survey measuring the attitudes of Winnipeggers on various items will be used as the guiding example throughout the course and as the basis of the major term assignment. Other surveys will be used as examples as appropriate.

As a result of this course, students will:

- Become familiar with the range of quantitative methodologies used in the social sciences
- Appreciate the value of mixing research methodologies, including qualitative and interpretive methodologies with quantitative methodologies
- Achieve a reasonable degree of skill in survey research techniques, including sampling strategies, data collection methods, and questionnaire design
- Become familiar with analysis of quantitative data using the statistical software SPSS
- Understand the information obtained from quantitative data in surveys
- Improve presentation skills (orally and in papers)

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## PREREQUISITES

Credit for undergraduate courses in both social science research methods *and* social statistics is required. For Sociology majors, completion of 077.448 is also required. Students who are unsure of their prerequisites should consult the instructor prior to the beginning of the course.

There is a lab component to this course. If you are unfamiliar with SPSS, you are required to attend 2-3 two hour labs with a qualified instructor. The labs have been designed to assist you in the preparation of your final research paper. Lab date and times to be determined at the beginning of the class (subject to the availability of the professor and students).

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## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

### Required Textbooks

Fowler, Floyd (1993) *Survey Research Methods*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fowler, Floyd (1995) *Improving Survey Questions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kirkpatrick, Lee A. and Brooke C. Feeney (2003) *A Simple Guide to SPSS for Windows for Versions 8.0, 9.0, 10.0, and 11.0*. Fifth Edition. Thomson/Wadsworth.

Optional textbook, available for purchase (and highly recommended for those less familiar with statistics)

Miles, Jeremy and Mark Shevlin (2001) *Applying Regression and Correlation: A Guide for Students and Researchers*. London: Sage Publications.

Weekly course readings in addition to the textbooks above will be placed in the mailroom. A schedule of weekly readings in addition to the Fowler texts will be distributed at the beginning of the term. These articles are intended to provide background for the day's discussion and will be a valuable resource for your future research and thesis work.

Students are also advised to review their coursework on research methods texts. Some of my favourite books for social science research methods include:

G. Bouma and R. Ling (2004) *The Research Process*, W. Lawrence Neuman (1995) *Social Research Methods*; Ted Palys (1997) *Research Decisions*; C.M. Judd and E.R. Smith (1992) *Research Methods in Social Relations*; Earl Babbie (1998) *The Practice of Social Research*; Winston Jackson (1995) *Doing Social Research*; and George Gray and Neil Guppy (1994) *Successful Surveys*.

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## ASSIGNMENTS

There is no final examination in this seminar. All students are graded on three assignments and a formal class presentation. Late assignments will receive a reduced grade (5% deducted per day for each day late, including weekends). All course requirements must be completed before a final grade is assigned.

PhD students are required to prepare fourth assignment. Instructions for this assignment will be provided along with the outline for the final assignment.

### *Description and Due Dates of Assignments*

#### Questionnaire construction assignment due: February 22

This assignment involves outlining a survey research question and constructing an appropriate questionnaire. Students may choose their own research topics.

Additional information about this assignment will be provided early in the course.

#### Class presentation (dates vary by student, begins on or before January 25)

Each student is expected to present a 15-minute paper on a course topic. Topics for the presentations will be chosen in class on September 22. Students will make a short presentation and will lead a short discussion about their topic. They will also prepare a paper outline of their presentation, including useful references, to distribute to other seminar participants. Students will be graded on the content and quality of the presentation and the handouts. A peer review, conducted by all students, will aid the instructor in assessing the appropriate grade. Students are invited to discuss their topics with the instructor in advance of their presentation.

Preparation of Journal Article **final paper due: April 5**

A dataset from which the term paper will be based is provided at the beginning of the course. For those students not familiar with SPSS, the lab is mandatory. Lab dates and lab instructor will be made available at the beginning of the course. More details on the research project to follow.

Part One: data analysis: **due March 30**

Part Two: completed journal paper **due April 5**

Additional assignment for PhD students only: **April 5**

*All assignments are expected to be structurally and grammatically correct. Marks will be deducted for these mistakes.*

*Grade Weights*

	<u>MA Students</u>	<u>PhD Students</u>
Assignment 1 Questionnaire	25%	25%
Assignment 2 Class Presentation:	20%	20%
Assignment 3 Final Paper		
-data analysis	20%	10%
-journal article	35%	35%
-PhD additional assignment	<u>n/a</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%	100%

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

<i>Grade Distribution:</i> A+ 90-100	B+ 75-79	C+ 65-69	D 50-59
A 80-89	B 70-74	C 60-64	F 0-49

- Late term papers and term paper outlines will be penalized 5% per day late (including weekends) to a maximum penalty of 35%. In the event of a medical emergency or other serious problem, extensions to the term paper may be granted but only if I am contacted prior to the deadline.
- Papers more than ONE WEEK LATE will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- Any student who submits an assignment or term paper that the professor suspects is plagiarized must submit to an oral examination based on the material in the assignment/paper. Should the professor find that the paper is plagiarized as a result of this examination, the student will face immediate disciplinary action. (Please see Academic Integrity last page.)

- Students are not permitted to reschedule presentations and assignments regardless of the scheduling of examinations and assignments in other courses.
- The University of Manitoba acknowledges the right of students to observe recognized Holy Days of their faith that fall within the academic year. The instructor should be notified in writing of a student's intended absence at least three weeks in advance.
- Students with special needs (who require aids, other supports or require extra time to write a test) should introduce themselves to the instructor at the beginning of the term in order to arrange suitable testing arrangements.

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## CLASS PRESENTATION TOPICS

Students will be asked to select their topic for presentation during class on January 11. Class presentations will begin on January 25. Presentations will occur weekly with one presentation per class day until all students have presented their topic (two students will present during the last two weeks of the course). To aid in organization, the suggested topics will be presented in order of selection. For instance, the student selecting "Ethnography" is expected to present on January 25.

Presentation 1: Ethnography

Presentation 2: Case Studies

Presentation 3: Content Analysis

Presentation 4: Narrative Analysis

Presentation 5: Response Sets

Presentation 6: Sensitive Questions

Presentation 7: Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Presentation 8: Focus Groups

Presentation 9: Quantitative Feminist Research

Presentation 10: Evaluation Research

Presentation 11: Action Research

Presentation 12: Replication and Triangulation

Presentation 13: Meta-Analysis

Presentation 14: Quantitative Historical Research

Presentation 15: Challenges in Recruiting Respondents

Presentation 16: Effects of Call-Display and other New Technology on Recruitment

Presentation 17: Obtaining Sensitive Information with FIPPA Legislation

*Students are encouraged to suggest their own topics in consultation with the instructor. Some topics will be deleted depending on the number of students enrolled in the course.*

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## WHAT CAN THIS CLASS DO FOR YOU?

This class is intended to introduce students to the basic principles behind conducting a major survey research project. By the end of the class, students should be able to:

- Prepare a journal article
- Conceptualize a research question and prepare a research proposal
- Link theories and literatures to research topics

- Operationalize independent variables
- Select an appropriate sample
- Design a questionnaire
- Apply appropriate data analysis
- Learn about research sensitive topics and ethical considerations
- Design and implement a survey research project from start to finish

In addition to the knowledge gained in learning to conduct a research project, this class has applications outside the course including:

- Critically evaluate journal articles, books and media reports
- Prepare professional research reports
- Learn rules for conducting interviews
- Training and hiring of interviewers
- Guidance in preparation of budgets and research grants
- Prepare appropriate statistical analyses with survey research data
- Organize and prepare effective professional presentations using Powerpoint

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## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence. Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on "plagiarism and cheating" and "examination impersonation" found in the *University of Manitoba Graduate Calendar*.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- Plagiarizing from books, journal articles and research reports
- Copying all or parts of other students' papers
- Having someone else write your paper
- Submitting a paper you have previously submitted to another professor for another course
- Working with other students in completing assignments
- Paraphrasing an author's ideas without proper referencing

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in this course. The instructor uses a variety of methods to check for academic dishonesty and has access to software geared to uncover plagiarism on the Internet. ***The penalties are severe and range from failing the course to expulsion from the university.*** Guidelines for properly referencing your papers and assignments will be distributed in class. If you would like clarification regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty, please arrange an appointment to see me.

**Important Notice:** The Faculty of Arts also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

**Note: the VW date for this course is March 17, 2006**