

L A K E H E A D U N I V E R S I T Y
D E P A R T M E N T O F S O C I O L O G Y

Dr. Paul R. Carr

Sociology 2911 – Social Research Traditions

Fall 2011

Wednesdays & Fridays: 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Instructor: Dr. Paul R. Carr
Office: OA3029
Classroom: OA2010 (This class is at the Orillia campus)
Email: prcarr@lakeheadu.ca
(NOTE: All communication will take place within the WebCT portal for this course)
Phone: TBA
Office hours: Wednesdays, 10am-noon and 4pm-5pm, and as negotiated
Instructor website: www.paulrcarr.net
Sociology web-page: <http://sociology.lakeheadu.ca>

1. Course Description

Sociology 2911 FA is an introduction to methods in sociological research and analysis. This course will cover basic concepts in research methods such as: developing a sociological research question, constructing a research hypothesis, collecting data for research (units of analysis), understanding the primary measurement issues (conceptual and operational definitions), examining logic and research ethic issues, and understanding the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods.

2. Required Text

Bouma, G. D., Ling Rod, and Lori Wilkinson. 2009. *The Research Process (Canadian Edition)*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
ISBN: 978-0-19-5422615-1

3. Course format

This course includes one fundamental text, which will provide a solid framework for our discussions, assignments and tests. The Instructor will give lectures on the content in the textbook, and will lead discussions with the assistance of short videos, practica and case studies. Questions of all kinds are welcome. There will be ample opportunity for discussion and clarification of issues, which will become increasingly complexified and problematized as we advance in the course. All assignment and communication will take place through WebCT.

4. Academic Guidelines

- a. A fundamental principle for the teaching and learning in this course is the free and open exchange of ideas in a climate of mutual respect, reinforcing an academic environment in which we can expand our horizons at the individual and collective levels.
- b. There is a penalty for assignments handed in late unless appropriate arrangements and/or documentation (i.e., medical notes) are provided.
- c. Written assignments must be formatted according to the ASA (American Sociological Association) Style Guide for referencing and citations. For more information, see the Department of Sociology webpage at <http://sociology.lakeheadu.ca/index.php> or the this website at <http://www.queensu.ca/sociology/files/styleguiderevised%20NOV06.pdf>
- d. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to the University regulations. For more information, see University Regulations section “IX Academic Dishonesty,” Lakehead University Calendar 10/11: <http://calendar.lakeheadu.ca/current/contents/regulations/univregsIXacdishon.html>
- e. Diversity and equity are concepts of central importance within an academic context, and we should be cognizant of the experiences, approaches and presence of our colleagues. Everyone should be made to feel comfortable in our classroom.
- f. Attendance in class, preparation to discuss readings and assignments, submitting work on time, and following the structure and rhythm of the class are the responsibility of students.
- g. The readings for this course are extremely important, and will assist students greatly as they undertake the required assignments and prepare for the final exam.
- h. Being able to write clearly, in good English, in a structure and style that is both effective and easy to follow, is important for this course. Students are encouraged to re-read and re-work their assignments before submitting them. The Instructor’s website contains a summary of

points that will assist in writing an effective paper. There are University resources available for those in need of assistance with writing.

- i. In accordance with University procedures, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. You must be registered with the appropriate University service.
- j. The instructor will be available at designated times, before and after class, and through the WebCT portal. Arrangements will be made for telephone contact. This syllabus is purposely detailed so as to provide a clear guide to where we are headed, what is expected, and how assignments will be evaluated.
- k. In order to facilitate a respectful, constructive and conducive learning environment, students are asked to turn off all electronic devices during class time.

5. Assignments

A. TESTS (2 X 25%)

There will be 2 tests throughout the term. They will contain multiple choice and short answer questions. These tests will be held in the regular classroom during classes. The material covered between tests will be the major focus of each test, although the exact details will be specified clearly in class well before each test. Each test will be worth 25% of the final grade.

THERE IS NO PROVISION FOR THE TESTS TO BE RETAKEN. FOR AN UNEXCUSED ABSENCE FROM A TEST, A ZERO WILL BE RECORDED. IN CASES OF MAJOR ILLNESS OR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, THE FINAL GRADE CAN BE REWEIGHTED TO MAKE UP FOR THE MISSING MARKS BUT ONLY IF I AM INFORMED BEFORE THE TEST AND WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS PROVIDED. IN THE INTEREST OF FAIRNESS TO ALL STUDENTS, AND IN PARTICULAR, TO THOSE THAT ADHER TO THESE GUIDELINES, NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE.

B. RESEARCH ARTICLE ASSIGNMENT (25%)

To apply concepts and techniques covered in class, you are asked to analyze one published article in an academic sociological journal such as: *The American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *European Sociological Review*, *Sociological Forum* and so on. You have to select one published research paper, and: a) indicate the research problem; b) whether it is qualitative or quantitative research, or some other form; c) key variables; d) measurement of these variables; d) research design; e) sampling procedure (if applicable); f) ethics issues (if applicable); and g) main conclusion(s). Significantly, you are asked to critique the paper: Are there

any errors, contradictions, problems, etc. in the research reviewed? Does the research appear to have a solid methodological foundation? Are there unanswered questions that should be addressed? Are the results communicated in an appropriate manner? What is your overall impression of the research? In undertaking this analysis, students should refer to and properly document at least 4 other appropriate references.

FORMAT

- i) Title page, including your name, course title, date and word-count + full bibliographic reference of the article you are reviewing; you should also create a title for your paper
- ii) SECTION 1: a) indicate the research problem (and approach used to understand it); b) whether it is qualitative or quantitative research, or some other form; c) key variables; d) measurement of these variables; e) research design; f) sampling procedure (if applicable); g) ethics issues (if applicable); and g) main conclusions
- iii) SECTION 2: Are there any errors, contradictions, problems, etc. in the research reviewed? Does the research appear to have a solid methodological foundation? Are there unanswered questions that should be addressed? Are the results communicated in an appropriate manner? What is your overall impression of the research?
- iv) SECTION 3: What is your overall impression of the research? Are there any particular implications related to this research? What can we learn from other research to assist us in critiquing the selected article?

Evaluation for the paper

- a) Structure and organization -----3
- b) Writing and communication -----3
- c) Content -----4
- d) Analysis -----5
- e) Discussion (+use of references)-----5

TOTAL →20

The paper should be **submitted through the WebCT portal (NOT through email)** within the body of the message as well as a WORD attachment. The paper should not be more than 1500 words.

IN THE INTEREST OF FAIRNESS FOR ALL STUDENTS, THIS ASSIGNMENT SHOULD BE HANDED IN AT THE PRESCRIBED TIME. LATE ASSIGNMENT WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT PENALTY WITH APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION. ASSIGNMENTS RECEIVED AFTER THE DUE DATE WILL BE PENALIZED. ONLY MAJOR ILLNESS AND EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES (WITH APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION) ARE ACCEPTABLE REASONS FOR HANDING IN AN ASSIGNMENT AFTER THE DUE DATE. IF A STUDENT CANNOT HAND IN AN ASSIGNMENT, THAT STUDENT MUST CONTACT THE PROFESSOR BEFORE THE DUE DATE (IN PERSON OR BY EMAIL), AND PROVIDE APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THIS POLICY WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED AND NO EXCEPTION WILL BE MADE.

STUDENTS WILL ALSO BE ASKED TO PRESENT THEIR PAPERS (5%). PRESENTATIONS WILL BE

10-15 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE CLASS. STUDENTS SHOULD SUMMAIZE THEIR PAPERS, DRAW ON PERTINENT AND SALIENT ISSUES, AND RAISE QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASS TO CONSIDER.

**C. DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT
(5% [PRESENTATION] + 20% [PAPER] = 25%)**

Depending on the size of the class, students will work individually or may work in groups of 2-3 to develop a research instrument on a topic of their choice. The instrument should include the following:

- 1) A research problem;
- 2) 6-8 key words;
- 3) A 150-word abstract outlining the research project;
- 4) A 300-word description of a proposed methodology, providing justification for the sample, the approach and the instrument;
- 5) A brief statement in relation to any ethical issues and concerns;
- 6) A survey instrument, including: a) a statement about the survey for participants/respondents; b) questions re: relevant demographic data; c) 10 close-ended questions; d) 10 open-ended questions; e) any other pertinent information.
- 7) A 200-word discussion of any particular issues, concerns, questions that would be helpful to fame and interpret the proposed research instrument as well as some thoughts on how that data could be analyzed.

The paper should be **submitted through the WebCT portal (NOT through email)** within the body of the message as well as a WORD attachment.

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STUDENTS WILL ALSO BE ASKED TO PRESENT THEIR PAPERS (5%). PRESENTATIONS WILL BE 10-15 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE CLASS. STUDENTS SHOULD SUMMAIZE THEIR PAPERS, DRAW ON PERTINENT AND SALIENT ISSUES, AND RAISE QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASS TO CONSIDER.

Evaluation for the paper

a)	Structure and organization -----	3
b)	Writing and communication -----	3
c)	Content -----	4
d)	Rigour, cohesion and pertinence of questions-----	5
e)	Overall project -----	5
		TOTAL →20

D. PARTICIPATION

Participation in this course is highly desirable. While a specific grade is not given for attendance, engagement, and contribution to the class, it may play a factor in augmenting one’s grade.

6. OVERVIEW of the GRADING

Test 1 -----	25	→Week 6
Test 2 -----	25	→Week 10
Research Article Assignment presentation -----	5	→Week 9
Research Article Assignment paper-----	20	→Week 10
Research Instrument presentation -----	5	→Week 11
Research Instrument paper -----	20	→Week 12
		TOTAL →100

7. Course structure and content

(NOTE: the following schedule may be modified slightly throughout the term)

DATE	TOPIC
Week 1	Course logistics/ introduction Chapter 1 “How we know what we know and how we know we know”
Week 2	Chapter 2 “Research as a way of knowing” Chapter 3 “Selecting a problem”
Week 3	Chapter 4 “Qualitative or quantitative research? where do I begin?” Chapter 5 “Selecting variables”

Week 4	Chapter 6 “Finding a variable’s measurements” Chapter 7 “Selecting a research design”
Week 5	Case studies
Week 6	Test # 1
Week 7	Chapter 8 “Selecting a sample” Chapter 9 “Ethics in human research” Chapter 10 “Making notes, organizing data, and constructing bibliographies”
Week 8	Chapter 11 “Summarizing and presenting data in quantitative research” Chapter 12 “Presenting data using qualitative research” Chapter 13 “Drawing conclusions” Chapter 14 “Reporting your research”
Week 9	Presentations (Research Article assignment)
Week 10	Test # 2 Research Article paper due
Week 11	Presentations (Research Instrument assignment)
Week 12	Review Research Instrument paper due