

# **SOCIAL SCIENCES 1RM3: HOW DO WE KNOW? DOING SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH**

**Winter, 2023**

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**TA:** To be determined  
**Location:** LRW-1055

**Class Times:** Mondays, 8:30 to 10:20am and Wednesdays, 8:30 to 9:20am

## **Course Description**

Social scientists come from diverse disciplines and study many different things. Some examples of topics studied by social scientists include: sources of economic inequality, access to health care, changing patterns of crime, differences in voting behaviour within countries, the impact of urban environments on mental and physical health outcomes, the interplay of religious practice and civil rights, and the impact of digital technologies on the documentation of Indigenous cultures. Social scientists use many different methods for studying these things. But while the topics and methods are different, there are many common elements to the overall research process. This course is designed to provide students with an overview of the diversity of research methods used within the social sciences (including social sciences at McMaster), how these methods are connected, and the challenges associated with each method. The emphasis will be on the methods by which we make social science discoveries.

## **Course Objectives**

This course addresses three University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (see, <http://ccl.mcmaster.ca/COU/pdf/Undergraduate%20Degree%20Level%20Expectations.pdf>).

- First, social scientists use a diverse range of methods to examine the social world. Gaining knowledge of these diverse methods will expand the student's depth and breadth of knowledge.
- Second, after learning about the strengths and weaknesses of these various methods, students will be able to consider and critically evaluate different approaches to understanding the social world. As part of this, students will gain an awareness of the limits to obtaining 'true' and 'valid' knowledge of social phenomena.
- Finally, this course will encourage students to discuss in class the methodological challenges that social scientists frequently encounter, and then discuss these challenges in greater depth in weekly group exercises and the exams. Student's communication and writing skills will be challenged and enhanced.

## **Required Materials and Texts**

- W. Lawrence Newman and Karen Robson, *Revel for Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Fourth Canadian Edition - Access Card, 4/E.

## **Class Format**

Lectures take place in the first half of each Monday class. Lecture slides will be posted on Avenue 4 to 5 days before each Monday lecture. In the lectures I provide brief reviews of the course topics, along with examples of the research method covered in each topic. I also summarize a current piece of research (done by a McMaster researcher) taken from a peer-reviewed, social science journal. Each week's article illustrates the research method being covered. The *Weekly Course Schedule* (found below) provides more detail about when each topic is covered. Weekly group-based exercises are started in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of each Monday class. The exercises are designed to reinforce the differences and similarities of the research methods covered in the course.

Wednesday's class time is devoted to groups completing their weekly exercises.

More details about group work organization and evaluation will be provided in the first class on Monday, January 9.

This course is designed around *active-learning*. Active-learning involves students being active in the learning process, and applying the material being taught. Weekly, group-based exercises are an integral part of the learning process. For the group-based work to be successful, students should be prepared, by having read the assigned textbook chapter **before** Monday's class. To encourage preparation, there are short (30-minute), weekly quizzes done on Avenue. The quizzes are based on course readings.

## **Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. Weekly class attendance, participation and group-based exercises – 30%, weekly exercises due by Thursdays, 10:00pm
2. Weekly online quizzes (on Avenue) – 10%, Tuesdays, 5:00 to 5:30pm (refer to the *Weekly Course Schedule* for the specific dates)
3. Midterm examination – 30%, February 27, 8:30 to 10:20pm
4. Final examination – 30%, day and time to be set by Registrar's Office

## **Course Evaluation – Details**

### **Weekly class attendance, participation and group-based exercises (30%); weekly exercises are due by Thursdays, 10:00pm**

This component of the final grade is determined from three things:

- Attendance at Monday and Wednesday class sessions;
- Self- and peer-assessments - done 2 times during the term, where you evaluate your own contribution to your group's work, and anonymously evaluate the contribution of other group members; self- and peer-assessment grades are weighted by attendance at Monday and Wednesday sessions;
- Grades on weekly group work submissions.

### **Weekly online quizzes (10%), refer to the Weekly Course Schedule for dates**

Each quiz will have 15 multiple-choice/true-false questions. They are scheduled for Tuesdays, 5:00 to 5:30pm, and completed on Avenue. The overall quiz grade is the average of your individual quiz grades. Everyone is permitted to miss one, and only one, quiz without penalty; you do **not** need to submit an MSAF for that missed quiz. The questions for each quiz are based on the topic covered during that week.

### **Midterm Examination (30%), February 27, 8:30 to 10:20am**

The midterm exam will be a mix of multiple-choice, true-false, and written interpretation questions. The midterm exam will cover the topics from the first 6 topics.

### **Final Examination (30%), Date to be set by Registrar's Office, and will be held during the April examination period**

The final exam will be a mix of multiple-choice, true-false, and written interpretation questions. The exam will mostly cover the topics completed after the midterm exam, along with some questions based on foundational materials from earlier weeks.

## **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

### **Week 1 (January 9-13)**

**Topic, January 9:** Introduction and Course Overview

**Topic, January 11:** Doing Social Research

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 1

### **Week 2 (January 16-20)**

**Topic:** Theory and Social Research

**Reading:** Textbook, Chapter 2

**Note:** Quiz 1, January 17, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #1, Due January 19, 10:00pm

### **Week 3 (January 23-27)**

**Topic: Research Ethics**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 3

**Note:** Quiz 2, January 24, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #2, Due January 26, 10:00pm

### **Week 4 (January 30-February 3)**

**Topic: Literature Review**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 4

**Note:** Quiz 3, January 31, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #3, Due February 2, 10:00pm

### **Week 5 (February 6-10)**

**Topic: Research Design**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 5

**Note:** Quiz 4, February 7, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #4, Due February 19, 10:00pm

### **Week 6 (February 13-17)**

**Topic: Measurement & Review of Weeks 1-6**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 6

**Note:** Quiz 5, February 14, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #5, Due February 16, 10:00pm

**(February 20-24) MID-TERM RECESS – No Readings, No Classes, No Quizzes, No Tests, No Assignments**

**Week 7 (February 27-March 3)**

**Topic:** No new topic

**Readings:** No new readings

**Note:** Midterm Examination, **February 27, 8:30 to 11:20pm** (covers Weeks 1 to 6)

**Week 8 (March 6-10)**

**Topic: Sampling**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 7

**Note:** Quiz 6, March 7, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** No group exercise submission this week; but there will be a group-based exercise (on sampling) that I will lead you through in the Wednesday class.

**Week 9 (March 13-17)**

**Topic: Survey Research**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 8

**Note:** Quiz 7, March 14, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #6, Due March 16, 10:00pm

**Week 10 (March 20-24)**

**Topic: Experiments**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 9

**Note:** Quiz 8, March 21, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #7, Due March 23, 10:00pm

**Week 11 (March 27-31)**

**Topic: Quantitative Research**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapter 11

**Note:** Quiz 9, March 28, 5:00 to 5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #8, Due March 30, 10:00pm

**Week 12 (April 3-7)**

**Topic: Qualitative Research**

**Readings:** Textbook, Chapters 12 & 13

**Note:** Quiz 10, April 4, 5:00-5:30pm

**Note:** Group Exercise #9: Due April 6, 10:00pm

**Week 13 (April 10-12)**

**Topic: Term Review**

**Readings:** None

**Note:** No quiz this week

**Note:** No group exercise submission this week

**Note:** April 12 is an optional AMA (ask me anything) class

## **Course Policies**

### **Submission of Assignments**

Assignments will only be accepted via submission to the assignment dropbox folder on the Avenue to Learn course site.

### **Late Assignments**

Late assignments will be penalized one grade per day (e.g. an assignment with a grade of B+ will become a B) unless you have followed the absence procedure as detailed below in the section titled *Absences, Missed Work, Illness*.

### **Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self-reporting tool for undergraduate students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work worth less than 25% of the course grade. Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period.

You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is **YOUR** responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation.

If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you **MUST** contact your Associate Dean’s Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence. Students will only be allowed a make-up exam if they apply for and receive a deferment from their Faculty office.

### **Avenue to Learn**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **University Policies**

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

If you have any questions regarding plagiarism in relation to assignments and exams, please contact me.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

### **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a [RISO](#) accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The *Copyright Act* and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## **Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

## **Course Modification**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check



his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Some aspects of the design of the course may change prior to the start of classes so as to incorporate features, where possible, that are intended to improve the course in light of the fall online experience.

### **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

### **Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F