Introduction to Sociological Research  
Summer 2021

**Instructor:** Dr. Stephen Lin

**Email:** cclin@mcmaster.ca

**Office Hours:** by appointments

**Teaching Assistant:**  
**TA email:**

# Course Description

This course will introduce you to the methods that sociologists use to conduct research. You will learn how to generate and frame research questions, measure concepts, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various existing research findings and methods.

This is an online course offered through Avenue-to-Learn (A2L, Avenue). Students will work through weekly online modules to complete the course. There are no live online lectures or tutorials.

# Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

* Identify key aspects of qualitative and quantitative research and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each.
* Distinguish between poor and well-crafted research methods in sociology
* Understand the basic function of SPSS
* Design a realistic research project that incorporates all elements of the research process
* Thoughtfully analyze and evaluate published research from a scholarly perspective

# Required Materials and Texts

Babbie, Earl, Jason D. Edgerton, and Lance Roberts. 2020. [*Fundamentals of Social Research Fifth Canadian Edition*](https://www.cengage.ca/shop/ProductDisplay?urlRequestType=Base&catalogId=10052&categoryId=&productId=1784538&errorViewName=ProductDisplayErrorView&urlLangId=-1&langId=-1&top_category=&parent_category_rn=&storeId=10651). Toronto: Cengage. Paperback, ISBN10: 0-17-689595-7; ISBN13: 978-0-17-689595-2.

# Class Format

This is an online course offered through Avenue-to-Learn. Students will work through weekly online modules to complete the course. There are no live online lectures or tutorials. There will be pre-recorded lectures made available to you on the designated dates (see weekly course schedule below).

# Course Evaluation

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Date** | **Value** |
| Online Midterm Exam | May 25 | 30% |
| Group Research Proposal | June 18 | 30% |
| Online Final Exam | June 17 | 40% |
|  |  | 100% |

# Evaluation Breakdown

**Online Midterm Exam (30%) – Tuesday, May 25**

This online midterm is worth 30% of the total grade. It will cover material from May 3 (Theory & Social Research) to May 18 (Sampling). There will be multiple-choice questions only on this exam. Pre-recorded lecture material should be your primary preparation resources. Anything from the book chapters that are not mentioned in pre-recorded lectures will not be tested.

**Online Final Exam (40%) – Thursday, June 17**

This online final exam is worth 40% of the total grade. It will cover everything you learn in this course. However, more questions will be from material covered after the midterm. This exam includes multiple choice questions only. Pre-recorded lecture material should be your primary preparation resources. Anything from the book chapters that are not mentioned in pre-recorded lectures will not be tested.

### Group Research Proposal (Friday, June 18 by 11:59pm) – 30%

In this course, you will be paired up with other students and complete a group research proposal based on your group interest in a sociological or criminological topic. The requirement for this written assignment is listed as follows:

* Introduction & Research Rationale (1 page)
* Social Importance (1 – 1.5 pages)
* Literature Review (2 - 2.5 pages)
* Research Design (2 – 2.5 pages)

Important Reminders

* Length: **8 pages** max., double spaced
* Late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless you provide legitimate reasons for late submission
* One submission per group via the Avenue dropbox.

\*\*Detailed instruction of this research project will be provided on Avenue.

# Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Topic** | **Reading** |
| May 4 | Introduction to the Course  Theory & Social Research | Ch. 1, 2 |
| May 6 | Designing a Research Study | Ch. 4 |
| May 11 | Conceptualization, Operationalization & Measurement | Ch. 5 |
| May 13 | Experiment & Survey Research  Survey Design | Ch. 7 Ch. 8 |
| May 18 | Sampling | Ch. 17 |
| May 20 | Literature Review | Ch. 6 |
| May 25 | **Online Midterm (May 25)** | None |
| May 27 | In-depth interview  Field Research | Ch. 10 Ch. 11 |
| June 1 | Nonreactive Research &  Secondary Data Analysis | Ch. 9 |
| June 3 | Ethics in Social Research | Ch. 3 |
| June 8 | Quantitative Data Analysis | Ch. 14, 16 |
| June 10 | Qualitative Data Analysis | Ch. 13 |
| June 15 | Research Paper Working Day | None |
| June 17 | **Final Exam (June 17)  Group Research Proposal Due (June 18)** | None |

# Course Policies

## Submission of Assignments All the assignments must be submitted through the dropbox available on Avenue to Learn.

## Late Assignments

Note: late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless accommodation is given.

## 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”.

## 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. Academiccredentials 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 academiccredit 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](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)**.**

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.

## Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca%20) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [*Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf)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](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Academic-Accommodation-for-Religious-Indigenous-and-Spiritual-Observances-Policy-on.pdf) 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](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities.pdf) (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.

## 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:

| **MARK** | **GRADE** |
| --- | --- |
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-89 | 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 |