

McGill University
Department of Sociology

COURSE OUTLINE

Sociology 580—Social Research Design and Practice

(**Location:** Leacock 819 from 12:35-2:25 on Tuesdays)

Fall 2022

Professor Jason T. Carmichael

Office: Leacock 814

Office Hours: Mondays from 10:00-11:45 and by appointment

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Course Overview:

This course provides a broad overview of the methodological approaches employed by sociologists. This is not an easy task because, unlike many other disciplines, sociology does not have a finite set of analytical tools that most of us rely on to conduct our research. In this course, we will survey some of the more widely used approaches in the discipline. Beyond outlining some of the strengths, weaknesses, and constraints of these methodological tools, we will also discuss the fundamental principles and logic of research. Finally, we will consider some practical aspects of research such as academic writing, reviewing articles, and academic presentations.

Course Requirements:

1) Outline of two articles in your subfield for writing structure.

Construct a detailed outline of two articles in your subfield from a leading journal.

2) Critical Review of Academic Article.

Choose an article within your subfield and write a critical review. Here, your goal will be to consider yourself a blind reviewer of the article for the Editor of the journal. Please choose an article from the following journals: *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Social Forces*, or the flagship journal of your subfield. IF you opt to review an article other than *AJS*, *ASR* and *SF*, please have it approved by me in advance. The article must be an empirical study.

3) SSHRC (or FRQSC) Fellowship Research Proposal/ MA Research Proposal

This project aligns closely with the SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship application proposal. The proposal will be two pages, single spaced, using 12-point font. Please use 1-inch margins. See SSHRC instructions here: <https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/instructions/doctoral/doctoral-eng.aspx#prop>

**Note that the SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship deadline is in mid-October. Those of you who intend to submit this year can work with me on revisions in an expedited fashion to meet the deadline.

4) **Final Prospectus**

The prospectus is an extension of the earlier proposal. It will resemble the front-end of a journal article submission (Introduction through the data/methods section). MA students should write the prospectus as if they are preparing the MA Research Paper. Doctoral students should approach this as if they are putting together their dissertation proposal. The format should be consistent with the style of introduction typically seen in your subfield, but must include a clear, concise research question, theoretical considerations, relevant literature, and any tension in the literature that your work may help resolve. The data/methods section should identify the data you will use, sampling procedures you will utilize, and the methodological approach you will adopt. Roughly 15 pages (+/- 1 page), double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins.

5) **Article Presentations and In-Class Participation.**

One-two student(s) will be required to present a brief summary (10-12 minutes) and lead the discussion for each of the articles outlined below. The person(s) assigned to the article will also be responsible for writing a 1–2-page single-spaced summary of the article or chapter and make this available to the rest of the class **prior to your presentation**. This summary should include criticisms, limitations, and weaknesses of the article with a focus on data and methodology. **Please bring one hard copy of the summary for me to look at during your presentation.**

Participation in class discussions and small group work is a vital component of the course. Students will be graded on participation, and you can't participate unless you **attend class** and do the readings (attendance will be part of your participation grade in the class). To promote useful class discussion, each student should have read all the required readings prior to class. Students should be prepared to share their thoughts and comments during class. **NOTE THAT STUDENTS WHO MISS MORE THAN TWO CLASSES THROUGHOUT THE TERM WILL NOT RECEIVE A FINAL COURSE GRADE HIGHER THAN AN A-**

6) **Weekly Discussion Questions**

On weeks you are not presenting an article, students should prepare two questions per reading assignment to facilitate discussion in the class. I will *not* collect these questions, rather, I will randomly ask student(s) in the class to offer their questions to the class about a given article.

7) **Attendance at two academic talks**

The primary mechanism of dissemination through which academics disseminate their research is through academic journals and books, but the presentation of our research through talks also serves as a vital vehicle of dissemination and acts as an important tool to receive feedback on your work prior to submitting to an academic journal or book

publisher. It is critical for students to understand what a good talk looks like, in terms of structure and delivery.

Grade Distribution:

Note: Final grades will be based on a relatively subjective assessment of your overall work in the course (presentations, participation, and final paper using the weights mentioned above). The grade weights outlined below only serve as a guide. Finally, NO EXTRA CREDIT WILL BE MADE AVAIABLE.

1) Outline of two academic articles.	5%
2) Critical Review of Academic Article.	5%
3) Fellowship Research Proposal	10%
4) Final Prospectus	50%
5) Article Presentations and In-Class Participation.	20%
6) Weekly Discussion Questions	5%
7) Attendance at two academic talks	5%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: all dates are tentative, and readings are subject to change during the term. Any changes will be announced in class.

Week 1: Sept 6th.

Introduction to the course.

Sociology - What would you say we do here?

Week 2: Sept. 13th – Overview of the Discipline and Some Random Draws

This week we will begin with an overview of the discipline (Moody and Light) and a few pulls from the flagship journal of the discipline. The goal here is to get a sense of what we do as sociologists, the breadth of the field and how we get it done methodologically. In other words, we are going to get our feet wet this week. **Note:** when reading articles for the course, pay particular attention to style, structure, and be critical of data and methods. _

-Moody, J., & Light, R. (2006). A view from above: The evolving sociological landscape. *The American Sociologist*, 37(2), 67-86.

-Brayne, S. (2017). Big data surveillance: The case of policing. *American Sociological Review*, 82(5), 977-1008.

-Mazrekaj, D., De Witte, K., & Cabus, S. (2020). School outcomes of children raised by same-sex parents: Evidence from administrative panel data. *American Sociological Review*, 85(5), 830-856.

-Decoteau, C. L., & Daniel, M. (2020). Scientific hegemony and the field of autism. *American Sociological Review*, 85(3), 451-476.

Week 3: Sept. 20th – The Research Question, the Accumulation of Knowledge, and Ethics

Bryman, A. (2007). The research question in social research: what is its role?. *International journal of social research methodology*, 10(1), 5-20.

Mears, Ashley. "Puzzling in sociology: On doing and undoing theoretical puzzles." *Sociological Theory* 35, no. 2 (2017): 138-146.

Abbott, Andrew. "Reconceptualizing knowledge accumulation in sociology." *The American Sociologist* 37, no. 2 (2006): 57-66.

ASA Code of Ethics (On MyCourses)

Week 4: Sept. 27th– Academic Writing, Replication, and Peer-Review

DUE: Outline of two academic articles from reputable sociology journals.

Becker, Howard S. 1986. "Terrorized by the Literature." *Writing for Social Scientists*. U Chicago Pres. (Excerpt on MyCourses)

Abbott, Andrew. "Notes on replication." *Sociological Methods & Research* 36, no. 2 (2007): 210-219.

A Open Science Collaboration. "Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science." *Science* 349, no. 6251 (2015).

Tomkins, Andrew, Min Zhang, and William D. Heavlin. "Reviewer bias in single-versus double-blind peer review." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no. 48 (2017): 12708-12713.

Franco, Annie, Neil Malhotra, and Gabor Simonovits. "Publication bias in the social sciences: Unlocking the file drawer." *Science* 345, no. 6203 (2014): 1502-1505.

Week 5: Oct. 4th –Publication Bias, Correlation and “causality” in sociology.

Smaldino, Paul E., and Richard McElreath. "The natural selection of bad science." *Royal Society open science* 3, no. 9 (2016): 160384.

Franco, Annie, Neil Malhotra, and Gabor Simonovits. "Publication bias in the social sciences: Unlocking the file drawer." *Science* 345, no. 6203 (2014): 1502-1505.

Mahoney, James. "Beyond correlational analysis: Recent innovations in theory and method." In *Sociological forum*, pp. 575-593. Eastern Sociological Society, 2001.

Abbott, Andrew. "The causal devolution." *Sociological Methods & Research* 27, no. 2 (1998): 148-181.

Week 6: Oct. 11th – No Class – Reading Break

I will be in my office on the make-up day (FRIDAY OCT 14th) during class hours to discuss the research proposal with those who would like to discuss it with me.

Week 7: Oct. 18th – Sampling, Validity and Measurement

DUE: Fellowship Research Proposal

Lucas, Jeffrey W. "Theory-testing, generalization, and the problem of external validity." *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 3 (2003): 236-253.

Earl, Jennifer. "Methods, movements, and outcomes." *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* (2000).

Berk, Richard A. "An introduction to sample selection bias in sociological data." *American sociological review* (1983): 386-398.

Context Article: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/13/understanding-how-2020s-election-polls-performed-and-what-it-might-mean-for-other-kinds-of-survey-work/>

Harris, David R., and Jeremiah Joseph Sim. "Who is multiracial? Assessing the complexity of lived race." *American sociological review* (2002): 614-627.

Week 8: Oct. 25th – Field Experiments - Audit Studies

Pager, Devah. "The mark of a criminal record." *American journal of sociology* 108, no. 5 (2003): 937-975.

Gaddis, S. Michael. "Discrimination in the credential society: An audit study of race and college selectivity in the labor market." *Social Forces* 93, no. 4 (2015): 1451-1479.

Kugelmass, Heather. "'Sorry, I'm Not Accepting New Patients' an audit study of access to mental health care." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 57, no. 2 (2016): 168-183.

Eid, Paul. "Les inégalités «ethnoraciales» dans l'accès à l'emploi à Montréal: le poids de la discrimination." *Recherches sociographiques* 53, no. 2 (2012): 415-450.

Week 9: Nov. 1st – Ethnographic Methods

DUE: Critical review of an academic Article from a reputable sociology journal_

Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. "A tale of two cultures: Contrasting quantitative and qualitative research." *Political analysis* 14, no. 3 (2006): 227-249.

Goffman, Alice. "On the run: Wanted men in a Philadelphia ghetto." *American sociological review* 74, no. 3 (2009): 339-357.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/magazine/the-trials-of-alice-goffman.html>

Jackson, Will. "Researching the policed: critical ethnography and the study of protest policing." *Policing and society* (2019).

Duneier, Mitchell. "How not to lie with ethnography." *Sociological Methodology* 41, no. 1 (2011): 1-11.

ASA Code of Ethics (On MyCourses). – If you didn't read it in week 3, read it now.

Week 10: Nov. 8th – Secondary Data, Survey Data, Qualitative and Quantitative Content Analysis.

Daly, Kathleen. 1987. "Discrimination in the Criminal Courts: Family, Gender, and the Problem of Equal Treatment." *Social Forces* 66: 152-175.

Jacobs, David, Zhenchao Qian, Jason T. Carmichael, and Stephanie L. Kent. "Who survives on death row? An individual and contextual analysis." *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 4 (2007): 610-632.

Carmichael, Jason T., and Robert J. Brulle. "Elite cues, media coverage, and public concern: an integrated path analysis of public opinion on climate change, 2001–2013." *Environmental Politics* 26, no. 2 (2017): 232-252.

Brulle, Robert J. "Environmental discourse and social movement organizations: A historical and rhetorical perspective on the development of US environmental organizations." *Sociological inquiry* 66, no. 1 (1996): 58-83.

Context: See my narrative coding of news articles, press releases and floor speeches on climate change. Also, see Excel coding sheet. PDF and Excel on MyCourses.

Week 11: Nov. 15th – Replication, Meta-Analyses and mixed-methods.

Wilson, Franklin D., Gale L. Smoke, and J. David Martin. "The replication problem in sociology: A report and a suggestion." *Sociological Inquiry* 43, no. 2 (1973): 141-149.

Pratt, Travis C., and Francis T. Cullen. "Assessing macro-level predictors and theories of crime: A meta-analysis." *Crime and justice* 32 (2005): 373-450.

Pearce, Lisa D. "Mixed methods inquiry in sociology." *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, no. 6 (2012): 829-848.

Dumont, Hanna, Denise Klinge, and Kai Maaz. "The many (subtle) ways parents' game the system: Mixed-method evidence on the transition into secondary-school tracks in Germany." *Sociology of Education* 92, no. 2 (2019): 199-228.

Collier, David. "Translating quantitative methods for qualitative researchers: The case of selection bias." *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 2 (1995): 461-466.

Week 12 and 13:

Nov. 22nd – Day 1 of Presentations of Final Prospectus

Nov. 29th – Day 2 of Presentations of Final Prospectus

DUE – FINAL PROSPECTUS (Prospectus must be EMAILED to me just prior to the beginning of class).

FINAL PROSPECTUS DUE ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS (Nov. 29th). THEY MUST BE TURNED IN DURING THE CLASS. ANY PAPERS TURNED IN AFTER THE END OF THE LAST CLASS WILL BE MARKED DOWN.

Important Notes:

No incompletes will be given in the course except in the most extreme cases and must be approved by Prof. Carmichael prior the last day of classes. STUDENTS WHO TURN THE FINAL PAPER IN AFTER THE LAST DAY OF CLASS WILL NOT GET A COURSE GRADE HIGHER THAN AN A-.

Additional Points:

- 1) McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).***

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

- 2) In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.***

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant

a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

- 3) *In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.***
- 4) *If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) at 514-398-6009 before you do this.***

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