A. Course Description

This course is designed to give you a comprehensive overview of the research methods used by sociologists. It will familiarize you with the tools, procedures, types of analysis, and ethics of sociological research, helping you to think logically, live ethically, and generate new knowledge. These tools and methods will be valuable to you in nearly any kind of job you undertake or graduate program in which you enroll in the future, whether it is business, law, social work, administration, or any kind of social science. As such, this course helps establish a framework for lifelong learning. This course will enable you to digest research results reported in the media with greater comprehension and, more importantly, to learn to question critically what you read and hear. This course alone is not sufficient to bring you up to speed with all of the methodological approaches that professional sociologists use, but I hope it intrigues you to pursue further courses and projects in social science research.

During the semester we will examine both qualitative and quantitative methods used by sociologists to study the world around them. We will cover various topics, including ethics, sociological paradigms, research design, variable operationalization and measurement, and several modes of data collection and observation. These topics will enhance our analytical skills and further our ability to analyze the world from a sociological perspective.
B. Methods of Evaluation

Assignments (25% each). There are four assignments, each worth 25% of your final grade. The full assignments are given in a separate handout. In short:

Assignment #1: Conceptualization and Research Design
Assignment #2: Sampling, Survey Construction and Quantitative Analysis
Assignment #3: Qualitative Analysis and Ethics
Assignment #4: Content and Discourse Analysis

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95 - 100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Excellent. Superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 - 94</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 - 84</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 - 79</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Good. Clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73 - 76</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 72</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.70</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 - 66</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 - 62</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.70</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 59</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>Marginal performance. (Generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 54</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 0 - 49 | F | 0.00 | Fail. Assigned to students:
\begin{itemize}
  \item a) who do not meet the academic requirements of the course, or
  \item b) who cease to continue in the course, but do not withdraw as per Mount Royal University policy.
\end{itemize}|

C. Course Policies

If you do not agree to the following conditions, you should not take this course:

- Accommodation: Students with special needs (e.g., learning disabilities, hearing, sight or physical impairment) should let me know how I can make the learning environment more comfortable for you. For those to which it is applicable, academic concession documentation
must be supplied to me in the first two weeks of classes.

- **Attendance:** If you are aware of events that may preclude you from attending a series of class meetings, you **must** let me know as soon as reasonably possible. After the fact, you will not have the opportunity to make up missed work (with the exception of unforeseen injury or illness. DO NOT come to class if ill, particularly if contagious). If you have any problem with the course, including non-attendance, come to see me as soon as you can. Early on we can resolve the problem, but by late in the course it may be too late for me to be of help. I do not penalize nonattendance per se, but it will be impossible to obtain a high mark in the course if you are not consistently present.

- **Technology:** Refrain from using iPhone and/or any handheld device during class—no calling or texting. You may use your laptop in class (solely for course purposes) provided it is not distracting to any other students and/or the instructor. This is a privilege, not a right; therefore, this rule can be changed at the discretion of the instructor.

- **E-mail:** You may always e-mail questions or concerns to me, but be advised that I normally reserve at least one business day to respond. So, an e-mail sent on Friday may not be answered until Monday. Usually I will respond much sooner, but occasionally other commitments may keep me from responding immediately, so please leave at least one business day for a response. If questions require lengthy responses I will likely ask you to come to office hours to discuss the issue.

- **Student-Athletes:** MRU Student Athletes who miss a test because they are travelling for a competition must provide complete documentation (e.g., note from their coach) outlining the dates of travel and will then be allowed to schedule a time to make up the test. If a student athlete misses class the day a paper is due (with prior notice provided), the paper will be due at the start of the first class after the student returns from travel.

- **Honesty:** Students suspected of cheating on an examination or plagiarizing in an assignment, in the instructor’s opinion, will result in the application of the most severe sanctions possible as provided for under the MRU Student Code of Conduct. Students are expected to comply with all university regulations as outlined in the MRU Calendar. Students are expected to understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it (if you have any questions please see the supplementary materials/handouts available at the information desk in the library).

- **Turning in Assignments:** All papers should be turned in at the start of the class meeting at which they are due. E-mail attachments are not an acceptable medium for turning in work.

- **Late Work:** All assignments will lose 10 percentage points for each day they are late. This does not count weekends. So, 18/20 paper, due Thursday, will receive a mark 16/20 if turned in on Friday and a mark of 14/20 if turned in Monday (a deduction of 2.0 points per day).

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to see me at your convenience. I hope you enjoy the course and I wish you every success in your personal and academic pursuits.

**D. Office Hours.**

Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00-2:00
Office hours will be held in B349-C

E. Learning Skills Centre

If you are interested in refining (or developing) your studying, note taking, or writing abilities, consider visiting the Learning Skills Centre at T-123 or calling them at 403-440-6452. Their free hands-on assistance and group workshops could help you become a more efficient and effective student. They can be of assistance with study skills, text book reading, exam taking, or a number of other student needs.

F. Reading


G. Outline of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

Week 1 — Introduction to Social Science Inquiry
January 12: FSR, Chapter 1 (Human Inquiry and Science)
January 14: FSR, Chapter 2 (Paradigms)

Week 2 — Approaches to Knowledge and Research Design
January 19: FSR, Chapter 4 (Research Design)
January 21: No reading

Week 3 — Research Design, Continued
January 26: FSR, Chapter 5 (Conceptualization)
January 28: No reading

Week 4 — Sampling and Ethics
February 2: FSR, Chapter 6 (Sampling)
February 4: FSR, Chapter 3 (Ethics)

Week 5 — Quantitative Research: Survey Construction and Administration
February 9: FSR, Chapter 8 (Survey)
February 11: Assignment #1 Due

[No class on February 16 or 18 – Reading Break]

Week 6—Quantitative Data Analysis
February 23: FSR, Chapter 14 (Quantitative Analysis) and Chapter 15 (Multivariate Analysis)
February 25: No reading; bring questionnaire/survey to class!

Week 7— Wrap up Quantitative Research
March 2: No Class
March 4: No Class; Assignment #2 Due

Week 8— Interviewing and Qualitative Research
March 9: FSR, Chapter 11 (Interviews)
March 11: FSR, Chapter 13 (Qualitative Analysis)

Week 9—Qualitative Data Analysis
March 16: Conducting Interviews; Bring interview schedule/guide to class!
March 18: FSR, Chapter 7 (Experiments)

Week 10— Observation & Ethnography
March 23: FSR, Chapter 10 (Field Research)
March 25: Assignment #3 Due

Week 11—Observation & Ethnography, cont’d
March 30: No reading
April 1: No reading

Week 12—Discourse and Content Analysis
April 6: FSR, Chapter 9 (Unobtrusive Research)
April 8: No reading

Week 13—Critiques of Social Research, Writing Up Social Research
April 13: No reading
April 15: No reading

Assignment #4 Due Friday, April 17 by 2:00 p.m. to Sociology/Anthropology Dropbox outside room B278