

**DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
GGR 271—SOCIAL RESEARCH METHODS
WINTER 2016 – Monday 11-1pm, PB B250**

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Wednesday 11-1pm

Course Description:

This is a practical course on scholarly and field methods designed to enable students to carry out their own research projects. The emphasis is on qualitative and interpretive research methods. Topics covered include the philosophy of qualitative research, interviewing, questionnaire design, sampling approaches, content analysis of written and graphic material, data coding, and focus groups. The course also focuses on the ethics of carrying out primary and secondary research.

A Few Ground Rules:

1. Please use e-mail judiciously. If you are having a problem in the course, first e-mail the head TA (who's name and email address will be provided in the first week of class). Please do not ask questions over e-mail that cannot be answered with one or two sentences. If you have a longer question, we would be happy to answer them during our office hours.
2. Assignment Submissions: All assignments are to be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the specified due date.
3. Late Penalty: Five (5) percentage points (of assignment grade) will be deducted for each day (Saturday and Sunday count as one day each) on all late assignments. Assignments will not be accepted later than one week after the due date. *Assignments by e-mail or fax will not be accepted.* All late assignments must be submitted to the assignment drop box located outside the Department of Geography main office, room SSH 5047. *Please note that the drop box is only available until 5PM on weekdays.*
4. Blackboard: This course has a Blackboard site where PowerPoint Slides from class lectures, any required readings from journal articles that are not in the text book, and announcements will be posted. Please make use of Blackboard as a useful reference point for this course.

5. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Any cases of plagiarism or cheating on exams will be handled in accordance with the University of Toronto's policies.
6. Test and essay questions will be drawn from the material in the text book and the content presented in the class lectures.

Text Book:

Bryman, Alan, Teevan, James and Bell, Edward. 2012. *Social Research Methods: Third Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
(Available at the University of Toronto bookstore)

Evaluation:

50 percent—2 Take-Home Assignments (25 Percent Each)
 Assignment 1: due February 22
 Assignment 2: due April 4
20 percent—Midterm Quiz (February 29)
30 percent—Final Exam (TBA)

Lecture Schedule, topics covered, and required readings

Week 1 - Course Introduction

- Introduction to social research, qualitative methods, and research ethics

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 - Chapter 1

Week 2 – Data Sources

- Brief History of Social Science Research
- Primary and Secondary Data
- Academic and Popular Sources
- History and ethics of university research

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 – Chapter 7

Assignment 1 hand out and explanation

Week 3 – The research design process

- Selecting a topic; developing a research question, selecting a design; structuring a research project
- Characteristics of high quality research: Validity, Precision, Reliability, Accuracy
- Experimental design: experimental; cross-sectional; longitudinal

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 – Chapter 2 and Chapter 8

Week 4 – Sampling Theory and Practice

- Sampling methods: simple random sample; Stratified random sample; non-probability sampling
- Response rates and handling non-response

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 – Chapter 12

Week 5 – Questionnaire/Interview based research

- Questionnaire/Interview based research
 - Structured, semi structured, unstructured

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 – Chapter 4 and Chapter 5

READING WEEK (February 15-19)

Week 6 – Interviewing in Practice

- Open and close ended questions
- Focus groups
- Questionnaire design
- Pilot testing

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 – Chapter 10

- **Assignment 1 due**

Week 7: February 29

Mid Term Exam

Week 8 - Case Studies

- Selecting and using case studies
- **Assignment 2 hand out and explanation**

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 – pp. 38-40;

Week 9 - Ethnographic/observational methods

- Participant action research and digital Storytelling

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 – Chapter 9

Week 10 - Content and textual analysis

- Interpretation of media and art
- Historical analysis

Reading: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 – Chapter 16

Week 11 - Research Ethics

- Research ethics
- University research ethics protocol
- Research in the workplace

Readings: Bryman, Teevan and Bell, 2012 –Chapter 11

Week 12 - Course Wrap Up – April 4

- Great research disasters: lessons learned from unsuccessful research projects
- Course Wrap Up
- Exam review

- **Assignment 2 due**