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**DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
GGR 271—SOCIAL RESEARCH METHODS  
WINTER 2020 – Mondays 11-1pm, Brennan Hall 200**

Professor:  
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**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.

***Important Dates***

February 3: Assignment 1 due  
March 2: Assignment 2, Part 1 due  
April 3: Assignment 2, Part 2 due

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Attendance and participation**

Everyone, including your instructor, is expected to come to class on time, with readings completed, and notes and assignments in hand (or submitted online). In-class time will involve a good deal of active participation, in order to develop a scholarly environment in which to explore ideas.

If you want to take notes on your **laptop**, you may do so with the Wi-Fi turned off. If your computer is being used for other than class purposes, I will ask you to put it away for the duration of the class. If this is a repeated problem, I will ask you not to bring your computer to class. **Cellphones** and other devices should remain off during class. If there is a pressing situation, and you need to be available by phone, please let Dr. Adiv know before class.

**Communication: email, Quercus, office hours**

Foremost, make sure to find a class partner who can fill you in if you have to miss a day; this is the best way to stay current. (Do not email your professor – in this or any class – to ask what you missed.)

This course is available through Quercus (q.utoronto.ca). Students enrolled in the course should be able to see the link using their UTORID and password. Information on using Quercus is available in the Student Quercus Guide (<https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/46670/pages/student-quercus-guide>).

Please use Quercus for:

- Non-textbook course material (videos, podcasts)
- Submitting writing assignments
- Course announcements (including class cancellations or assignment changes)

**Please do not use Quercus to email Dr. Adiv or TAs. Instead, use our UofT emails (at the top of this syllabus).** You can usually (though not always) expect a response to your email within 24 hours M – F. A Friday afternoon email will most likely get a Monday response. If you don't hear from me within 48 hours, do follow up. You are expected to check your UofT email daily, M - F.

When you email professors and TAs, please use formal etiquette.

- Make sure you have checked the syllabus first to see if your question has been covered. Then ask a classmate. Contact your professor once you have exhausted these options.
- Include a meaningful subject line (e.g., GGR 271: questions about text)
- Format the message as if it were a letter (with a salutation [Dear Professor], body [I am contacting you because...] and closing [Sincerely,])
- End the email with your full name.

I recommend that students come to **office hours** (for this and every class) at least once per term. You can learn so much more in a face to face conversation. Bring a friend if you like. Sign up for office hours at [calendly.com/dr-adiv](https://calendly.com/dr-adiv) to guarantee a time, or stop by if you are flexible. Please let your professor know if you won't be coming for a time you reserved so someone else can have that slot. TAs will also have office hours, especially around writing assignments. This is the best way to get the extended help you need on your work.

## Readings

**Required textbook:** Bryman, Alan, Teevan, James. 2016. *Social Research Methods: Fifth Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Oxford University Press. (Available at the University of Toronto bookstore)

All supplemental material can be found on Quercus in a folder *labeled with the week we will discuss them in class*. Print and mark the text (highlighter, pen, post-its or digitally); take notes and bring these to class, as we will reference them. Sometimes we may re-divide the readings for the week under a particular topic. Some readings may be added or substituted during the semester. No changes will be made less than a week before reading is due.

## Writing Assignments and exams

Guidelines:

- Organize your written work into paragraphs, and check grammar and spelling before you hand it in.
- All papers must be typed, double spaced, with 1-inch margins and Times New Roman 12 point font.

- Do give your essay a title (centered at the top of the first page), but please no title pages. Include your name, the course and the date in the upper left-hand corner of the assignment; include the word count on the bottom right hand corner of the last page.
- Submit your paper as a Microsoft Word Document (other formats will be returned to you), labeled [LASTNAME]\_GGR271\_[ASSIGNMENT:].
- All assignments should be uploaded to Quercus by 11AM the day they are due.

### 1. ASSIGNMENT 1 (Due February 3)

In this assignment, you will compare the research approaches of three academic articles on one of six topics, and comment on the strengths and weaknesses associated with the methods, and the ways the methods influence the conclusions drawn.

### 2. ASSIGNMENT 2 (Due March 2, April 3)

In this assignment, you will develop your own research proposal based upon a current issue. You will write a lit review; develop a research question; propose a research design, including methods, and sampling frame; and discuss ethics. We will work on pieces of this assignment in class, and you are encouraged to go to office hours to develop this work.

Part 1 of this assignment (review of literature) is due first; we will dedicate a class session to organizing and drafting this part, as it is new to many students. You will get marks on Part 1 back a week later, and then embark on Part 2, which is the complete research proposal paper, based on part one.

*Note: if you do not turn in part 1, you will not get credit for part 2. You may not change your topic for part 2 without instructor approval.*

#### **Late Assignments:**

Written assignments for this class are to be submitted in electronic form to Quercus. All assignments are to be handed in by 11AM the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalised 5% each day late. **No assignments will be accepted more than one week after the due date** unless the student has obtained prior permission from the instructor in the case of documented illness or other extenuating circumstances.

Extensions will only be granted in the case of documented illness (see <http://illnessverification.utoronto.ca>) or personal emergency. If a personal emergency arises that prevents you from submitting your assignment on time, contact your College Registrar immediately so that you can assemble the proper collaborating documentation.

### 3. Final exam

The final exam will be a combination of definitions and short answers from the readings, media and lectures from the course. We will review for the exam in the last few weeks of the course.

**Missed Exam:** The final exam is administered through the Faculty of Arts and Science. Students who are unable to write their examinations due to illness, etc., should contact their College

Registrar (see "Petitions Regarding Examinations" in the Calendar - <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/petitions/common#deferred>)

### **Grading Scheme:**

Assignment 1: 25%

Assignment 2 (part I): 20%

Assignment 2 (part II): 25%

Final Exam: 30%

### **Grade Change Policy (for all assignments and exams):**

Students wanting clarification on a particular grade must submit a request in writing explaining their question and, if they are disputing an answer marked wrong, documentation of the grading error with evidence from the text. Per University policy: "the remarking request should go first to the TA and any appeal of that should go to the course instructor. Such a request entails a remarking of the work. Hence, if a remarking is granted, the student must accept the resulting mark as the new mark, whether it goes up or down or remains the same. Continuing with the remark or the appeal means the student accepts this condition."

### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities, who may require accommodations, should contact Accessibility Services (<http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>). Please notify the instructor if you have a disability that may require some modification to this course so that I can work with you and AS to make the appropriate arrangements. If you are not sure if you are eligible for accommodations, please contact the DRC in order to find out. The DRC is located in 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400, and can be contacted at 416-978-8060, [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca).

### **WRITING HELP AND CITATION GUIDELINES**

There are resources at U of T to help you develop skills of reading, writing, studying, and researching. Please consider accessing the following:

- Robarts Library research and reference services (<https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/roberts-reference-and-research-services>)
- Writing Centres (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca>)
- the Academic Success Centre (<http://www.asc.utoronto.ca>)
- English Language Learning programs (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>).

You are required to properly document the sources of your work. Choose a citation strategy consistent with your other courses. APA is the most common, and instructions can be found here: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM**

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto -- plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will not be tolerated. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour

on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Plagiarism includes quoting or paraphrasing the work of another author, including that of fellow students, without proper citation. Other offenses include submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor or falsifying or altering documentation such as doctor's notes. Please familiarize yourself with U of T's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) and check the "How not to plagiarize" website (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

**PLEASE NOTE ALSO THE FOLLOWING:**

*People come to this class with a variety of academic expertise, life experiences, and customs (both individual and cultural). These differences can, and hopefully will, contribute positively to the substance and quality of class discussion. However, because these differences are often related to social inequalities, they can also be a source of misunderstanding and frustration. It is thus important to keep in mind that active, respectful class participation is as much about listening to and engaging the ideas of others as it is about speaking one's own mind. This is an aspect of the class that we will discuss openly.*

| WEEK | DATE                                       | TOPICS  | READINGS   | ASSIGNMENTS  |
|------|--|---|--|--|
| 1    | January 6: Course Introduction             | Introduction to social research, qualitative methods, and research ethics   | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 1<br><br>Intro to Qualitative Methods Video                                   | Assignment 1 hand out and explanation  |
| 2    | January 13: Data Sources                   | Brief History of Social Science Research; Primary and Secondary Data; Academic and Popular Sources; History and ethics of university research   | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 8<br><br>"When the numbers aren't enough"                                     |  |
| 3    | January 20: The research design process    | Topic selection; developing a research question; selecting a design; structuring a research project<br><br>Characteristics of high quality research: Validity, Precision, Reliability, Accuracy<br><br>Research design: experimental; cross-sectional; longitudinal | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 2<br><br>Video: An Introduction to Research Design<br><br>Psychics!           | Assignment 1 Workshop: marking articles and outlining                        |
| 4    | January 27: Sampling Theory and Practice   | Sampling methods: simple random sample; Stratified random sample; non-probability sampling<br><br>Response rates and handling non-response  | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 12<br><br>Sage video sampling<br><br>Sex Ed in Ontario                        | Assignment 1 peer review   |
| 5    | February 3: Case Studies                   | Selecting and using case studies  | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 17<br><br>Video: An Introduction to Case Studies<br><br>Mozambique Case Study | <b>Assignment 1 due</b><br><br><b>Assignment 2 hand out and explanation:</b> |
| 6    | February 10: Navigating published research | Writing workshop  | Bring in 1 – 3 newspaper articles  | Assignment 2: the annotated bibliography and the                             |

| WEEK | DATE   | TOPICS   | READINGS  | ASSIGNMENTS   |
|------|--|--|---|---|
|      | February 17 – 21   | READING WEEK   | “This is your brain on nature” + questions  | research question   |
| 7    | February 24:<br>Asking questions – surveys<br>(Matti S)                  | Open and close ended questions; Focus groups; Questionnaire design; Pilot testing                          | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 11<br><br>Video: Introduction to focus groups<br><br>Sage video on questionnaires<br><br>Climate change denial |   |
| 8    | March 2:<br>Asking questions - Interviews                                | Interview based research: structured, semi structured, unstructured  | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 5 – 6<br><br>Thinking Allowed: Gangs and Spirituality  | <b>Assignment 2 Part 1 due</b>                            |
| 9    | March 9: Ethnographic and observational methods<br><br>Guest speaker TBA | Participant observation; meaning-making; transect walking  | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 10<br><br>Video: Researching the Heavy Metal Subculture Through Participant Observation                        | Assignment 2 Part 1 returned                              |
| 10   | March 16: Content and textual analysis<br><br>Guest Speaker TBA          | Interpretation of media and art; Historical analysis   | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 16<br><br>Shamus Khan on Historical Data   | Assignment 2 workshop: research design, sampling, methods |
| 11   | March 23: Research Ethics<br><br>Dean Sharpe                             | Research ethics; University research ethics protocol; Research in the workplace                            | Bryman and Bell, Ch. 3<br><br>Public Documentary on Research Ethics   | Assignment 2 workshop: outlining                          |
| 12   | March 30: Course Wrap Up   | Great research disasters: lessons learned from unsuccessful research projects; Course Wrap Up; Exam review |   | <b>Assignment 2, Part 2 due Friday, April 3</b>           |

