

# SOCI 211: Sociological Inquiry

## Summer 2024

Monday-Thursday 8:35-10:55am  
Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building ([SADB](#)) 1/12

Instructor: Gabriel Lévesque  
Email: [gabriel.levesque2@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:gabriel.levesque2@mail.mcgill.ca)  
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, ≈11am-12:30pm

---

### Official course description

“An introductory review of methods of sociological research including research design, elementary quantitative data analysis, observation, and use of official statistics. Detailed examination of published examples of the use of each of the major techniques of data analysis and collection.”

### What to expect

Sociological inquiry is an introduction to the methods sociologists use to make sense of the social world. You will be introduced to data collection and analysis techniques. You will also learn how to read and evaluate published research in sociology. I will try to balance more traditional lectures with small group activities and interactive lessons. This course assumes no prior knowledge in the social sciences or in research methods.

Assigned readings are necessary to your success in this course. They should be completed prior to lectures because they will often be used as a resource during class. I advise you to read the assigned texts in the order they are laid out in the outline (see below). Course readings are either uploaded on [MyCourses](#) or are available online through your McGill Library account. I will use a polling application during lectures. You can join at [slido.com](https://slido.com) with the code #1427100.

Due to our short schedule, this course will be quite demanding. You should expect a weekly workload corresponding to two classes on a normal (Fall or Winter) schedule. Given these expectations, I will be twice as available as your typical instructor. I will hold office hours twice a week and will also be available for online appointments. For more timely questions, you are welcome to ask me in person right after class!

### Course policies

**Respect:** Discussions in this class must always be respectful of others and their views. Comments, disagreements, and debates will be encouraged, but they must be respectful both in tone and substance. Being respectful in the classroom also includes

general lecture etiquette, like raising your hand before speaking, avoiding packing your things up before the class is over, chatting while others are speaking, etc. Everyone deserves a positive experience in this classroom.

**Emails:** Since we will see each other four times a week, I prefer to answer any question in person (after class, in office hours, etc.) than through email. If you deem your question is better suited for an email, you are welcome to reach me that way. You should expect answers to your emails within 24 hours. Please make sure to include “SOC1 211” and your name in the email object and/or body. I reserve the right not to answer to your email if (a) you ask about something that is *clearly* stated in the course outline (e.g., the due date for an assignment, the readings for next class, etc.) or (b) your question refers to an evaluation that is to be submitted in less than 24 hours. The course policy on respect (see previous rubric) also applies to emails.

**Accommodations:** I will do my very best to accommodate students who need it in this course. If you need an accommodation for a learning disability or anything else, please let me know as early as possible how I can help you reach your full potential in this course (see University-mandated information below).

**Written assignments:** I am flexible on their exact format of your written assignments, but here are six mandatory elements for all of them:

- (1) you must include your name and student ID on the first page
- (2) your document must have page numbers
- (3) you must use paragraphs (one key idea = one paragraph)
- (4) the body of the text must be in 12 pt. and be double-spaced
- (5) your document should be set with 2.5cm (1-inch) margins on all sides
- (6) you must use references rigorously, either in footnotes, endnotes or the author-date format.

**Lateness:** To avoid being late, please check the due dates and times for assignments on MyCourses. You are allowed 3 “free” late days in total for submission of assignments, no questions asked. Any lateness beyond those days will lead to a one-increment grade penalty per day (A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, and so forth). Lateness penalties will only be accounted for in your final grade.

**Grade appeals:** As an instructor, I take the marking of assignments seriously and strive to be fair, consistent, and accurate. Nevertheless, I still make mistakes. If you would like to appeal your grade, please follow these procedures:

- a) If the error deals with mathematical calculations of the grade, send me an email.
- b) For substantive appeals, you must wait at least 24 hours after having received your grade before contacting me. When that delay is passed, you may write me an email within a week detailing why you believe your grade should be modified. If I choose to regrade your assignment, note that your grade can go up, down, or stay the same.

**AI:** The use of artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT) to complete written assignments is forbidden. You are welcomed to use those tools to help your prepare for an exam or in any other way that can enhance your learning experience without undermining your academic integrity. A good rule of thumb: if you wouldn't ask a class colleague to do it for you, then you shouldn't ask ChatGPT to do it.

**Electronic devices:** Research has shown that the use of electronic devices in class, including when taking notes on laptops, reduces comprehension and retention for the user and other students. Here are a two resources to support this claim: [Mueller & Oppenheimer 2014](#); [Hall et al. 2020](#). Given this, I advise against using an electronic device to take notes in class. With that said, there will be plenty of opportunities in class (e.g., Slido, group discussions) for you to make a productive use of those tools.

## Evaluations

*All written assignments are to be submitted on MyCourses.*

Evaluation	Worth	Due date
Reading summary	20%	May 13 <sup>th</sup>
Problem and question	10%	May 20 <sup>th</sup>
Exam	20%	May 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Group discussions		
1) Research ethics (May 14 <sup>th</sup> )	10%	May 16 <sup>th</sup>
2) What's the point of sociology? (June 3 <sup>rd</sup> )	10%	June 6 <sup>th</sup>
Final research proposal	30%	June 7 <sup>th</sup>
Conference participation	+3%	May 30 <sup>th</sup>

**Reading summary:** Choose a peer-reviewed empirical article in the sociology journal of your choice. I recommend browsing a general sociology journal, such as the *Canadian Review of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review* or the *British Journal of Sociology*. Using the template provided on MyCourses, produce a summary of that article. You are welcomed to pair up with a colleague for this assignment. However, the critique section must be entirely your own. If you choose to pair up for the assignment, please make sure to indicate it clearly on the assignment.

**Research proposal:** The largest evaluation in this course is your research proposal. This evaluation is broken into two pieces: the *Problem and question* (10%) and the *Final research proposal* (30%).

2.1 In the *Problem and question*, you will describe the sociological problem you wish to address in your proposal and end with your research question. This assignment should be about 1 page. It should reference at least 3 research articles to properly set up your problem.

2.2 In the *Final research proposal*, you should include (1) your revised problem and question, (2) your arguments and/or hypotheses, and (3) the data and methods you wish to use to answer your questions. This assignment should be 8-12 pages. It should reference at least 7 research articles. We will discuss this assignment at length in class.

**Exam:** The exam will be held in class and will last approximately 90 minutes. You will be allowed to use written notes and any other printed course materials.

**Group discussions:** Group discussions will be held in class twice this semester. One will be about research ethics (May 14<sup>th</sup>) and one about the purpose of sociology (June 3<sup>rd</sup>). In groups of around 5 students, you will discuss the assigned readings using the worksheet that will be available on MyCourses. You will produce a written summary of your discussions and I will grade that summary. You will be graded as a group for this assignment.

## Detailed class schedule

---

### SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

---

1) Wed. May 1<sup>st</sup>

#### **Introduction**

Mills, Charles Wright. 2000 [1959]. "The Promise," In *The Sociological Imagination* (Ch. 1, p. 3-24), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2) Thu. May 2<sup>nd</sup>

#### **Is sociology even a real science?**

Conley, Dalton. 2015. "Methods," In *You May Ask Yourself*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Ch. 2, p. 45-69), New York, W.W. Norton.

Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating. 2008. "How many approaches in the social sciences? An epistemological introduction," In *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences. A Pluralist Perspective* (Ch. 2, p. 19-40), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3) Mon. May 6<sup>th</sup>

#### **Reading sociology articles**

- Maroto, Michelle, Delphine Brown, and Guillaume Durou. 2023. "Is Everyone Really Middle Class? Social Class Position and Identification in Alberta." *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 60(3):336–66.
- Holmqvist, Mikael. 2023. "Consecration and Meritocracy in Elite Business Schools: The Case of a Swedish Student Union." *The British Journal of Sociology* 74(4):531–46.

---

## SECTION II. RESEARCH DESIGN

---

4) Tue. May 7<sup>th</sup>

### **Logic of inquiry**

*\*Add/drop deadline\**

- Babbie, Earl and Lance W. Roberts. 2018. "Research Design and the Logic of Causation," In *Fundamentals of Social Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Edition (Excerpt from Ch. 4, p. 75-98), Toronto: Nelson.

5) Wed. May 8<sup>th</sup>

### **Problems and research questions**

- Martin, John Levi. 2017. "How to Formulate a Question," In *Thinking Through Methods. A Social Science Primer* (Ch. 2, p. 16-34), Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Eidlin, Fred. 2011. "The Method of Problems versus the Method of Topics." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(4):758–61.
- Mears, Ashley. 2017. "Puzzling in Sociology: On Doing and Undoing Theoretical Puzzles." *Sociological Theory* 35(2):138–46.

6) Thu. May 9<sup>th</sup>

### **Concepts and measurements**

- Babbie, Earl and Lance W. Roberts. 2018. "Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement," In *Fundamentals of Social Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Edition (Excerpt from Ch. 5, p. 110-129), Toronto: Nelson.

7) Mon. May 13<sup>th</sup>

### **Cases and sampling**

*Reading summary is due.*

- Blackstone, Amy. 2012. "[Sampling](#)," In *Principles of Sociological Inquiry: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*.

8) Tue. May 14<sup>th</sup>

**Research ethics**

*In class: Group discussion 1.*

Carr, Deborah, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert, Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, Mary C. Waters. 2018. "Ethical Issues in Social Science Research," In *The Art and Science of Social Research* (Excerpt from Ch. 3, p. 66-83), New York: W.W Norton.

---

SECTION III. METHODS AND ANALYSIS

---

9) Wed. May 15<sup>th</sup>

**Quantitative methods I. Micro-level research**

Nie, Fanhao. 2024. "Ruled by the Demons? Exploring the Relationship Between Belief in Demons and Public Attitudes Toward Donald Trump and Joe Biden." *Social Currents*, p. 1-19.

10) Thu. May 16<sup>th</sup>

**Quantitative methods II. Meso- and macro-level research**

*Discussion worksheet 1 due.*

Best, Rachel Kahn, and Alina Arseniev-Koehler. 2023. "The Stigma of Diseases: Unequal Burden, Uneven Decline." *American Sociological Review* 88(5):938–69.

Rossmann, Gabriel, Nicole Esparza, and Phillip Bonacich. 2010. "I'd Like to Thank the Academy, Team Spillovers, and Network Centrality." *American Sociological Review* 75(1):31–51.

--> Mon. May 20<sup>th</sup>

**Journée des Patriotes / Victoria Day**

*Problem and question due.*

No class.

11) Tue. May 21<sup>st</sup>

**Qualitative methods I. Interviews and ethnography**

Lévesque, Gabriel. 2023. "Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research," de Mario Luis Small et Jessica McCrory Calarco, Oakland, University of California Press, 2022, 230 p." *Politique et Sociétés* 42(3):220–22.

Cramer, Katherine J. 2012. "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106(03):517–32.

12) Wed. May 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Qualitative methods II. Discourse**

Gagnon, Audrey. 2020. "Far-Right Framing Processes on Social Media: The Case of the Canadian and Quebec Chapters of Soldiers of Odin." *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 57(3):356–78.

13) Thu. May 23<sup>rd</sup>

**In class: Exam**

No readings.

14) Mon. May 27<sup>th</sup>

**Comparative-historical methods**

Lange, Matthew. 2013. "Comparative-Historical Methods: An Introduction," *Comparative Historical Methods* (Ch. 1, p. 1-21), Los Angeles: SAGE.

Anderson, Elisabeth. 2018. "Policy Entrepreneurs and the Origins of the Regulatory Welfare State: Child Labor Reform in Nineteenth-Century Europe." *American Sociological Review* 83(1):173–211.

15) Tue. May 28<sup>th</sup>

**Interpretation I. Inference**

Pacewicz, Josh. 2022. "What Can You Do With a Single Case? How to Think About Ethnographic Case Selection Like a Historical Sociologist." *Sociological Methods & Research* 51(3):931–62.

16) Wed. May 29<sup>th</sup>

**Interpretation II. Reliability and validity**

Carr, Deborah, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert, Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, Mary C. Waters. 2018. "Ethical Issues in Social Science Research," In *The Art and Science of Social Research* (Ch. 5, p. 146-155), New York: W.W Norton.

17) Thu. May 30<sup>th</sup>

**Sociological inquiry in practice**

*In class: Conference participation (+ 3%)*

No readings.

Guest: Khandys Agnant (PhD student in Sociology, McGill)

## SECTION IV: CONCLUSION

---

18) Mon. June 3<sup>rd</sup>

**What's the point of sociology?**

*In class: Group discussion 2.*

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. "Black Feminist Epistemology," *Black Feminist Thought* (Ch. 11, p. 269-290)

Turner, Jonathan H. 2019. "The More American Sociology Seeks to Become a Politically-Relevant Discipline, the More Irrelevant It Becomes to Solving Societal Problems." *The American Sociologist* 50(4): 456–87.

Ramos, Howard. 2023. "Uncritical Sociology: Canadian Sociology at the Crossroads?" *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 60(4): 820–29.

## University-mandated information

### McGill's Grading Scale:

A	85-100%
A-	80-84%
B+	75-79%
B	70-74%
B-	65-69%
C+	60-64%
C	55-59%
D	50-54%
F	0-49%

### Attendance and participation in class discussions.

As students, you are responsible for all announcements made in class and on MyCourses, as well as for all course materials given out in class. You should also check for new announcements or material on MyCourses at least weekly.

### Policy Concerning the Rights of Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability 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 (see <https://www.mcgill.ca/access-achieve/>) at 398-6009 before you do this.

### Remise des travaux en français



"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)." Les étudiants de ce cours peuvent rédiger tous leurs travaux (incluant les examens) en français.

### **Policy for the Accommodation of Religious Holy Days**

"1 Students are not to be penalized if they cannot write examinations or be otherwise evaluated on their religious holy days where such activities conflict with their religious observances. (...)

2 Students who because of religious commitment cannot meet academic obligations, other than final examinations, on certain holy days are **responsible for informing their instructor, with two weeks' notice of each conflict.** (...)

3 When the requested accommodation concerns a final examination, students are responsible for advising their faculty office as soon as possible and not later than the deadline for reporting conflicts. Additional documentation confirming their religious affiliation may be requested." (Approved by Senate - November 20, 1996 - Minute 92)

### **Statement on academic integrity at McGill**

"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/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) 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/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity))."

© Instructor generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.