



# SOCI2000

## Social Research Methods

Session 2, Fully online/virtual 2021

*Macquarie School of Social Sciences*

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#### **Disclaimer**

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#### **Session 2 Learning and Teaching Update**

The decision has been made to conduct study online for the remainder of Session 2 for all units WITHOUT mandatory on-campus learning activities. Exams for Session 2 will also be online where possible to do so.

This is due to the extension of the lockdown orders and to provide certainty around arrangements for the remainder of Session 2. We hope to return to campus beyond Session 2 as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Some classes/teaching activities cannot be moved online and must be taught on campus. You should already know if you are in one of these classes/teaching activities and your unit convenor will provide you with more information via iLearn. If you want to confirm, see the list of [units with mandatory on-campus classes/teaching activities](#).

Visit the [MQ COVID-19 information page](#) for more detail.

## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff  
Senior Lecturer in Sociology  
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Credit points  
10

Prerequisites  
40cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

### Unit description

Social research is essential in the contemporary world and an important field of employment for graduates in the social sciences and humanities. This unit gives students an opportunity to develop practical skills designing social and organisational research; and in collecting, analysing and presenting data to address research questions. You will consider the best research methods to use and the problems, limitations and traps likely to be encountered by inexperienced researchers. You will also consider the ethical issues in social research, and the impact of new information technologies on social research. A major emphasis in the unit is on the practice of social research. A series of workshops introduces major methodological techniques, basic qualitative and quantitative approaches, including interviewing, focus groups, textual analysis, and participant observation. Students also receive a basic introduction to SPSS. Research methods useful to community generated research are also explored. No knowledge of statistics is required. The unit is suitable for all students in the social sciences, humanities, media, creative arts or business and finance. It is particularly useful for those seeking interesting and meaningful employment after graduation or for anyone wanting to go on to undertake higher degree research.

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

**ULO1:** apply knowledge of the major qualitative and quantitative social research methods to answer important social questions.

**ULO2:** use statistical software (such as SPSS or R) to analyse quantitative data, and use thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data.

**ULO3:** articulate important problems and debates that face social researchers, including the scientific status of social research; the strengths and weaknesses of various methods; validity and reliability; and ethical considerations.

**ULO4:** scope a research problem, design research study, pilot your proposed methods, and write a research proposal to address a serious social issue.

**ULO5:** collect and analyse original data (qualitative and quantitative), and to be able to write this up and present it as professional academic research

## General Assessment Information

### 1. Exams/Quizzes:

- **Mid-semester exam (20%):** Testing weeks 1 to 7.
- **Final exam (20%):** Testing weeks 1 to 13

30 minute online exams (on iLearn). 20 multiple choice questions each. Exams open from 5pm Friday to 11:59pm Sunday.

### 2. Group Project:

- **Pilot Study Report and Presentation (Qualitative Analysis) (30%)**
- **Final Report and Presentation (Quantitative Analysis) (30%)**

This is a group project. Form your own groups of 2 to 6 students in Week 1, and register via link on iLearn. If you don't have a group, please post asking for other group members on iLearn discussion.

For the first assignment (due in Week 8) you will submit a qualitative (analysing words, not numbers) analysis. For the second assignment (due in Week 13) you will submit a quantitative (i.e. statistical) analysis.

#### 2.1 Instructions for Group Project:

**A) PREAMBLE:** The Propaganda Model argues in modern democratic and capitalist societies the mass media will largely serve the interests of the wealthy and powerful. This is said to happen without official censorship and with the media staffed by journalists and editors who work

with 'complete integrity and goodwill'. Herman and Chomsky (the inventors of the 'Propaganda Model') argue that this largely unconscious process will lead to selection of topics, framing of issues, emphasis of stories, and focus of attention in a way that benefits the wealthy and powerful. They suggest a way to test the model, by comparing the treatment of 'unworthy victims' (people oppressed by us) and 'worthy victims' (people oppressed by someone else).

**B) RESEARCH QUESTION:** Choose a case study - a topic or pair of topics - from the mass media in Australia and test Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model. Does the pattern of media coverage of your case study conform to the Propaganda Model? Alternatively, is some other model - such as 'pluralism' (all views get fair hearing), or 'metropolitan elites' (media is dominated by left-wing elites, whose values are pushed on society) - better at explaining your evidence?

**C) POTENTIAL TOPICS:** You may choose your own case study/ies or you may pick one of the following.

Compare one or more Australian newspapers treatment of:

- Saudi Arabia vs North Korea.
- Iran vs Saudi Arabia
- Myanmar vs West Papua
- Palestine vs Israel
- Saudi invasion of Yemen vs Myanmar treatment of Rohingya (or Chinese treatment of Uyghurs)
- Male vs female politicians
- Property owners vs property renters
- Property owners vs housing commission tenants
- Indigenous Australians vs low socio-economic status white Australians
- Anti-lockdown protestors vs Black Lives Matters protestors
- Liberal Party vs Labor Party
- The Greens vs One Nation
- Australian Medical Association vs Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Business Associations vs Unions
- Christians and Muslims
- Religious and Atheist celebrities
- Problem alcohol drinking by young people and older people
- Deaths due to MDMA (Ecstasy) and alcohol
- Poverty alleviation by jobkeeper vs charities
- Price setting for Private Health Insurance vs the Minimum Wage
- Private Health Insurance vs Medicare

- 'Robodebt' vs 'Home Insulation' scandals
- Deaths due to asbestos vs 'Home Insulation'
- Government subsidies for mining companies vs unemployment benefits
- Inflation vs Unemployment
- Wind power vs Nuclear Power
- Renewables vs Coal
- Coverage of Victorian vs NSW lockdowns
- Covid in Bondi (Eastern suburbs) vs Fairfield (South-western suburbs)
- Coverage of Labor vs Liberal state governments Covid response
- Problems of business owners vs problems of workers during Covid lockdown
- Covid vaccinations of doctors and nurses vs age-care (and/or disability) workers
- **Your own topic, but please use a 'matched-case' method (comparing two groups who are largely identical, except that one is 'worthy' and the other is 'unworthy').**

**D) METHOD:** It is recommended that you focus on the treatment by one newspaper, such as the Australian, the Daily Telegraph, the Sydney Morning Herald/the Age, the Australian Financial Review, or the Guardian (Australia).

If you are selecting your own topic, then buy the newspaper for several days and look for patterns you find interesting and might be worthy of research. The majority of the work of your assignment will involve analysing newspaper articles.

You use the database **Factiva** (which Macquarie University has a subscription to) to get all newspaper articles printed on a particular topic within a selected date range. It is recommended that for the first assignment (due in Week 8) you try to pick a topic and date range that will give you about 25 to 50 articles.

It is recommended that before you finalise your topic (by around week 3) you explore (scope out) - using Factiva - a couple of different potential topics and look for patterns you find interesting.

**E) ANALYSIS:** We will work on your assignment each week in class, and a lot of important information about the assignment will be delivered in class.

For the first assignment (due in Week 8) you will submit a qualitative (analysing words, not numbers) analysis. For the second assignment (due in Week 13) you will submit a quantitative (i.e. statistical) analysis.

**F) FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS::**

1. For BOTH Week 8 and Week 13 you will deliver a 12 minute presentation with powerpoint slides.
2. The presentation in Week 8 should be a qualitative analysis (analysis of words using themes)
3. The presentation in Week 13 should be a statistical analysis (analysis using numbers). :

4. All group members should present for equal times
5. You should also submit a SCRIPT of your talk, which should be around 1,400 words + tables and figures.
6. Presentations
7. Internal students will present face to face (unless there is lockdown). External students will present on Zoom
8. Presentations will be outside class times, in 'Marking Consultations' of 30-60 minutes (depending on group size). Groups will book these online closer to submission date.
9. SAMPLE SIZE: You should aim to have around 25 to 50 newspaper articles you code for the Week 8 presentation, and 50 to 100 articles you analyse for the Week 13 assignment. However, this is a minimum and you are welcome to code more articles if it is appropriate. If you find there are too many articles for your topic, then you can either shorten the date range you are looking at, or pick a random sample of the articles you find.
10. ATTACHMENTS: Bring the following attachments to your presentation (if you are presenting on Zoom, please email or WhatsApp the files to Nick), AND ALSO upload to iLearn via Turn-It-In (this is a Macquarie requirement, to check for plagiarism):
  1. SLIDES: Your presentation slides
  2. SCRIPT: 1,400 word script of your presentation, with tables and references.
  3. DATA: In Week 8: Your newspaper articles with highlighting (coding). In Week 13: Dataset as SPSS file + Codebook

## 2.2 Marking criteria for group project

**A) Group mark (25%):** One quarter of your grade will be awarded based on the quality of the total product as a whole.

**B) Individual marks (75%):** Three quarters of your grade for the group project will be awarded based on the quality of your individual contribution. This will be judged on:

- A description of each individual's work that is attached to be beginning of each report
- You are encouraged to allocate each group member at least one theme to qualitatively analyse (for Week 8) and statistically analyse (for Week 13). This will allow all group members to clearly show individual contribution to the report.
- A peer evaluation, which will be confidential and completed online after submission of each report (week 8 and 13).

## C) Grading criteria for presentations

1. **WRITING/PRESENTATION:** Clear, straight-forward writing and verbal presentation.
2. **MOTIVATION:** Identifies and justifies choice of research question and topic.
3. **LITERATURE REVIEW:** Clearly explains the theory/ies or ideas to be tested, and identifies relevant previous research on the topic.
4. **METHOD:** Clearly articulates a method to collect and analyse data to answer your research question, including:
  - **4.1. CONCEPTUALISATION & OPERATIONALISATION:** articulates hypotheses (if necessary), conceptualisations of variables/concepts, and operationalisation of variables/concepts,
  - **4.2. DATA COLLECTION:** Summarizes techniques for data collection, and methods of sampling.
5. **DATA ANALYSIS:** High quality data analysis that clearly analyses and presents the evidence for the main findings of your research and seriously considers alternative theories and contradictory evidence.
6. **CONCLUSION:** Summarizes findings and discusses academic and policy implications.

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
<a href="#"><u>Final Exam</u></a>	20%	No	End Wk 13: Opens 5pm Fri 5 Nov to 11:59pm Sun 8 Nov 2021
<a href="#"><u>Final Report (Group Project)</u></a>	30%	No	Week 13 - Make appointment to present. Due at presentation
<a href="#"><u>Mid-term Exam</u></a>	20%	No	End Wk 7: Opens 5pm Fri 10 Sept to 11:59pm Sun 12 Sept 2021
<a href="#"><u>Pilot Study Report and Presentation (Group Project)</u></a>	30%	No	Week 8 - Make appointment to present. Due at presentation

### Final Exam

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 0.5 hours

Due: **End Wk 13: Opens 5pm Fri 5 Nov to 11:59pm Sun 8 Nov 2021**

Weighting: **20%**

Online exam that assesses material from whole semester

On successful completion you will be able to:

- apply knowledge of the major qualitative and quantitative social research methods to answer important social questions.
- use statistical software (such as SPSS or R) to analyse quantitative data, and use thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data.
- articulate important problems and debates that face social researchers, including the scientific status of social research; the strengths and weaknesses of various methods; validity and reliability; and ethical considerations.

## Final Report (Group Project)

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Project

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 30 hours

Due: **Week 13 - Make appointment to present. Due at presentation**

Weighting: **30%**

Presentation, final written report, with peer evaluation and self evaluation/reflection.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- collect and analyse original data (qualitative and quantitative), and to be able to write this up and present it as professional academic research

## Mid-term Exam

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 0.5 hours

Due: **End Wk 7: Opens 5pm Fri 10 Sept to 11:59pm Sun 12 Sept 2021**

Weighting: **20%**

Online exam that assesses material from first half of semester

On successful completion you will be able to:

- apply knowledge of the major qualitative and quantitative social research methods to answer important social questions.
- use statistical software (such as SPSS or R) to analyse quantitative data, and use thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data.
- articulate important problems and debates that face social researchers, including the scientific status of social research; the strengths and weaknesses of various methods; validity and reliability; and ethical considerations.

## Pilot Study Report and Presentation (Group Project)

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Project



Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 30 hours

Due: **Week 8 - Make appointment to present. Due at presentation**

Weighting: **30%**

Presentation, pilot study report, with peer evaluation and self evaluation/reflection.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- scope a research problem, design research study, pilot your proposed methods, and write a research proposal to address a serious social issue.

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<sup>1</sup> If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

<sup>2</sup> Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

## **Delivery and Resources**

### **I) COMMUNICATION**

**WHATSAPP:** Because this class is so heavily practical and the assessments involve significant independent group work I have found that the best way to organise communication is for students to set up two WhatsApp chats for each project group: one with group members only, and one with group members plus me.

When you form your project group in Week 1, please set up these WhatsApp chats and please add me (0490 911 666) to the appropriate chat.

If you have questions or need help, please message the whatsapp chat with me in it, and I will aim to respond ASAP, and at the latest within 24 hours.

**CONSULTATIONS:** For consultations, I will be available from 6pm to 7pm on Thursdays (teaching weeks only), immediately after the last class. This will be in my Zoom room (link on iLearn).

### **II) TEXTBOOK**

**BUYING TEXTBOOK:** This is the textbook:

- Neuman, W. L. (2013). Understanding Research: Pearson New International Edition. Harlow: Pearson Education UK.

Read the ebook for free at the MQ Library here: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/lib/MQU/detail.action?docID=5175361>

Buy ebook from Pearson here (\$60):

<https://www.pearson.com.au/products/M-N-Neuman-W-Lawrence/Understanding-Research-Pearson-New-International-Edition-eBook/9781292033648?R=9781292033648>

**READING THE TEXTBOOK:** Please read the required readings before coming to class (internal and zoom students)

### III) PROJECT GROUPS

**FORMING PROJECT GROUPS:** Please find a project group (internal students we will do this in class, external students can do on the discussion chat on iLearn).

Please register your project group via the link on iLearn.

**PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT GROUPS:** Please participate and contribute to your project group fully and seriously or you will be penalised in your peer review mark. This includes coming to class (for internal students), as we will do significant project work in each class (we will do workshops at the end of each class, applying the knowledge from that week to your project).

## Unit Schedule

<b>LECTURE (pre-recorded)</b>			
Week	Key Concepts	Statistics	Your Project
1	Choosing a research project	Login to SPSS + Connect Google Drive + Visualize Model Data	Instructions for Projects + Introduction to Factiva + Starting to scope a topic
2	Scoping a research project	Key ideas in statistics (I) + Recoding and computing	Getting inspiration for a topic + Scoping that topic
3	Collecting Qualitative Data	Key ideas in statistics (II) + Descriptive Statistics	First round of coding + Making a codebook
4	Analysing Qualitative Data	Key ideas in statistics (III) + Chi-square tests	Axial coding - coding according to the codebook
5	Writing: How to get a High Distinction (most of the time)	T-tests	Selective coding - finding good examples + writing them up
6	Conducting a Literature Review	Correlation	Finding relevant literature - the literature search
7	How to do ethical research + Measuring society	Indexes	Reading, noting, and writing a literature review
8	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS
9	Survey design + Sampling	Linear Regression	Setting up a quantitative coding frame in Google Forms
10	Importing your data into SPSS + testing your hypotheses		
11	Presenting your statistical results as tables		

12	Presenting your statistical results as figures		
13	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS

<b><u>SEMINAR (2 hours)</u></b>		
Week	Concepts Exercise (weekly topics)	Projects Exercise (weekly topics)
1	The method of matching cases (Part 1)	Introduction to Factiva + Generating Potential Study Topics: Inductive + Deductive Approaches
2	The method of matching cases (Part 2)	Scoping a Topic
3	Conducting an interview: Strategies for Academic Success	First round of coding + Making a codebook
4	Writing Fieldnotes: Overcoming Challenges to Academic Success	Axial coding - coding according to the codebook
5	Structuring Paragraphs	Selective coding - finding good examples + writing them up
6	Structuring Essays	Finding relevant literature - the literature search
7	Identifying + Addressing Ethical Issues: Case Studies	Reading, noting, and writing a literature review
8	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS
9	Measuring Society: Turning concepts into numbers	Setting up a quantitative coding frame in Google Forms
10	Getting a representative sample	Importing your data into SPSS + testing your hypotheses
11	Presenting your statistical results as tables	
12	Presenting your statistical results as figures	
13	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS

<b><u>Readings</u></b>	
Week	
1	Neuman: Ch 1, Why Research.
2	Neuman: Ch 2, Planning a Study.
3	Neuman: Ch 10, Observing People.
4	Neuman: Ch 8: Research with Nonreactive Measures (section on content analysis only). Methods101.com (Week 5)

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harrigan, How to write a short paper</li><li>• Strunk &amp; White, 'Elementary principles of composition' in Elements of Style. (available via Leganto on iLearn) (or just Google).</li><li>• Orwell, Politics and the English Language.</li><li>• Posusta, Steven. 1996. Don't Panic: The Procrastinator's Guide to Writing an Effective Term Paper. Bandanna Books, Santa Barbara.</li></ul>
6	TBA
7	Neuman: Ch 5, Measuring Social Life.
8	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS
9	Neuman: Ch 4, Sampling. Neuman: Ch 6, The Survey
10	TBA - see methods101.com
11	TBA - see methods101.com
12	TBA - see methods101.com
13	PRESENTATIONS - NO CLASS

## Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the [search tool](#).

## Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

## Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](mailto:ask.mq.edu.au) or if you are a Global MBA student contact [globalmba.support@mq.edu.au](mailto:globalmba.support@mq.edu.au)

### Late Assessment Submission Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved,

(a) a penalty for lateness will apply – 10 marks out of 100 credit will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and

(b) no assignment will be accepted seven days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline.

If it looks like you are going to submit a late assignment, you are strongly encouraged to submit a Special Consideration request.

These requests are generally more likely to be granted if you (1) have a medical reason; and (2) can provide written evidence. However, these are not necessarily required and students are encouraged to apply for Special Consideration if you feel your circumstances warrant it.

## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

### Learning Skills

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Getting help with your assignment](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

## Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

## Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

If you are a Global MBA student contact [globalmba.support@mq.edu.au](mailto:globalmba.support@mq.edu.au)

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit [http://www.mq.edu.au/about\\_us/offices\\_and\\_units/information\\_technology/help/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.