

ANTHROPOLOGY 9101B
Research Design in Anthropology
COURSE OUTLINE
Winter 2026

Class day/time: Friday 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Classroom: SSC 3315

Instructor: Dr. Trish Markert (she/her)

Office: SSC 3430/3433

Office hours: Tuesdays, 12-1 p.m.

Email: pmarkert@uwo.ca

Credit value: 0.5 credit

Calendar Course Description: This course offers an introduction to a range of issues related to the practice of anthropological research. Among the topics we will address through readings, presentations, and discussions are research design, ethics, and the advantages and limitations of different approaches to data collection, analysis, and presentation of results. Assignments will require students to conduct an original research project.

Full Course Description: Research design provides the necessary scaffolding for any anthropology project. In this course, we will examine how to design a research project in phases – from background research, to generating research questions and objectives, to choosing appropriate methods for data collection and analysis. Through readings, presentations, weekly assignments, in-class exercises, and discussions, we will address issues such as research and professional ethics, working through challenges and within limitations, connecting method and theory, approaches to community-based research, and writing research for different audiences. This course emphasizes developing a solid methodology, not just for data collection but for the research process as a whole, including preparation, brainstorming, organizing, and writing.

The content of the course is largely student driven. Most weeks, students will have the opportunity to think through their own research design and discuss their project with others. Students will lead discussions, present on methods and ideas, and workshop each other's writing-in-progress. The term will culminate in research proposal developed throughout the course.

The overarching goal of this course is to challenge students to think critically, pragmatically, and creatively about the process of generating research designs and conducting research as anthropologists, and to develop the skills they need to conduct ethical, well-designed research in graduate school and their careers.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Critically evaluate how research questions, methods, theories, and data shape and inform each other in anthropological research design;
- Develop a novel project, including background research, questions, and methods, that addresses a relevant question in anthropology;
- Effectively communicate the methods they expect to apply in their graduate research and how the data they collect will effectively address their proposed research question/s;
- Situate their research and positionality as a researcher in relation to relevant ethical issues and obligations, address accountability in their research, and communicate the principles that guide their work;
- Communicate their research in a variety of genres and formats to academic and non-academic audiences;
- Describe a broad range of methodological approaches in anthropology through an active engagement with their classmate's work;
- Effectively convey their own methodological approach, in oral presentation and in writing;
- Write a research proposal that demonstrates a strong, critical, and well-considered research design in anthropology.

Course Materials

Readings for this course will include assigned articles, proposals, and drafts-in-progress. I will make required readings available on OWL Brightspace through the Content tab. Unless otherwise noted, I announce readings twice during the term (the first half during the first week of class, the second half during Reading Week) and post them 1-2 weeks before they are due in class. Readings may be subject to change with *at least* one week's notice. This allows us to tailor articles/chapters to emergent projects, interests, and discussions in class.

You will also choose one full-length fiction novel to read for the "Novel" Research Design assignment. You may choose to purchase the book, find a virtual copy, or get it from the library. I may also be able to lend books on a case-by-case basis.

Evaluation

I will post Assignment Instructions under Content and Assignments on Brightspace. Assignments are generally due at 11:59pm on Friday, unless noted otherwise.

- 10% Domain Bibliography (due Friday, Jan. 23)
- 10% Ethics Statement (due Friday, Feb. 6)
- 20% "Novel" Research Design (due Friday, Feb. 27; presentation in class on Friday)
- 10% Proposal Review (due Friday, March 13)
- 10% Proposal Workshop Notes (due Friday, March 27; we will schedule in-class workshops during the last week of class)
- 40% Final Proposal (due Thursday, April 17; flexible two-day submission applies)

Academic Statements and Policies

Communication Policy:

The best way to get in touch with me is by email. I will respond to emails as promptly as possible, which will generally be within 24 hours on weekdays or Monday if you email on Friday or the weekend. Though you may occasionally receive emails or announcements from me outside those hours, I generally reserve evenings and weekends for my family.

Please start the subject line for every course-related email with **"ANTH9101B: [Subject]"** so that it is sorted properly in my inbox, and I can respond promptly – without this, there is a chance I will miss your email and you will need to resend it. Indicate why you are contacting me in the subject line and include any details I might need to address your questions or problem in the body of the email.

Academic Integrity - Statement on Plagiarism:

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing with in-text citations. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. Penalties range from a failing grade for the assignment or the course to suspension or even expulsion from the University. I will provide you with the tools to properly reference and acknowledge other's work in class. Never hesitate to ask if you have a question about academic honesty.

Attendance and Class Preparation:

We will meet in person throughout the semester unless I let you know otherwise. I may shift class to Zoom in the event of my own illness or other extenuating circumstances. If so, I will notify you by Brightspace or email with instructions.

Coming to class and being prepared are essential to doing well in this course. Completing assignments, readings, and class preparation *before* we meet will be necessary to participate in activities and discussion. Please make sure to carefully review what is expected each week and prepare accordingly.

Missed Class Policy:

Things happen and life is unpredictable! My number-one rule is to be in communication – let me know if you run into any issues, regardless of what they are, and we can talk through options. But in general, familiarize yourself with the following absence policy:

1. **Absences:** If you are unable to attend class, you must send me an email in advance or within 24 hours of the missed class to notify me of your absence. Depending on the week, you may need to meet with me or complete make-up material. If you miss two classes, I will contact you to schedule an appointment to talk about how you can stay caught up in the class. If you miss class without notifying me, I cannot guarantee an option to make up missed material or marks (e.g., on presentation days).
2. **Zoom Attendance:** If you need to miss class but would like to join on Zoom, you can contact me to see if it is possible at least one day ahead of class time. This option might be available if you have unexpected travel, bad weather, a minor illness, or a COVID exposure but would still like attend class and participate in discussion. I can't guarantee Zoom participation, but

depending on what we're doing that week, I will do my best to make this option available with 24 hours' notice.

This policy is meant to lend flexibility in the case of minor illness, travel, or unexpected conflicts. If you need to be absent from class on medical, compassionate, legal grounds, etc., you may also request academic accommodation based on a professionally documented reason (see [Academic Policies, Academic accommodation](#)).

A note on sickness: if you are feeling ill or believe you might be contagious, it is important to take care of yourself and others by staying home. If you are beginning to feel unwell or have been recently exposed, please consider wearing a mask to protect others in the class. Do not hesitate to email me if you are concerned about missing class due to illness and want to talk about your options.

Guidelines for Assignments:

I will upload specific PDF instructions for each major assignment to our OWL Brightspace site. For in-class assignments and class preparation activities, I will provide instructions in class and/or using Brightspace (e.g., Announcements, Content, Discussion Board, etc.).

Assignment Submission and Late Assignments:

Assignments are generally due on Fridays by 11:59pm or as otherwise marked on Brightspace, the assignment sheets, and the course outline. All assignments have a two-day flexible submission window, so if you need to take the weekend to finish up, you may take the extension without penalty and without notifying me. After the flexible submission window, I will deduct a blanket 10% of the mark but accept late assignments for one week from the original due date. At 11:59pm on that date, the submission will close on Brightspace.

I will not accept late assignments past that date without 1) academic consideration or 2) a targeted, in-person conversation in which we come up with a tailored deadline *ahead* of the original due date (e.g., in cases where you know you have a serious conflict that will prevent you from meeting a deadline).

Flexible Submission Policy:

If an assignment is due on OWL on a Friday, I will accept it until Sunday night with no penalty. This does not apply to presentations, workshops, and assignments that are due in class.

Use of Generative AI Tools Policy:

Based on the current state of generative AI in the world and the academy, I ask that all students actively and intentionally opt out of all generative AI use for this course. This means that I do not condone any use of generative AI to complete, edit, or aid assignments, at any phase of research (e.g., asking ChatGPT for sources or definitions). In other courses and your daily life, you can make the ethical, professional, and personal decision that makes most sense for you.

There are several reasons for this policy. Some are ethical (i.e., dependence on genAI is destroying the environment and reversing climate initiatives; day-to-day AI use trains/funds models that are being used in warfare, policing, surveillance, ethnic cleansing, and genocide; and so on). Some are practical (i.e., you are here to build skills and I need to make sure you are building them rather than outsourcing them; AI remains bad at critical tasks, despite messaging to the contrary). Some are cognitive (e.g., researching, reading, and writing are *ways of thinking* that are important to develop, and emerging research links AI reliance with cognitive decline at an individual and societal level). Some are personal (i.e., AI-produced work is boring; the writing is poor, particularly at a graduate level; providing feedback on AI work wastes my time).

I know that AI is increasingly impossible to avoid in today's world. We will go over strategies for intentional decision-making around AI use in class. This policy is primarily honour-based, but evidence of using AI to complete your work may result in lost marks or a 0 (see Academic Integrity - Statement on Plagiarism).

Academic Consideration:

You can find the [university policy on academic considerations here](#), with [additional details on the consideration policy here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

It is important to communicate with me as soon as you know you will need additional considerations (beyond course policies) to complete coursework or assignments, including exams. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds ("[What is Academic Consideration](#)"). It is your responsibility to keep me informed about considerations and provide the appropriate documentation so that I can work with you on ways to stay caught up in class. All missed work must be made up by the end of the exam period in the applicable term.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays:

Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Accessible Education:

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education (AE), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AE and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations may include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction. Please see [Western's Accessible Education](#) page for more information.

Academic Rights and Responsibilities:

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current [Academic Policies in the Academic Calendar](#) which include, but is not limited to, academic consideration for medical illness, accommodation for religious holidays, academic appeals, academic accommodation for students with disabilities, as well as scholastic discipline.

Gender Based Violence:

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these

traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Mental Health Support:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Weekly Schedule of Topics and Assignments

The following schedule may be subject to some change (e.g., rescheduling due to class cancellation, cross-over classes with the sociocultural/linguistic class, deadline extensions). I will announce any changes using the Announcements page on Brightspace.

I will assign 1-3 readings per week, which will be posted to OWL Brightspace. Readings for the first half of the term will be announced the first week of class. Readings for the second half of the term will be announced during Reading Week.

Week 1, Jan. 9

Introductions

No in-person class (I will be presenting at SHA in Detroit)

Assignment due (unmarked): Post a plain-language introduction to your research to our discussion board on OWL Brightspace. See Brightspace for details. I will also assign a library exercise that you can complete asynchronously any time before our next meeting.

Week 2, Jan. 16

Setting the Stage for Research Design

Doing background research, organizing background sections, and strategies for data management

Class preparation: Please bring a laptop to class. If you have data management strategies or preferred software, come prepared to share!

Week 3, Jan. 23

Connecting Method and Theory

Figuring out "theoretical framework" and asking informed research questions

Assignment due: Domain Bibliography

Week 4, Jan 30

Ethics in Anthropological Research Design

Addressing principles, professionalism, practice

Assignment due: Ethics Statement

- Week 5, Feb. 6** **(Co)Producing Knowledge**
Indigenous, community-based, and collaborative research
- Guest speaker: Dr. Jameelah Morris
- Class preparation/readings:* To be announced on OWL Brightspace.
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- Week 6, Feb. 13** **For the Love of Methods [Virtual Class]**
Creating/writing research designs; methods workshop and show-and-tell
- Class preparation:* Methods show-and-tell; you will research a method that relates to your project and come to class prepared to discuss. Instructions posted to OWL Brightspace.
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- Week 7, Feb. 20** **Reading Week**
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- Week 8, Feb. 27** **The Craft of Writing (Fact and Fiction)**
"Novel" research designs – presentations and book discussion
- Class preparation:* "Novel" Research Design "flash" presentations (7 minutes)
- Assignment due:* "Novel" Research Design
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- Week 9, March 6** **Making Data Meaningful**
Developing approaches for analysis and interpretation
- Class preparation:* Draft of methods section; come prepared to discuss your approach to analysis and interpretation, in your thesis or previous research.
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- Week 10, March 13** **Why Does It Matter?**
Significance, contributions, and knowledge mobilization
- Class Preparation:* Please come prepared to discuss the proposals you've read and share how they approached the themes of this week.
- Assignment due:* Proposal Reviews
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- Week 11, March 20** **Writing Budgets and Budget Justifications**
- Class Preparation:* You are each applying for \$20,000 CAD to complete your research project. Come up with an itemized budget and budget justification and bring to class.
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- Week 12, March 27** **Proposal Workshops**
See OWL Brightspace for workshop instructions.
- Assignment due:* Proposal Workshop Notes

Week 13, April 3

NO CLASS

Final proposal due **Friday, April 17 at 11:59pm** on Brightspace. Flexible submission deadline applies.