

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
Department of Sociology
2019-2020**

**Sociology 9021
Qualitative Research Methods
Tuesdays 1:30-4:30, SSC-5235**

Instructor

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides students with an overview of several of the main types of qualitative research methods as well as the epistemological issues that distinguish qualitative from quantitative methods. It also considers ethical issues, data analysis and management challenges that are associated with qualitative research.

TEXT

There is no text for this course (see course assignments for more info).

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will develop new and more detailed knowledge and perspectives on qualitative research. Including:

1. Enhanced knowledge of qualitative research methods, their strengths and limitations;
2. An improved understanding of how to utilize different types of qualitative research methods to answer different types of research questions;
3. An improved ability to evaluate qualitative research based on methodological considerations;

EVALUATION

Weekly reading assignment (5 marks reading/5 marks write up):	60 marks
Reading presentation:	10 marks
Attendance:	10 marks
Comment:	20 marks

WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENT:

In advance of each week's class from January 25 to March 15 (6 classes), you will be expected to find one appropriate peer-reviewed journal article on that week's topic.

Your selection of the article will be rated according to: appropriateness of topic 'fit', quality of the publication (don't google crap on the internet), whether it highlights a novel or interesting issue and originality (if you all hand in the same article, I will mark accordingly) AND whether it constitutes QUALITY qualitative research (methodologically rigorous, ethically sound, valid).

You will also do an one-page summary review of the article, including discussion of why you think it fits the topic, its relative degree of importance in the research literature, whether it highlights a novel or original problem/issue, and what we can learn from it. Any strengths and/or limitations can also be identified.

Expect to present one of your reviews to the class. Each week I will ask 2 or 3 people to provide their summaries to everyone else; you need to come to class and **be prepared EVERY** week, as you don't get to pick when you present. This will ensure that most people show up each week ready to engage.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is critical to your success in this class. Skipping more than one class (ie. to avoid seminar presentations) will result in a zero for seminar participation/presentations, regardless of whether you present or not.

COMMENT ON WHAT YOU LEARNED:

On the **March 31st class**, you will be expected to hand in a 6-8 page comment piece in relation to **two** of the techniques you have learned in this class. What I'm looking for is to see: 1. Detailed knowledge of a technique (including references to concepts, ideas, papers and/or discussions from class – **this is your chance to show what you learned**); 2. The applicability of each method to different types of research questions, and; 3. Their respective strengths and limitations. As always, I encourage creativity. You can structure the format of the assignment any way you choose – from being a straight essay to using pictures or other modes of communication to being a fake television script. Qualitative research is creative, so feel free to be creative.

OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READING

January 7: Course Introduction

January 14: What makes research qualitative (and other issues)?

January 21: Ethics

January 28: Negotiating and sustaining access

February 4: Using existing data sources

February 11: Ethnography

February 18: Spring break

February 25: I have to be away this week for work, so you're catching a break

March 3: Interviews & focus groups

March 10: Visual research

March 17: Data analysis

March 24: Systematic reviews

March 31: Content analysis

April 4: Course wrap up

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines

Only serious and unforeseeable reasons will be accepted as grounds for being late for any assignments. The need for an extension must be discussed before the due date of the assignment (seminar, test, term paper) and documented through the appropriate channels.

A Note on Plagiarism

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 such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. See Scholastic Offences (below) for the link to Scholastic Discipline regulations.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com: <http://www.turnitin.com>

Scholastic Offences

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 web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/appeals_discipline/index.html

Accommodation

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 encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS 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 include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

For more information, see <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>

Completion of Course Requirements

Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall-December 31; Winter - April 30, Summer -August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook:

http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html

Mental Health

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness Western for a complete list of options to obtain help: http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. The Wellness Education Centre (lower level UCC) assists students in finding mental health and other related resources best suited to their needs: <http://se.uwo.ca/wec.html> Western's School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' Living Well website provides tips for thriving at grad school and other helpful information:

http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/living_well/index.html

Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre:

<http://www.westernmustangs.ca/index.aspx?path=ims#>

Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Also, we encourage you to check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>

Standards of Professional Behaviour

It is the responsibility of all members of the Department of Sociology to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- **respect for others** both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy)

- **active engagement in learning** and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best)
- **personal integrity** (following through on commitments; doing own work)

Students should also be aware of the **UWO Student Code of Conduct** found at <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>