



**Western University**

**SOCIOLOGY 3307F – 001**  
**Investigating the Social World:**  
**Qualitative Research**

**Fall 2016/17**

**Wednesday, 1:30-4:30pm, SSC 3014**

**Instructor: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann**

Office Hours: by appointment  
Department of Sociology, Office: SSC 5430

Email: [wlehmann@uwo.ca](mailto:wlehmann@uwo.ca)

---

**Course Description**

In this course, students will learn to investigate the social world using a variety of qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviewing, observation, or content analysis. Students will explore the principles underlying qualitative inquiry and acquire a general understanding of the theoretical positions that underlie qualitative methodology. Through lectures, readings, guest presentations, and hands-on research activities, students will explore different ways of investigating the social world in a scientific but non-statistical way that gives voice to the people we are studying. The ultimate goal is to let students experience the ways that qualitative sociologists do research. We will therefore emphasize applied aspects of qualitative research.

***Prerequisite(s)***

Enrolment in Honors Specialization or Honors Double Major in the Department of Sociology with a minimum grade of 60% in both Sociology 2205A/B and 2206A/B.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

***Antirequisite(s)***

Sociology 3310F/G, 3311F/G

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate different research methods, and their usage.
- Formulate research questions and choose a qualitative research design to examine those questions.
- Understand and meet the ethical standards for conducting research with human subjects.
- Design and carry out a research project, including conducting in-depth interviews, ethnographic field observations, and content analysis.

- Analyze and interpret qualitative data.
- Write an effective research report.
- Prepare an effective oral presentation that presents key information in a narrow time frame.

### **Required Text(s)**

No textbook will be used. Articles are assigned weekly and will be posted on OWL.

### **Method of Evaluation**

• Content Analysis Exercise	Due October 5, 2016	15%
• Ethnography Exercise	Due: October 26, 2016	20%
• Interview Project & Term paper	Due November 30, 2016	35%
• Reading Reviews		10%
• Ethnography & Interview In-class Presentations (5% each)		10%
• Group Presentation: Research	December 7, 2016	10%

### ***Evaluation Breakdown (detailed information provided in class)***

#### ***Content Analysis Exercise (15%)***

- You will be asked to critically review some form of published material (children’s picture book, celebrity magazine, fashion magazine, university viewbooks, or something similar)
- Code and analyze the content of the publication according to a set of research questions.

***Report/Essay due: October 5, 2016; length: 3-5 pages double-spaced***

***Note: late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless accommodation has been given***

#### ***Ethnography Exercise (20%)***

- Spend some time observing a specific site; collect field notes.
- Write a short essay describing your observations, and the challenges of being an observer

***Report/Essay due October 26, 2016; length: 7-10 pages, double spaced***

***Note: late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless accommodation has been given***

#### ***Interview Project and Term Paper (35%)***

- In a small group, decide on a research topic that studies the student experience at Western (more detail in class)
- Each member conducts one interview with a participant
- Transcribe your interview and share with the other members on your team
- Use all interview transcripts from your team to write a research report individually

***Term paper due November 30, 2016; length: 10-15 pages double-spaced***

***Note: late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless accommodation has been given***

### ***Reading Reviews (10%)***

- Each week starting September 21 (second class) to November 23 (eleventh class), you are to submit a short comment and/or question regarding the assigned readings for that week. In this submission, you should pose one comment or question regarding the articles' key findings/positions.
- In total, this will be ten (10) submissions. Your mark will drop by one for each week you do not submit. Once you have submitted less than six, your reading review mark will automatically drop to zero (0).
- Also, comments such as "I really liked the article" or "The author did a great job explaining xyz" or "There are too few participants to make the research generalizable" will not gain you any marks. You need to demonstrate that you read and thought about the article.
- The reviews are to be submitted either in person at the beginning of class, or before class via email. Submissions after class will not be accepted.

### ***Group Presentation on Ethnography and Interview Class Exercises (10%)***

- On **October 19**, you will be asked to conduct a small ethnography exercise as a group in class. You will do a short observation on campus and then present on your findings and experience to the class.
- On **November 2**, you will be asked to conduct a small interview exercise as a group in class. You will interview a person and then present on your findings and experience to the class.

***Each presentation is worth 5% for a total of 10%.***

### ***Group Presentation on Research (10%)***

- Combine the findings from your individual term papers to prepare a group presentation for the class  
***Presentation held last class, December 7, 2016***

### **Contact Information**

#### ***Instructor: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann***

- In person: by appointment in SSC 5430
- By telephone: 519-661-2111 x85385
- By email: [wlehmann@uwo.ca](mailto:wlehmann@uwo.ca)

#### ***Teaching Assistant: Cliff Davidson***

- In person: by appointment in SSC 5311
- By email: [cdavid44@uwo.ca](mailto:cdavid44@uwo.ca)

### **How to Get Important Information**

Make sure to check the course OWL site regularly for course updates, cancellations, and other course-related postings.

## **Important Policies**

### ***Policies for Assignment Deadlines:***

If you miss the due date for an assignment due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, you must provide notification of and documentation for the reasons for your circumstances to your Academic Counselor within 48 hours. If your problem is medical in nature, you should be seen by your doctor on the date of the exam or on the date the assignment is due. If your Academic Counselor agrees that your reasons are legitimate and are supported by your medical doctor's documentation, you will be allowed to hand in your assignment at a later date.

### ***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 (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

### ***Plagiarism Checking:***

Students may be required to submit their assignments to turnitin.com on the class WebCT website after they are completed. These papers will be subject to submission for textual originality.

### ***Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class***

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

### ***Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness***

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: [http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

### ***Accessibility Options:***

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

### ***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:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### ***Mental Health***

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western ([http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

### ***Compassionate Grounds***

***Serious Illness of a Family Member:*** Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a medical certificate from the family member's physician to your home faculty's Academic Counseling office.

***In Case of a Death:*** Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a copy of the newspaper notice, death certificate or documentation provided by the funeral director to your home faculty's Academic Counseling office.

### ***Grade Guidelines***

The Department of Sociology has grade distribution guidelines that all instructors are required to follow. For Sociology courses at the 3000 level, class averages must be in the range of 70-74%.

### ***Course Attendance Requirements:***

With the exception of legitimate medical/personal excuses (documentation required to be submitted) students are expected to attend at least 80% of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade in the course cannot be obtained without meeting this attendance requirement.

## Course Schedule and Readings

### 1. Introduction: September 14, 2016

- Introduction to the course: content, assignments, expectations
- Discussion of major assignment project; formation of groups.

### 2. Epistemological Issues, Choosing Methodologies and Research Questions: September 21, 2016

- Quantitative versus qualitative research: key differences;
- How does epistemology affect your approach to your research topic and questions?
- Deciding on research question and data collection approaches

Reading 1: Krahn & Taylor: *Resilient Teenagers: Explaining the High Educational Aspirations of Visible-Minority Youth in Canada*

Reading 2: Taylor & Krahn: *Living through our children: exploring the education and career 'choices' of racialized immigrant youth in Canada*

### 3. Content Analysis: September 28, 2016

- What is content analysis; how is it done?
- Use of art, photos and other visual data for qualitative research
- Hands-on work: Content analysis exercise

Reading 1: Adams, Walker & O'Connell: *Invisible or Involved Fathers? A Content Analysis of Representations of Parenting in Young Children's Picturebooks in the UK*

Reading 2: Jackson and Gee: *Look Janet, no you look John*

### 4. Ethics in Qualitative Research: October 5, 2016

- Research ethics and guidelines (Western Policies)
- Develop Letter of Information and Consent Form

Reading 1: Lenza: *Controversies Surrounding Laud Humphrey's Tearoom Trade*

Reading 2: Duncan et al: *Is my mum going to hear this? Methodological and ethical challenges in qualitative health research with young people*

**Content analysis exercise essay due today**

### 5. Ethnography and Observational Field Work I: October 12, 2016

- What is ethnography? When is it the right method to use?
- Sampling in ethnographic research
- Participatory versus non-participatory ethnography
- Ethics in ethnographic research
- Techniques of ethnographic research

Reading 1: Khan and Jerolmack: *Saying Meritocracy and Doing Privilege*

Reading 2: Nathan: *My Freshman Year (Chapter 1)*

## **6. Ethnography and Observational Field Work II: October 19, 2016**

- Hands-on ethnographic exercise and *presentations*

Reading 1: Armstrong and Hamilton: *Paying for the Party (Chapter 4)*

Reading 2: Thompson, *Hanging Tongues*

## **7. In-Depth Interviewing I: October 26, 2016**

- Developing interview guides & strategies and techniques for successful interviews

Reading 1: Hermanowicz: *The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed*

Reading 2: Venkatesh: *Learnin' the Trade: Conversations with a Gangsta'*

*Ethnography exercise essay due today*

## **8. In-Depth Interviewing II: November 2, 2016**

- Hands-on interview exercise and *presentations*

Reading 1: Granfield: *Making It by Faking It*

Reading 2: Lehmann: *Extra-credentia experiences and social closure*

## **9.1 Special forms of interviewing: Focus Groups and photo elicitation: Nov. 9, 2016**

- How and when to use focus groups and photo elicitation

Reading 1: Young et al.: *Drinking like a guy*

Reading 2: Allen: *'Picture this': using photo-methods in research on sexualities and schooling*

## **9.2 Beginning to put it all together: Nov. 9, 2016**

- Strategies for success in your interview project

## **10. Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data: November 16, 2016**

- Transcribing, coding, organizing and interpreting data
- Hands-on work in class: Coding exercise

Reading 1: Saldana: *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (Chapter 1)*

Reading 2: Mullins & Preyde: *The lived experience of students with an invisible disability*

## **11. Analysis and Interpretation; Writing up results: November 23, 2016**

- More on coding and analyzing
- Writing effective qualitative research papers and reports

Reading 1: van den Hoonaard: *Qualitative Research in Action (Chapter 8: Writing up Qualitative Research)*

Reading 2: Nath: *Aesthetic and emotional labour through stigma*

## **12. Presenting research; and summary of learning: November 30, 2016**

- How to prepare effective presentations of your results; debriefing of project; wrap up and summary

*Papers Due in class*

## **13. Group Presentations: December 7, 2016**