Western University

SOCILOGY 3307G – 002
Investigating the Social World: Qualitative Research

Winter 2018
Tuesday, 9:30am-12:30pm, SSC 3014

Instructor: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann
Office Hours: by appointment
Department of Sociology, Office: SSC 5430
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Teaching Assistant: TBA

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)
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
- Interview Project Proposal  Due January 30, 2018  10%
- Ethnography Exercise  Due: February 27, 2018  25%
- Interview Project & Term paper  Due April 3, 2018  45%
- Reading Reviews  10%
- Group Presentation: Research  April 10, 2018  10%

Evaluation Breakdown (detailed information provided in class)

Interview Project Proposal (10%); one submission per group; all group members receive the same mark
- You have to submit a proposal for your group’s interview project
- The proposal needs to include the following:
  - A short literature review giving the context of the study. This should be no more than 1-2 pages and include at least 3 references to studies on your topic.
  - A set of research question you will answer with your project.
  - A description of your sample and your recruitment strategy.
  - Your letter of information and consent form.
  - A first draft of your interview guide.

Due: January 30, 2018
Note: as this is a group proposal, late assignments will not be accepted

Ethnography Exercise (25%)
- 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 February 27, 2018; 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 (45%)
- 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 April 3, 2018; 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 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: wlehrmann@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant: TBA
• In person: TBA
• By email: TBA

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.

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

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
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

Mental Health
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (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 (subject to change)

1. Introduction: January 9, 2018
   - Introduction to the course: content, assignments, expectations
   - Discussion of major assignment project; formation of groups.

2. Preparing for Research: Developing a Research Proposal, Choosing Methodologies and Research Questions: January 16, 2018
   - Understanding the context of your project: literature reviews
   - Formulating Research Questions and choosing the right methodology
   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. Ethics in Qualitative Research: January 23, 2018
   - 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*

4. Ethnography and Observational Field Work I: January 30, 2018
   - Sampling and techniques of ethnographic research
   - Ethics in ethnographic research
   Reading 1: Khan and Jerolmack: *Saying Meritocracy and Doing Privilege*
   Reading 2: Nathan: *My Freshman Year (Chapter 1)*
   Research Proposals Due Today

5. Ethnography and Observational Field Work II: February 6, 2018
   - Hands-on ethnographic exercise and presentations
   Reading 1: Armstrong and Hamilton: *Paying for the Party (Chapter 4)*
   Reading 2: Thompson, *Hanging Tongues*

6. Content Analysis: February 13, 2018
   - 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*
7. In-Depth Interviewing I: February 27 2018
   - 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: March 6, 2018
   - Hands-on interview exercise and presentations
   Reading 1: Granfield: Making It by Faking It
   Reading 2: Lehmann: Extra-credential experiences and social closure

9.1 Special forms of interviewing: Focus Groups and photo elicitation: March 13, 2018
   - 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: March 13, 2018
   - Strategies for success in your interview project

10. Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data: March 20, 2018
    - 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: March 27, 2018
    - More on coding and analyzing
    - Writing effective qualitative research papers and reports
    Reading 1: van den Hoonoord: 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: April 3, 2018
    - How to prepare effective presentations of your results; debriefing of project; wrap up and summary

13. Group Presentations: April 10, 2018