



The University of Western Ontario  
**SOCIOLOGY 3307G-001**  
Investigating the Social World:  
**Qualitative Research**  
**Winter 2024**  
**In-Person**

**Instructor:** Dr Kaitlynn Mendes, Associate Professor

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*This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.*

**Course Description:** In this course, students will learn to investigate the social world using a variety of qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviewing techniques, observation, and textual 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, assessments, 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 2206A/B

Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, 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.

***Anti-requisite(s):*** Sociology 3310F/G, Family Studies and Human Development 3230A/B.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

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

- Develop skills around how to collect, manage, analyze, and interpret qualitative research data
- 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, including research in online spaces
- Design and carry out a research project, including conducting in-depth interviews, ethnographic field observations, and content analysis
- Analyze and interpret qualitative data

Demonstrate academic integrity in assessed work through appropriate use of academic citation and referencing conventions.

## **Course Material:**

There is no single textbook students need to purchase, however this course draws heavily from Alan Bryman's *Social Research Methods*. You can purchase various editions online or through the campus bookstore

[https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2021A&courses%5B0%5D=001\\_UW/SOC3307F](https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2021A&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/SOC3307F)

Other weekly readings will be assigned and posted on OWL

## **Communication:**

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

The best way to contact me is by email: [Kaitlynn.mendes@uwo.ca](mailto:Kaitlynn.mendes@uwo.ca). Please note that I might take up to three business days to reply to your email.

## **Method of Evaluation:**

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

### ***Evaluation Breakdown:***

Class attendance	All Weeks	10%
In-depth interview proposal	12 Feb 2024	15%
Ethnography Assignment	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2024	25%
Content Analysis Assignment	15 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	15%
Interview transcription, analysis and write up	5 <sup>th</sup> April 2024	35%

### ***Evaluation Details:***

*Class Attendance:* Class attendance is expected and students must attend at least 80% of class to pass the course. If you cannot attend a class due to illness or other reasons please inform Professor Mendes ahead of time. You must attend at least 10 classes to get full marks.

Due: Weekly  
Weight: 10%  
Where: In Person

*In-depth interview proposal:* Identify a sociological problem. Identify research questions. Create a draft interview guide; Describe your recruitment strategy; produce your letter of information and consent form.

Due: 12<sup>th</sup> Feb  
Weight: 15%  
Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced  
Where: OWL

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

Due: 1<sup>st</sup> March  
Weight: 25%  
Length: 8-10 pages, double-spaced  
Where: OWL

*Content Analysis Assignment:* Content will be assigned to you. Choose content to analyse and answer the questions posed to you on the assignment. We will do this during class time.

Due: 15<sup>th</sup> March  
Weight: 15%  
Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced  
Where: OWL

*Interview transcription, analysis and write-up:* Conduct an interview (over zoom, face-time or phone). Transcribe the interview and analyse it for themes related to your research questions. Write a brief report on your findings. Submit your transcription, your thematic coding notes, and a brief write-up on your findings

Due: 5<sup>th</sup> April  
Weight: 35%  
Length: 10-15 pages, double-spaced  
Where: OWL

### **Student Absences:**

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

#### ***Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade:***

Regarding student attendance, if students are going to miss class for unforeseen circumstances, please contact Dr. Mendes as soon as possible. Depending on the circumstances, Dr. Mendes might consider reweighting the assignment.

#### ***Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:***

For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible (not Dr. Mendes).

Depending on the circumstances, accommodations might be made by providing an extension or re-weighting.

### Course Schedule and Readings:

Jan 11	1	Introduction – What is qualitative research
Jan 18	2	Qualitative research design and processes
Jan 25	3	Research Ethics
Feb 1	4	Interviews and Focus Groups
Feb 8	5	Ethnography and Observational Methods
Feb 15	6	pARTicipatory and creative methods
Feb 22		<b>Reading week</b> (Feb 17-25)
Feb 29	7	Content Analysis
March 7	8	Semiotics and Case Study Research
March 14	9	No class – drop in consultation
March 21	10	Analyzing Data: Coding, thematic, and discourse analysis
March 28	11	Writing up and presenting research
April 4	12	No class – drop in consultation

#### Week 1: January 11<sup>th</sup> 2024 Introduction – What is qualitative research:

- Introduction to the course, content, assignments and expectations
- Difference between qualitative and quantitative research
- The beauty and mess of qualitative research

#### *Key Reading:*

Bell, E., Bryman, A., and Kleinknecht (2022) *Social Research Methods (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 9 ‘The nature of qualitative research’

#### Week 2: January 18<sup>th</sup> 2024 Qualitative research design and processes

- Understanding the context of your project: Literature reviews

- Developing research questions
- Choosing the right research design
- Understanding sampling decisions

*Key Readings:*

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3 (read from Introduction-end of Lab Experiments) & Chapter 5 ‘Getting Started: reviewing the literature’

*Additional Readings:*

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 18 ‘Sampling in qualitative research’

Salkind, Neil J. (2012) *100 Questions (and Answers) About Research Methods*. Part 1 “Understanding the Research Process and Getting Started” (London, New Delhi and New York: Sage)

**Week 3: January 25<sup>th</sup> 2024      Research Ethics**

- Understand key ethical principles in qualitative research, including special considerations for online research
- Protecting yourself, and research participants

*Key Readings:*

Association of Internet Research (AoIR) (2019) *AoIR’s Internet Research Ethics 3.0*. Available at: [IRE 3.0 - final-includes missing reference \(aoir.org\)](https://www.aoir.org/aoir3.0-final-includes-missing-reference). Pp. 9-24.

Bell, E., Bryman, A., and Kleinknecht (2022) *Social Research Methods (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3: Research Ethics

*Additional Readings:*

Fielding, Nigel G., Raymond, M. Lee, and Blank, Grant (2017) *The Sage Handbook of Online Research Methods*. London and New York: Sage. Chapter 2 ‘The ethics of online research’

**Week 4: February 1<sup>st</sup> 2024      Interviews and Focus Groups**

- Developing interview guides and strategies for successful interviews
- How do run a focus group
- Troubleshooting interviews and focus groups
- Interview exercise in class

*Key Readings:*

Bennett, J. (2014). Using diaries and photo elicitation in phenomenological research: Studying everyday practices of belonging in place. In *SAGE Research Methods Cases*. <https://www-doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.4135/978144627305014539100>

Bell, E., Bryman, A., and Kleinknecht (2022) *Social Research Methods (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 11 'Interviewing in qualitative research'

Roulston K, deMarrais K, Lewis JB. Learning to Interview in the Social Sciences. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 2003;9(4):643-668.

### **Week 5: February 8<sup>th</sup> 2024    Ethnography and Observational Methods**

*Key Readings:*

Bell, E., Bryman, A., and Kleinknecht (2022) *Social Research Methods (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 10 'Ethnography and participant observation'

Caliandro A. Digital Methods for Ethnography: Analytical Concepts for Ethnographers Exploring Social Media Environments. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 2018;47(5):551-578.  
doi:[10.1177/0891241617702960](https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241617702960)

Postill, J, Pink, S (2012) Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145: 123–134

### **Week 6: February 15<sup>th</sup> 2024    pARTicipatory and creative methods**

- This week we will discuss various ways that you can integrate art and creative outputs into your research design
- Learn how pARTicipatory research can be useful for helping marginalized groups share information and knowledge in their own, creative ways.
- Get a chance to receive formative feedback on your in-depth interview proposal

*Key Readings:*

Renold, Emma and Ringrose, Jessica (2019) 'Jarring: Making Phematerialist Research Practices Matter', *MAI: Feminism & Visual Culture*. [JARring: Making PhEmaterialist Research Practices Matter - MAI: Feminism & Visual Culture \(ucl.ac.uk\)](https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241617702960)

van der Vaart, G., van Hoven, B., & Huigen, P. P. (2018) 'Creative and Arts-Based Research Methods in Academic Research. Lessons from a Participatory Research Project in the Netherlands.' *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-19.2.2961>

### **February 17<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> 2024 – Reading Week – No Classes**

### **Week 7: February 29<sup>th</sup> 2024    Content Analysis**

- Key features of content analysis
- Learn how it can be either qualitative or quantitative – and the difference between the two

- Developing coding for content analysis

*Key Readings:*

Bell, E., Bryman, A., and Kleinknecht (2022) *Social Research Methods (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 12 ‘Content Analysis’

- Fowler LR, Schoen L, Smith HS, Morain SR. Sex Education on TikTok: A Content Analysis of Themes. *Health Promotion Practice*. 2022;23(5):739-742. doi:[10.1177/15248399211031536](https://doi.org/10.1177/15248399211031536)

**Week 8: March 7<sup>th</sup> 2024      Semiotics and Case Study Research**

- Learn to design and carry out a case study research
- What is semiotics and how is it used
- Practice doing semiotic analysis

*Key Readings:*

Chandler, D. (2017) ‘Models of the Sign’, *Semiotics: The Basics, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* London and New York: Routledge.

Walby, K. and Wilkinson, B., 2021. The visual politics of public police Instagram use in Canada. *New Media & Society*, p.14614448211015805.

Zainal, Z (2007) ‘Case Study As a Research Method’, *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, 9(Jun) Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41822817\\_Case\\_study\\_as\\_a\\_research\\_method](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41822817_Case_study_as_a_research_method)

**Week 9: March 14<sup>th</sup> 2024      No Class- Drop In Consultation**

- This week, students will get the chance to have 1-1 drop in sessions to discuss and get feedback on their next assignment

**Week 10: March 21<sup>st</sup> 2024      Analyzing Data: Coding, thematic and discourse analysis**

- This week we learn about key ways to analyse and code qualitative data, using techniques such as thematic analysis and discourse analysis
- Have a chance to get formative feedback on your final assignment

*Key Readings:*

Clarke, V. & Braun, V (2017) ‘Thematic analysis’, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12:3, 297-298,

Gray, David E. (2014) *Doing Research in the Real World. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. London, New Delhi, New York: Sage. Chapter 26 “Analysing and Presenting Qualitative Data

Lofgren, K (2013) ‘Qualitative analysis of interview data’  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRL4PF2u9XA>

Mod-U (2016) 'How to know you are coding correctly: Qualitative research methods'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iL7Ww5kpnIM>

**Week 11: March 28<sup>th</sup> 2024      Writing up and presenting research**

- This week we go over details of how to write up and present research
- Students get a final chance for summative feedback on their final assignment

*Key Reading:*

*Bryman, Alan (2016) Social Research Methods (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 28 'Writing up social science research'*

**Week 12: April 4<sup>th</sup> 2024      No class – drop in session**

- This week, students will get the chance to have 1-1 drop in sessions to discuss and get feedback on their final assignment

**Academic Policies:**

Please review the Department of Sociology "[Important Academic Policies](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf)" document  
[https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic\\_Policies.pdf](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf) for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Academic Accommodation
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health