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

Learning Outcomes

- Synthesize and critically evaluate theoretical arguments and published research from a sociological perspective.
- Analyze, evaluate, and utilize a variety of methodological approaches in Sociology
- Master’s: Understand and critically evaluate current research and scholarship within sociology.
- Doctoral: Critically evaluate and apply current research and scholarship within sociology and in one’s area(s) of specialization.
- Master’s: Demonstrate an understanding of results from qualitative research and the competent use of different qualitative research methodologies and designs.
- Doctoral: Conceptualize, design, and implement original research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding that makes a sustained, evidence-based, sociological argument and presents ideas, concepts, and results clearly.
- Apply sociological methods to understand and interpret social phenomena
- Understand and apply standards of academic integrity and appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct and presentation of research.
- Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss ideas clearly and articulately through effective oral and written communication.
- Demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the complexity of knowledge, the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines, and the limitations of one’s own work and of the discipline more generally.

Course Material(s)
Required textbooks:

Methods of Evaluation

Evaluation Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Proportion of Test Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Facilitation</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method Group Exercise</td>
<td>Feb 14/28</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (Thesis/Paper Review)</td>
<td>March 21</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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Students are expected to do the weekly readings. The weekly readings will be the basis for class discussions. There are a total of two assignments and two class presentations.

The first assignment consists of a group exercise and presentation.

The second assignment is a review of a thesis in sociology, choose a doctoral or master’s thesis (or research paper) in your area of interest.

Students are also asked to take part in a seminar facilitation. Detailed information on each of the assignments will be provided to students. The goal of the thesis review is to provide students with an introduction to the nature and scope of research in the area of sociology. The method group exercise provides students with some hands-on research experience.

**SDC’s Learning Skills Services, Rm 4100 WSS, www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning**

LS counsellors are ready to help you improve your learning skills. We offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counseling.

**Participation**

Participation will be evaluated based on how well-prepared students are for class, their participation in the class, and their record of attendance. Considering that discussion and critical analysis are an important part of the learning process in research methods, students are expected to participate frequently in class discussion throughout the year. Students who engage with the course material in a critical and in-depth manner will receive high participation marks. Also students are required to attend all classes. Missing 3 or more classes will lead to a very low attendance grade. If you cannot attend class, please email the professor with detailed explanations. Students are expected to be on time.
Seminar Discussion Facilitation
Each student is expected to choose a method of their choice and to discuss its strengths and weaknesses. A summary of the method should be provided, including purpose, key assumptions, procedures, strengths and weaknesses, and conclusions. Students are also expected to present an exemplary use in Sociology of the chosen method. Students are responsible for facilitating the discussion and raising key points. All students are expected to participate in the discussion.

Method Exercise
This is a group exercise and should help you develop your hands-on research skills. Groups of 3-4 students will develop a research strategy to investigate a research question of their interest. Part of the assignment will be to negotiate the nature of the research question, the best method to be employed, and how to go about it. This is a first taste of the reality of conducting qualitative research and collaborating with colleagues. The project and best practices will be presented to the class on February 14/28.

Thesis and Method Review
This assignment consists of writing a review of a thesis in Sociology. The assignment will help you gain familiarity with various methods. Through the review you will develop skills in the critical assessment of qualitative research methods. This will provide a useful foundation for your own thesis. It also provides familiarity with the structure of a thesis and its components. MA students will review a Master’s thesis or paper and PhD students a doctoral thesis.

Plagiarism
Students are responsible for understanding the nature and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other scholastic offenses. Plagiarism and cheating are considered very serious offenses because they undermine the integrity of research and education. Actions constituting a scholastic offense are described at the following link: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf

(In accordance with policy at UWO):

“Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage 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 academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work and programs in electronic form for plagiarism checking. (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar)."

Students are expected to work alone unless it is specified in the assignment.

Possible penalties for a scholastic offense include failure of the assignment, failure of the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

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 strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW 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.

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](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf)

6. A few words about the assignments and deadlines

I will not give extensions except under special circumstances. If you cannot meet the deadline, notify the instructor as soon as possible, preferably before the scheduled date and present adequate documentation. Late papers without permission are subject to a cumulative penalty of 5% points per day.

The method exercise and final paper should be submitted via OWL. Be sure to keep a copy of all work submitted in fulfilment of this class for at least 3 months after termination of the class.

“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 for such checking 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](http://www.turnitin.com)).”

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.

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit: [http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/](http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/) for more information on these resources and on mental health.

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 ext 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.
**Support Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western [http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/](http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**Course Schedule**

It is your responsibility to consult the course schedule in order to keep up with the course readings and ensure you do not miss the deadlines for the assignments. The course schedule outlines the topics to be discussed each week, the readings corresponding to the lectures, and deadlines for the assignments. Assigned readings should be completed before attending the class.

**Being on Time and Texting/Social Media**

Students are expected to be on time for class (even on Zoom). Any missed material is your responsibility.

**Class Schedule**

**I. ORIENTATION TO RESEARCH**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading and Discussions</th>
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| 1 Jan 10 | **Introduction to the Course:** Overview of course material and assignments.  
Designing and conducting quantitative and qualitative research in *Sociology*: A plurality of views.  
Distinguish qualitative from quantitative methods.  
Writing strategies: creativity, procrastination & speed.  
Goals of the Sociology programme.  
Role of research: my voice, my standpoint. |
| 2 Jan. 17 | **Components of the Research I.**  
**Readings:**  
Chapters 1-3.  
Introduction  
Asking questions and identifying goals  
Strategies for designing research  
The role of theory  
Chapter 1. |
II. DATA COLLECTION IN A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Jan. 24 Components of the Research II.

Readings:


Chapter 5 and 8.

The introduction

The purpose statement

Research questions & goals

Observing social life through field research


Chapters 2, 17.

Seminar 1: Unobtrusive research.

Seminar 2: Small stories research

Jan 31 Qualitative Data Collection Methods: Interviews, Focus Groups.

Readings:


Chapters 6 +7.

Seminar 1: Interviews.

Seminar 2: Focus groups.

Email Topic Choice for Method Exercise

Feb. 7: Social Media Qualitative Data Collection: Instagram
Seminar: Social Media Analysis
Readings:
Chapters 34, 8, 12.
Seminar 1: Data harvesting.
Seminar 2: Virtual ethnography.
Seminar 3: Visuality in social media.

III. METHOD EXERCISES

*Group Presentations*: Discussion of Method Exercise.
Group presentations + discussion.

*Group Assignment Due: Method Exercise*

Feb. 21 No class/Spring break

Feb. 28 Topic: Method Exercise.
*Group Presentations*: Discussion of Method Exercise.
Group presentations + discussion.

*Group Assignment Due: Method Exercise*
IV. DATA ANALYSIS IN A QUALITATIVE STUDY

9 March. 7 Qualitative Data Analysis. Coding, Scheme Development, Inter-coder reliability.

Readings:


Chapter 9.

Seminar 1: Grounded Theory.

Seminar 2: Thematic Analysis.

Seminar 3: Narrative Analysis

V. WRITING UP THE STUDY/ COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH/ETHICS

10 March 14

Work on final papers. Consultations.

Readings:


Doing exemplary research: criteria for excellence, steps to follow, the ups and downs, creating your own path, getting it done, serendipity, creativity, work, routines, etc.

Readings:


Chapter 10
Presentation: Writing the Proposal: Steps along the way.

Additional voluntary readings (for background knowledge):


Assignment Due: Thesis/Paper Review.


Chapter 5


http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/magazine/the-trials-of-alice-goffman.html?_r=1
Presentation: Putting together an ethics protocol.

Additional readings:

a) UWO Ethics Guidelines.
   Guidelines: https://www.uwo.ca/research/ethics/human/board_guidelines.html

b) Tri-Council Ethics:

c) Big data ethics:

Mini practice assignments (no evaluation):
- Create a letter of information for a qualitative study
- Create recruitment materials for a qualitative study

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April 4: Looking into the Future. Conferences, Papers, CVs, etc.

What does a CV look like when you apply for your first job as a qualitative researcher? How can I be building my CV along the way? How do I tailor it to an academic and industry setting as a qualitative researcher? What are methods demonstrations? How do I put one together for qualitative work?

Discussion of Final Assignments: Pros and cons of various methods chapters:
How do I make decisions about what method works best? How do I present methods, what works?

Course Overview, Final Remarks.

No readings.