



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 9021B
Qualitative Research Methods
Winter 2025
Tuesdays, 9:30am-12:30pm, SSC 5235
DRAFT

Professor: Tracey L. Adams

Office Hours: by appointment and after class
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Enrollment Restrictions

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Department of Sociology, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the epistemology and ontology underlying qualitative methods, as well as the pragmatics of conducting qualitative research. It provides an overview of several different types of qualitative research methods. Furthermore, it considers ethical issues and data analysis and management challenges that are associated with qualitative research. Details on course requirements are provided below.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- * Analyze, evaluate, and utilize a variety of qualitative methodological approaches in Sociology
- * Understand and critically evaluate current research and scholarship within sociology
- * 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
- * Conduct original research and write a theoretically informed research paper that makes a sustained, evidence-based, sociological argument and presents ideas, concepts, and results clearly
- * 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 ability to engage in scholarly discussion and debate in learning environments

* 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 Materials

There are no required textbooks in the course. All required readings will be made available, free of charge, on OWL Brightspace and/or through the library. No software is required.

Methods of Evaluation

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|-----------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Research Proposal | 15% | February 11 2025 |
| Final Paper | 40% | April 15 2025 |
| In-Class Activities (2) | 10% | Jan 28, Feb 11, March 4 2025 |
| Seminar Presentation | 10% | Week to be determined |
| Class Attendance & Participation | 10% | All Weeks |
| 3 Minute presentation of research | 15% | April 1 |

Students must complete all assignments and receive a passing grade in each to pass the course. Please find further information below. More detail will be provided in class. Please also note that I have a flexible deadline policy. Written assignments are due within 1 week of the official deadline. I urge you to aim for completion of assignments by the deadline or as close to the deadline as possible.

Evaluation Breakdown

1. Research Proposal (15%); Due February 11, 2025

Pick a research topic you can study with the use of qualitative methods. Given the constraints put upon us by Western's Research Ethics Board, keep the following in mind:

- 1) For an interview project: please pick a non-sensitive topic, and also one that does not involve participants who cannot give their own consent,
- 2) For an ethnographic project: please pick a public location that does not require consent from those you observe.
- 3) For a content analysis, please analyze publicly available content that does not require consent or permission to use the data.

The research proposal should include: 1) a statement of the problem and its significance; 2) a description of your research methodology, including data collection strategy, sampling strategy, and recruitment strategy, 3) a brief discussion of the challenges, benefits and limitations of the proposed study, and 4) a bibliography of 10 articles you found that inform your research. **If you are doing an interview, I will also need to see a letter of information that you will share with your participants.** These articles need to be different from any listed on the course outline. Only the bibliography is needed. You do not need to discuss or describe these articles at this stage.

The proposal should be 5-10 pages. Upload the assignment in OWL Brightspace.

2. In-Class Assignments (10%); Jan 28, Feb 11 and/or March 4, 2025

We will have some hands-on activities completed in class on Jan 28, Feb 11 and March 4. A minimum of two of these activities should be handed in after class. Each will be marked out of 5. If you choose to hand in all three assignments, the best two out of three will count towards your grade.

3. Final Project as per Proposal (40%), Due April 15, 2024

Expand your proposal into a project. Given the unique circumstances of each proposal, we will develop specific details in personal consultations, but here are a few guidelines:

- 1) Your final paper should follow the structure of a research article.
- 2) You need to follow all the necessary steps you would in any research project (e.g., consider research ethics implications, include Letters of Information if needed, and carefully consider sampling).
- 3) Keep in mind that you have time constraints in the course and do not have time to collect or analyse a lot of data. Try to keep in manageable. For interviews, depending on length, no more than two (or three, if one of them is very short). For ethnographies, you should spend at least a few hours in the space (on one or more occasions), and record your detailed observations. For content analysis, make sure the amount and length of the content is manageable.

The final paper should be 15-20 pages. Upload the assignment in OWL by the due date.

4. Presentation (10%)

Each week includes a presentation topic. In first class, students sign up for a topic. Given the expected size of the seminar, presentations will be two to three students per topic. The presentation should give an overview of the assigned topic. Highlight its importance for our understanding of qualitative methods. Present to the class evidence from academic sources and provide a balanced perspective on the topic (e.g., where applicable, present to the class arguments for and against something). After the formal presentation, there will be a question-and-answer period. If you wish, you can prepare discussion questions to facilitate this part of the presentation. The presentation itself should be no longer than 20 minutes (total), with an additional 10 minutes for questions. Use PowerPoint.

5. 3-Minute Presentation (15%), April 1 2025

In the last class, all students will give a 3-Minute presentation using one slide to sum up their project, methodology, and its findings.

6. Class Attendance and Participation (10%), All Weeks

Class attendance is encouraged, although it is understood that illness and other extenuating circumstances may require you to miss class from time to time. When you are in class you are encouraged to engage in class participation.

Course Schedule

1. Introduction: January 7, 2025

Introduction to the course: content, assignments, expectations

Discussion of major assignment project; Signing up for presentations

2. Defining Qualitative Methods and Preparing for Research: January 14, 2025

* What is qualitative methods. The difference between quantitative and qualitative methods.

* Key concepts of ontology, epistemology, and paradigm

* Formulating Research Questions/Objectives

* Research Design

Reading TBD

Presentation topic: integrating good principles of EDID in a project

3. Ethics in Qualitative Research: January 21, 2025

* Research ethics in academic and non-academic research

* Ethical principles and policies.

* Ethical implications for your assignments (and research more generally)

Reading TBD

Presentation: researching sensitive topics

4. In-depth interviews: January 28, 2025

* Developing interview guides & strategies and techniques for successful interviews

* Interview exercise in class

* Brief reflection

Reading TBD

Presentation: what is data saturation?

5. Ethnography and Observational Field Work: February 4, 2025

* Sampling and techniques of ethnographic research

* Ethics in ethnographic research

* Auto-ethnography

Reading TBD

Presentation: auto-ethnography

6. Content Analysis: February 11, 2025

* What is content analysis; how is it done?

* Hands-on work: Content analysis exercise

Reading TBD

Presentation: sampling in content analysis

READING WEEK; FEBRUARY 18, 2025

7. Other Qualitative Research Methods: February 25, 2025

- * Case Study Analysis
- * Institutional Ethnography
- * Indigenous Research Methods (and PAR)
- * Photo-voice and Arts-Based Research

Reading TBD

Presentation: Participatory Action Research

8. Historical Research Methods: March 4 2025

- * How is qualitative historical research accomplished?
- * Hands-on experience using historical research methods.
- * In-class assignment / exercise.

Reading TBD

Presentation: Bias, Inequalities, and Silences in the Historical record.

9. Analysis and Coding of Qualitative Data: March 11, 2025

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

Reading TBD

Presentation: grounded theory

10. Writing up and presenting research: March 18 2025

- Writing effective qualitative research papers and reports
- How to prepare effective presentations of your results

Reading TBD

Presentation topic: reliability and validity in qualitative methods

11. No class today; Drop-in consultations on final project: March 25, 2025

12. Three-Minute Presentations: April 1, 2025

Everyone presents their key findings in 3 minutes using one infographic slide

NOTE: SOME PRESENTATION TOPICS AND READINGS WILL CHANGE

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines

Insert here if applicable.

Statement on Academic 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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

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>).

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

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>

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

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.

Health/Wellness Services

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