The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 3307F 001
Investigating the Social World:
Qualitative Research

Fall 2021/22
Tuesday, 9:30am-12:30pm, SSC 3026

Instructor: Dr Kaitlynn Mendes, Associate Professor
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2 (virtual or face to face) or by appointment
Department of Sociology, Office: SSC 5415
Email: Kaitlynn.mendes@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 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 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, Family Studies and Human Development 3230A/B, the former Sociology 3311F/G.

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
Required Text(s):
This course draws heavily from Alan Bryman’s *Social Research Methods*.

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

Method of Evaluation:

*Evaluation Breakdown:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance</td>
<td>All Weeks</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth interview proposal</td>
<td>18th October 2021</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis Assignment</td>
<td>29th October 2021</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography Assignment</td>
<td>8th November 2021</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview transcription, analysis and write up</td>
<td>9th December 2021</td>
<td>35%</td>
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*Evaluation Details:*

*Class Attendance:* Class attendance is expected. If you cannot attend a class due to illness or other reasons please inform Professor Mendes ahead of time. You receive 1 mark for each of the 11 classes attended, giving you a bonus mark of 1% if you attend all 11.

Due: Weekly

Weight: 10%

*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: 18th October

Weight: 15%

Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced

*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: 29th October

Weight: 20%

*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: 8th November  
Weight: 25%  
Length: 8-10 pages, double-spaced

*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: 9th December  
Weight: 35%  
Length: 10-15 pages, double-spaced

**How to Contact Me:**
The best way to contact me is by email: Kaitlynn.mendes@uwo.ca

**Contingency Plan:**
Although this course is designed to take place in person, should Public Health guidance change, we will move to online learning, including weekly sessions and office hours.

**How to get important information:**
Please be sure to regularly check the OWL course site regularly for updates, cancellations, and other course-related material.

**Important Policies**

**Policies for Assignment Deadlines:**
For all assignments, small extensions are available for medical or personal emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. If you miss, or know you are going to miss the assignment due date due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, please get in touch with myself and your Academic Counsellor as soon as you can. If your problem is medical in nature, be sure to be seen by a doctor. If your Academic Counselor agrees that your reasons are legitimate and are supported by medical documentation, you will be allowed to submit your assignment or have your grade re-weighted, depending on the circumstances. If none of these steps are taken, late marks will be deducted by 3% each day.

**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:**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for 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 ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).

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

As a courtesy to other students, please 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: [counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html).

**Academic Consideration for Missed Work**

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a Self-Reported Absence (SRA) form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will NOT be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course. Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to your Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf)

**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/academics/examinations/accommodated_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/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 (www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Course Schedule and Readings:

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction – What is qualitative research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Qualitative research design and processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Research Ethics</td>
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<td>Oct 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interviews and Focus Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>pARTicipatory and creative methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ethnography and Observational Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 2</td>
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<td>Reading week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Online Research</td>
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<td>Nov 16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Semiotics and Case Study Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Analyzing Data: Coding, thematic, and discourse analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>No class – drop in consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Dec</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Writing up and presenting research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Week 1: September 14th 2021  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:**


**Week 2: September 21st 2021**  
**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:**


**Additional Readings:**


**Week 3: September 28th 2021**  
**Research Ethics**

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

**Key Readings:**


**Additional Readings:**


**Week 4: October 5th 2021**  
**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:*


**Week 5: October 12th  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:*


**Week 6: October 19th 2021 Ethnography and Observational Methods**

*Key Readings:*


Week 7: October 26th 2021  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:


November 2nd 2021 – Reading Week – No Classes

Week 8: November 9th 2021  Online Research

- Address ways of doing online research
- Engage with practical and ethical issues of doing online research
- Look at opportunities and limits of online research

Key Readings:

Rogers, R. (2013), Digital Methods, MIT Press. (Intro + Ch. 1)


Week 9: November 16th  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:


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
Week 10: November 23rd 2021  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:


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=iL7Ww5kpnlM

Week 11: Nov 30th 2021  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

Week 12: December 7th 2021  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: