



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
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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:***

Class attendance	All Weeks	10%
In-depth interview proposal	18 th October 2021	15%
Content Analysis Assignment	29 th October 2021	15%
Ethnography Assignment	8 th November 2021	25%
Interview transcription, analysis and write up	9 th December 2021	35%

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).

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.

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.

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

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

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:

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

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:

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 17 'The nature of qualitative research'

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:

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp.40-49 & Chapter 5.

Additional Readings:

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5th 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: 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:

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://aoir.org/AOIR3.0-Final-Includes-Missing-Reference). Pp. 9-24.

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 6 "Ethics and politics in social research"

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: 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:

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>

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 20 '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: 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:

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 \(ucl.ac.uk\)](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/maivc/jarring)

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>

Week 6: October 19th 2021 Ethnography and Observational Methods

Key Readings:

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 19 '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 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:

Bryman, A. (2016). 'Content Analysis' In *Social Research Methods, 5th Ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 288-308.

Rose, G. (2009) *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials.* London: Sage. Chapter 4 "Content analysis"

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)

Jessamy Perriam, Andreas Birkebæk & Andy Freeman (2020) 'Digital methods in a post-API environment', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 23:3, 277-290,

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:

Chandler, D. (2017) 'Models of the Sign', *Semiotics: The Basics, 3rd ed.* London and New York: Routledge.

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:

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. 3rd 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: 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:

Bryman, Alan (2016) *Social Research Methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 28 'Writing up social science research' p. 661-687