



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

Fall 2022

Tuesday, 9:30am-12:30pm, UCC 58

In-Person

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 2206A/B

Unless you have either the prerequisites 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.

Anti-requisite(s): Sociology 3310F/G, Family Studies and Human Development 3230A/B, the former Sociology 3311F/G.

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

Other weekly readings will be assigned and posted on OWL

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) and student email 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

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	18 th October 2022	15%
Ethnography Assignment	28 th October 2022	25%
Content Analysis Assignment	15 th November 2022	15%
Interview transcription, analysis and write up	8 th December 2022	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

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: 28th October

Weight: 25%

Length: 8-10 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: 15th November

Weight: 15%

Length: 6-8 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: 8th December

Weight: 35%

Length: 10-15 pages, double-spaced

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning:

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

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 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.

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

Course Schedule and Readings:

Sept 13	1	Introduction – What is qualitative research
Sept 20	2	Qualitative research design and processes
Sept 27	3	Research Ethics
Oct 4	4	Interviews and Focus Groups
Oct 11	5	Ethnography and Observational Methods
Oct 18	6	pARTicipatory and creative methods
Oct 25	7	Content Analysis
Nov 1		Reading week
Nov 8	8	Student Choice
Nov 15	9	Semiotics and Case Study Research

Nov 22	10	Analyzing Data: Coding, thematic, and discourse analysis
Nov 29	11	No class – drop in consultation
Dec 6	12	Writing up and presenting research

Week 1: September 13th 2022 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 (6th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 9 ‘The nature of qualitative research’

Week 2: September 20th 2022 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. Chapter 3 (read from Introduction-end of Lab Experiments) & Chapter 5 ‘Getting Started: reviewing the literature’

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 27th 2022 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 \(aoir.org\)](#). Pp. 9-24.

Bell, E., Bryman, A., and Kleinknecht (2022) *Social Research Methods (6th 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: October 4th 2022 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 (6th 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: October 11th Ethnography and Observational Methods

Key Readings:

Bell, E., Bryman, A., and Kleinknecht (2022) *Social Research Methods (6th 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: October 18th 2022 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/10.1080/17513758.2019.1644444)

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 7: October 25th 2022 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 (6th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 12 ‘Content Analysis’

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

November 1st 2022 – Reading Week – No Classes

Week 8: November 8th 2022 Student Choice

- Online Research
- Social Media Research
- Indigenous Research and Ways of Knowing
- Practical Session – experience designing and doing research

Week 9: November 15th 2022 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 22rd 2022 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 29th 2022 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 6th 2022 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'

Important Policies

Academic Consideration for Missed Work: Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation in order to receive accommodation for missed work worth 10% or more of the final grade in the course. All required documentation for absences must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty. Individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds or for other reasons.

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf. The student medical certificate is available at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Religious Accommodation: When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at <https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

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.

Accessibility Options: Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html), which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

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:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

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.

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 (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

Mental Health: Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters:

[Academic Counselling - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.uwo.ca/academic_counselling/).

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html .To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.