



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

Winter 2025

In-Person

Instructor: Dr Kaitlynn Mendes, Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
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 or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, 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.

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*. Students are welcome to purchase second-hand or earlier editions of this textbook. While I recommend you get the most recent edition, any edition will do. 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 Brightspace at no charge to you.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) 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. Please note that I might take up to three business days to reply to your email

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	12 th Feb 2025	15%
Ethnography Assignment	17 th March 2025	30%
Reflection	28 th March	10%
Interview transcription, analysis and write up	4 th April 2025	35%

Evaluation Details:

Class Attendance: Class attendance is expected and students must attend at least 70% of class to pass the course. If you cannot attend a class due to illness or other reasons please inform Professor Mendes ahead of time. This course has 10 days of class where you are marked as present or absent. If you attend at least 8 classes, you will get full marks. Academic consideration will not be granted for missed days.

Due: Weekly
Weight: 10%
Where: In Person

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: 12th Feb

Weight: 15%

Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced

Where: OWL Brightspace

Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment already includes flexibility in the form of grace days [a 48-hour submission window with no academic penalty], Professor Mendes reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

Grace days: For each assignment, students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 48 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 48 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 3% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted.

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: 17th March

Weight: 30%

Length: 8-10 pages, double-spaced

Where: OWL Brightspace

Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment already includes flexibility in the form of grace days [a 48-hour submission window with no academic penalty], Professor Mendes reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

Grace days: For each assignment, students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 48 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 48 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 3% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted.

I Used to Think...Now I Think Reflections: Students need to submit reflections for 5 classes over the course of the term. Students will think about what you have learned about the topic that week and complete the following sentence stems:

I used to think...

Now I think...

Due: 28th March

Weight: 10%
Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced
Where: OWL Brightspace

Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment already includes flexibility in the form of choosing which 5 classes to reflect upon, Prof. Mendes reserves the right to deny academic consideration for this assignment. It is recommended that you submit your reflections weekly as you go, but all 5 reflections must be submitted by 28th March 2025. The assignment is graded based on a pass/fail and students will receive a fail on any reflections missed.

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: 4th April
Weight: 35%
Length: 10-15 pages, double-spaced
Where: OWL Brightspace

Please note that because the submission deadline for this assessment already includes flexibility in the form of grace days [a 48-hour submission window with no academic penalty], Prof. Mendes reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

Grace days: For each assignment, students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 48 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 48 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 3% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted.

Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation: *Interview transcription, analysis and write-up:* Due 4th April.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.”

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#). Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically schedule during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

Course Schedule and Readings:

Jan 8	1	Introduction – What is qualitative research
Jan 15	2	Qualitative research design and processes
Jan 22	3	Research Ethics
Jan 29	4	Interviews and Focus Groups
Feb 5	5	Content Analysis
Feb 12	6	Ethnography and Observational Methods
Feb 19	7	Reading week (Feb 15-23)
Feb 26	8	pARTicipatory and creative methods
March 5	9	Semiotics and Case Study Research
March 12	10	No class – drop in consultation
March 19	11	Analyzing Data: Coding, thematic, and discourse analysis
March 26	12	Writing up and presenting research

April 2	13	No class – drop in consultation
---------	----	---------------------------------

Academic Policies:

Please review the Department of Sociology “[Important Academic Policies](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf)” document https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Course Selection
- Absence from Course Commitments
- Missed Tests and Exams
- Religious Accommodations
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health
- Gender-Based and Sexual Violence statement

2024-2025