



The University of Western Ontario
Department of Sociology
Sociology 3307F-001
Investigating the Social World:
Qualitative Research
Fall 2026

Delivery Method: In-person

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This is a DRAFT copy only. Please see the course site for the final version.

Course Description: The goal of qualitative research is to develop an in-depth, firsthand understanding of how people go about their everyday lives. As such, it is necessary to venture into people's life-worlds and acquire intimate awareness of the meanings they attribute to the world around them. The main objective of this course is for you to learn about qualitative research by doing it yourself. Along with observation and content analysis assignments, you will develop your own qualitative interview project and see it through to completion. As such, you will: pick a topic of sociological interest to you; design your project and develop a research proposal; conduct an in-depth interview; code and analyze data from your interview; and, write a paper based on your research. Each week, you will have the opportunity to discuss your research experiences with the professor and your classmates. You will also take part in exercises designed to expand your knowledge of qualitative methods.

Prerequisite: Sociology 2206A/B.

Antirequisites: Sociology 3310F/G, Family Studies and Human Development 3230A/B.

Unless you have either the prerequisite for this course (Soc 2206A/B) 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. This 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.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Participate knowledgeably in discussions about the ins and outs of qualitative research
2. Design a qualitative research project
3. Describe the various ethical issues encountered during qualitative research
4. Collect data on social life using a variety of qualitative research techniques
5. Code and analyze qualitative data
6. Write a research report using qualitative data
7. Explain many of the complex issues encountered when collecting qualitative data
8. Develop theory grounded in analyses of the social world

Course Material:

1. van den Hoonaard, Deborah K., and Lisa-Jo van den Scott. 2022. *Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer*, 4th ed. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. The cost of the textbook is listed [here](#). While the current edition is required, students are welcome to purchase a second-hand copy.
2. Additional readings available on our course OWL Brightspace site.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course [OWL Brightspace](#) site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students enrolled in the course. Please respect your classmates, teaching assistant (TA), and instructor in all communications. Your TA and I constitute the teaching team for this course. TA contact information and office hours will be posted on our OWL site.

E-mail. You can reach your TA and me outside of class through e-mail. If you have a more complex question, it is best to meet to discuss. E-mail can also be used for addressing administrative issues about the course and arranging to meet. We will do our best to respond to e-mail messages within 24 hours. Please use “Sociology 3307F” as the subject line. Use your Western e-mail account.

Office Hours. Do not hesitate to visit your TA or me during our office hours. We are here to help with any questions you might have. This time not only serves as a great way to clarify understanding of the course material, but we also enjoy talking with students about sociology in general, educational pursuits, and career aspirations. If you cannot make it to my office hours, I will usually be around after class, or you can make an appointment to meet with me in person or online over Zoom.

Classroom Etiquette:

We only have a short amount of time in each class to cover a lot of material. To help everyone stay focused, keep phones turned off and put away, avoid whispering with your neighbours, and use computers only for class-related activities. If there is a problem with classroom conduct, you may be asked to leave for the duration of the lecture.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):

Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs are only permitted for brainstorming and preliminary research purposes, but not to generate or analyze data, or to write your assignments.

Electronic Devices:

Electronic devices are permitted for all aspects of the course (e.g., note-taking, assignment-writing).

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Applied Learning Exercises

- Carry out brief in- and out-of-class exercises designed to extend your knowledge of course material through direct application of research techniques.
- **Missed exercises:** You are allowed 1 missed exercise without penalty. It is not necessary to complete the missed exercise or notify me about your absence. Given this flexibility, I reserve the right to deny academic consideration for missing more than 1 exercise.
- Counts for **10%** of your final mark.

Interview Assignment: *Research Proposal*

- To help formulate an initial research plan and communicate your ideas for your interview assignment, submit a research proposal and ethics materials.
- **Length:** ethics materials and a 5- to 7-page, double-spaced proposal.
- Due **Monday, October 5th by 11:59 pm** on our OWL Brightspace site.
- Counts for **20%** of your final mark.

Observation Assignment

- Observe and take field notes on social life as it happens in a public setting of interest to you. Reflect on your experience and sociological themes arising from your observational data.
- **Length:** field notes and a 3- to 5-page, double-spaced reflection.
- Due **Monday, November 2nd by 11:59 pm** on our OWL Brightspace site.
- Counts for **20%** of your final mark.

Content Analysis Assignment

- Select a sociological topic that can be studied through a qualitative content analysis of a publicly accessible YouTube video. Submit observational notes, a transcript of the video, and a reflection on your experience and sociological themes identified in your analysis.
- **Length:** observational notes, transcript, and a 3- to 5-page, double-spaced reflection.
- Due **Monday, November 16th by 11:59 pm** on our OWL Brightspace site.
- Counts for **20%** of your final mark.

Interview Assignment: *Final Paper*

- Interview a friend or family member about a sociological issue. Submit an interview transcript and a research paper based on themes emerging from your analysis of the interview.
- **Length:** interview transcript and a 10- to 12-page, double-spaced research paper.
- Due **Monday, December 7th by 11:59 pm** on our OWL Brightspace site.
- Counts for **30%** of your final mark.

Late Submissions: If illness or extenuating circumstances affect your ability to complete an assignment (excluding the Applied Learning Exercises), you may submit it up to 48 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. If you submit your assignment after the 48-hour grace period, 5% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. Given these flexible deadlines, I reserve the right to deny academic consideration for submissions beyond the 48-hour grace period. **Note:** If your Final Paper is submitted after the 48-hour grace period, supporting documentation is required to receive academic consideration.

Course Schedule and Readings:

The reading list and weekly schedule are available on the course OWL Brightspace site.

2026-2027



Department of Sociology
Effective September 1, 2026.

Academic Policies

Scholastic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the [Scholastic Offences](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf) Policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf.

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.

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 Western University and Turnitin.com

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Prior to any examination, students must turn their cellphones off and store them in their bags/coat at the front of the room. The use (or possession) of cellphones or other communications technologies during examinations is strictly prohibited. Those caught using a cell phone or other communication technologies, or even the physical possession of these technologies during an examination, will result in a zero on the examination in question. Similarly, the use (or possession) of these technologies during examination breaks (bathroom breaks during an exam) will also result in a zero. Intent does not matter. Forgetting to put away your cellphone or other communication technologies, whether during the examination or on examination breaks (bathroom breaks), are not justifications. It will result in a zero on the examination in question. In sum, your cellphones should never be seen or heard during an examination and should always be stored in your bags/coats at the front of the room.

Copyright: Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use.

Code of Student Conduct: Every student is expected to comply with the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct. Sanctions for non-compliance range from a warning or reprimand to expulsion from the University. It is the responsibility of every student to read the Code and familiarize themselves with its contents. The Code is available at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf.

Student Responsibility: Students in a degree program must select courses in accordance with the published requirements. Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded. Students must ensure course prerequisites have been completed successfully or special permission from the Dean is obtained. Students who fail to do so will be removed from the course without adjustments to fees. The decision may not be appealed.

Student Responsibility for Course Selection:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/academic_counselling.pdf

Registration and Progression:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/registration_progression.pdf

Graduation Requirements:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/graduation.pdf

Absence from Course Commitments: Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration](#) – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf.

Students missing regularly scheduled course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request using the Student Absence Portal (SAP) https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html. 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 scheduled 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 in the course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness must include the completed Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical_certificate.pdf or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner. Students must request academic consideration as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

Procedure on makeup assessments for Social Science students and for courses offered by the Faculty of Social Science (Effective September 1, 2026):

If academic consideration is granted, students should consult the course outline for information regarding how the missed assessment will be addressed and follow any instructions provided by the instructor. At the instructor's discretion, the weight of a missed test/quiz or mid-term may be transferred to another assessment in the course, including the final exam, rather than requiring a makeup assessment. Reweighting is not available for missed final exams.

Students are entitled to **one makeup assessment opportunity** for a missed test/quiz, mid-term, or final exam supported by approved academic consideration. **No additional makeup opportunities will be provided.**

Makeup assessments represent the final opportunity to complete a missed course assessment. The course instructor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup test/exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test/exam will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test/exam.

What happens if I miss a makeup assessment as a Social Science student or in a course offered by the Faculty of Social Science?

Students who miss a makeup assessment are not eligible for an additional makeup opportunity. Depending on their circumstances, they may:

1. Remain enrolled in the course and accept a grade of zero on the missed makeup assessment. Students should consult the course outline and calculate whether they can still achieve a passing grade in the course.
2. Withdraw from the course through [Student Center](#) before the [published drop deadline](#). A course dropped before the deadline will result in a withdrawal (WDN) without academic penalty. Part-time students should consult the Registrar's Office [refund schedule](#) to determine whether a tuition refund is available. Students enrolled full-time in 4.0-5.0 courses are generally not eligible for tuition refunds when a course is dropped.
3. If the published drop deadline has passed and the missed makeup assessment is supported by appropriate documentation, students may submit their documentation through the [Student Absence Portal](#) to request a **WDN (withdrawal without academic penalty)**. Approval is not automatic and remains subject to Faculty review. Requests for a second makeup assessment will not be considered.

Students are encouraged to carefully consider their ability to complete a makeup assessment as scheduled, as no further opportunities to complete the missed work will be available.

Note: missed work can only be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is not sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty Academic Advising Office.

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 Brightspace 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.

Guidelines for Grades/Marks: The Department of Sociology has grade distribution guidelines that all instructors are expected to follow. Generally, and with few exceptions, this means that the number of A's in a course cannot exceed the number of B's, and class means are expected to fall within a prescribed percentage range. This means that your final grade depends on your ranking relative to your peers. Courses with grades falling outside this range may be adjusted, up or down. These guidelines do not prohibit a student achieving 95% or higher in all their courses, but it does mean that an entire course cannot be made up of students receiving 95%. This policy combats grade inflation, contributing to higher standards, and ensuring uniformity across all courses of the same level. Motivated and hard-working students receive grades well above the course averages. The use of grade guidelines, including any adjustments of grades, either up or down for this purpose, cannot be used as the basis of an appeal.

Sociology 1000-Level

A's not to exceed B's

Means in the range of 68-72%

Sociology 2000-Level

A's not to exceed B's

Means in the range of 70-75%

Sociology 3000-Level

Means in the range of 73-80%

Sociology 4000-Level

Means in the range of 78-82%

Support Services:

- **Office of the Registrar Services** <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>
- **Faculty Academic Advising** - Please visit your Home Faculty Academic advising webpage for information regarding adding/dropping courses, important dates, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters
https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html .
- **USC services** – information available regarding student health/dental plan, LTC bus pass, food support services, Peer support Centre etc <http://westernusc.ca/services/> .
- **Mental health** – Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) <https://www.uwo.ca/health/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

- **Health & Wellness Services** – Registered part-time and full-time students can book a physical health appointment at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/index.html>.
- **Accessible Education** provides support and services to students with disabilities at Western, in all programs and faculties. 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.
- **Gender-Based and Sexual Violence** – Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experience GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the Wellness and Wellbeing website <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.
- **Western Libraries** – Visit the many library locations on campus. Western Libraries provide access to material in physical and digital formats <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/catalogue/index.html>. Research support is also available <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/research/index.html>.
- **Writing Support Centre** – Online writing resources, writing support and writing modules are available to undergraduate students <https://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/>.
- **Bookstore:** Search for Textbook/course material availability and cost <https://bookstore.uwo.ca/course-materials-textbooks/course-materials-and-textbooks>.