



2014-2015
Department of Sociology
SOC3307F – 530
Investigating the Social World: Qualitative Methods
Wednesday 3:30pm-6:30pm, MRW152

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Course Description

Mandatory for third-year Sociology students in an Honors Specialization. Students will learn to investigate the social world using content analysis, various methods of observation, and different types of interviewing. Particular attention will be paid to the relationship between epistemology and qualitative research approaches. Students will participate in research practice exercises. Ultimately, students will learn to think critically about sociological research.

Antirequisites - Sociology 3310F/G, 3311F/G.

Prerequisites - Enrolment in a Sociology Honors Specialization with a minimum grade of 60% in Sociology 2205A/B and 2206A/B or the former 231. If not in an Honors Specialization, a minimum grade of 70% in Sociology 2205A/B and 2206A/B or the former 231.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites. If you do not have the requisites for this course, and you do not have written special permission from your Dean to enrol in this course, you will 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 Overview

In this course, students will learn to investigate the social world using a variety of qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation, or content analysis. In so doing, students will explore the principles underlying qualitative inquiry and acquire a general understanding of the numerous theoretical positions that underlie qualitative methodology. Through lectures, readings, guest presentations, 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.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

- Identify primary purposes and goals of qualitative research
- Identify various strategies and approaches to conducting and analyzing qualitative data
- Discuss ethical considerations when engaging in qualitative research
- Demonstrate ability to critique qualitative research and analysis reported in academic and non-academic literature.
- Demonstrate ability to formulate and implement a research project from implementation to completion
- To be able to recognize and assess quality and rigour in evaluating qualitative research

Required Texts

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Leavy, Patricia. 2011. *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional articles are assigned weekly and will be posted on Sakai.

Evaluation

Research proposal (Oct 15)	25%
Midterm Exam (Nov 5)	20%
Term Paper (Dec 3)	45%
Group Presentation (Dec 3)	10%

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
Sept 10	Introduction	
Sept 17	Library Presentation	
Sept 24	Epistemological Issues and Research Questions	Chps. 1-2 SR: #1-3
Oct 1	The Research Process: Practical and Ethical Considerations	Chp. 3 SR: #4-6
Oct 8	In-Depth Interviewing Special Forms of Interviewing: Focus Groups and Oral Histories	Chpts. 4-7 SR: #7-8
Oct 15	Ethnography and Field Work Due: Research Proposal	Chpt. 8 SR: #9
Oct 22	Content Analysis and Unobtrusive Measures	Chpt. 9
Oct 29	Case Study and Mixed Method Approaches	Chpt. 10-11
Nov 5	Midterm Exam	
Nov 12	Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data	Chpt. 12
Nov 19	Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data	
Nov 26	Analysis and Interpretation: Writing Up Results	Chpt. 13
Dec 3	Group Presentations Due: Term Paper	

Supplemental Reading

1. Sandelowski, M. (1993). "Rigor or rigor mortis: The problem of rigor in qualitative research revisited." *Advances in Nursing Science*, 16, (2), 1-8.
2. Sandelowski, M. (1995). "Sample size in qualitative research." *Research in Nursing and Health*, 18, 179-183.
3. *Glaser, B. G. & Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.
4. Lauder, Matthew A. 2003. "Covert Participant observation of a Deviant Community: Justifying the Use of Deception." *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 18(): 185-196.
5. Haggerty Kevin D. 2004. "Ethics creep: governing social science research in the name of ethics." *Qualitative Sociology*, 27: 391-414.
6. Vanderstaay, Steven L. 2005. "One Hundred Dollars and a Dead Man; Ethical Decision Making in Ethnographic Fieldwork." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 34(4): 371-409.
7. Hermanowicz, J.C. (2002) "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed", *Qualitative Sociology* 25(4): 479-499.
8. Dunlap, Eloise, Bruce Johnson, Harry Sanabria, Elbert Holliday, Vicki Lipsey, Maurice Bennett, William Hopkins, Ira Sobel, Doris Randolph and Ko-lin Chin. 1990. "Study Crack Users and their Criminal Careers: The Scientific and Artistic Aspects of Locating Hard-to-Reach Subjects and Interviewing them about Sensitive Topics." *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 17(1): 121-143.
9. Vail, D. Angus. 2001. "Researching from Afar: Distance, Ethnography and Testing the Edge." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 30(6): 704-725.

Midterm Exam

The exam will consist of a essay and long answer questions in which students are asked to reflect on conceptual aspects related to qualitative research. More details will be given in class.

Research proposal, term, and poster presentation:

Detailed information will be provided in class.

Mobile Phone Policy

All phones are to be shut off at the start of class, except if you have a emergency that you are having to attend to (such as an immediate family member's illness or hospitalization, or your spouse's/domestic partner's impending delivery), in which case you need to let me know at the start of class. **Text messaging is absolutely prohibited during class times.**

Communications

Email is my preferred method of contact. It should be professionally prepared, spell- and grammar-checked, and not written in "text message" format. All communications must be written from your UWO account. The subject heading should read the course title. Sign the email with your full name and student number. Expect a response within 24-48 hours, excluding weekend.

Late Coursework

All coursework is due on the dates noted. Late coursework will only be accepted without penalty with appropriate documentation. Coursework received after the due date will have their grade reduced by a rate of 10 % per day (including weekends).

BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are not grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded under the Medical Documentation heading of the following website: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm> . If it is not possible to have an SMC completed by the attending physician/nurse practitioner, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student "was seen for a medical reason" or "was ill" is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation. All documentation is to be submitted to an Academic Advisor.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full statement of University policy regarding extensions of deadlines or makeup exams can be found at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2014/pg117.html>

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, www.registrar.uwo.ca, for official dates). You should consult with the course instructor and the

Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory.

3. ABSENCES

Short Absences: If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

Extended Absences: If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

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

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage 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 academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Computer-marked Tests/exams:

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. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar.

6. PREREQUISITES AND ANTIREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the 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.

Similarly, you will also be deleted from a class list if you have previously taken an antirequisite course unless this has the approval of the Dean. These decisions may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course because you have taken an antirequisite course.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar_services/index.html . The Western Registrar's website is at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/index.cfm> . The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/> . Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.