

**INTERMEDIATE QUALITATIVE METHODS  
SOC254H1S**

**Summer 2021  
Department of Sociology  
University of Toronto**

**Instructor:** Jaime Nikolaou  
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**Class:** Monday/Wednesday, 6:10-9:00pm  
**Location:** Zoom, synchronous

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“COVID-19 is not just a medical pandemic; it is a social event that is disrupting our social order.”  
(Teti, Schatz and Liebenberg 2020:2)

“I’ve been thinking about the virtual classroom. It seems like a perfect moment to scrap the existing syllabus and teach the moment. No matter the course topic, I can see how plagues, pandemics, and health care could become the meat of the lesson.  
#teachthevirus”  
(Anne Fausto-Sterling, Twitter)

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The main goal of this course is to give undergraduate students with introductory knowledge of qualitative methods more hands-on research experience. To this end, you will apply your sociological imagination to COVID-19 and carry out exploratory research on some social aspect of the pandemic that compels you. Your project will develop over 12 weeks, guided by tutorials and recently published studies that showcase how qualitative scholars are studying COVID-19 and innovating data collection techniques in response to lockdown measures.

**EVALUATION**

This summer, we will meet synchronously on Zoom twice a week, for up to three hours. Each class will open with lecture, where we will discuss assigned readings to deepen your understanding and appreciation of qualitative epistemology. After lecture, students will join TAs in tutorial, where you will apply these techniques to develop and refine your ongoing research. Because this course is scaffolded and collaborative, your active participation is necessary and video-based participation is strongly encouraged. Please note that while all classes will be recorded in their entirety for pedagogical purposes, only lecture content will be posted to Quercus for student review.

## **PROMPTS (10%)**

At the end of each lecture, I will ask a simple methods question to structure your future reading. For Class 2, I might ask, for example: “What is reflexivity and how is Cherneski (2020) a reflexive scholar?”. Prompts should be 400-500 words long and posted to Quercus by 4pm before the next class. These posts will be graded “pass/fail” and you will gain 0.5% for each quality submission (not exceeding 5%). If you provide 150-200 words of substantive feedback on another student’s post by 11:59pm the same day, you will earn an additional 0.5% (not exceeding 5%). Please note that you must first post your own prompt before you can see or reply to your peers’.

## **RESEARCH PROJECT (90%)**

This course invites you to ask and (preliminarily) answer a sociological question about COVID-19. You may design and carry out this research on your own or with others, noting that all term work will be graded individually. Brief descriptions of the core components of the Research Project are outlined below, with detailed instructions to follow.

## **TUTORIALS (25%)**

Tutorials in this course are meant to foster your sociological imagination about COVID-19, and sharpen your practical skills in qualitative research design, data collection, and analysis. Tutorials will be TA-led, consisting of in-class writing, whole group workshops and presentations, and one-on-one consultations. As with lecture, tutorial attendance is mandatory, and you will gain up to 1-5% for each class that you attend and submit work for (not exceeding 25%). Ten tutorials are scheduled this term (excluding Classes 1 and 7), and we will provide instructions about what to submit during class time. Though weighted low individually, tutorials are essential to the course, and you will struggle to progress with your Research Project if you do not submit work for all ten. TAs will provide feedback on all submissions, which you can and should adapt for the following assignments.

## **IN-CLASS TEST (25%)**

On 26 July, we will not meet synchronously. Instead, you will write an In-Class Test – a mock ethics application on whatever social aspect of COVID-19 you plan to study qualitatively. Before writing the test, it is imperative that you have a clear, open-ended research question and know which kind of data fits the question. You will have six weeks to arrive at these decisions, guided by scaffolded tutorials and course material. You will receive detailed feedback on your ethics application, which will function as a proposal for the remainder of your term work, before the course drop date (2 August). Once your project is approved, you can begin collecting data to answer your question, which should be completed by 4 August.

## **PRELIMINARY RESEARCH REPORT (40%)**

When we return from the civic holiday, you will have crafted a qualitative question about COVID-19 and collected some data to answer it. Over the last third of the course, you will engage in preliminary analysis and memo-writing, weave emergent findings against existing literature, and share your research process and insights with the class. You will then repackage all this hard work into 10-12 pages of sociological sensemaking via the Preliminary Research Report, which will be due in mid-August. We will negotiate the exact deadline later in the term, based on student progress.

## READING SCHEDULE

In this course, you will read a mix of qualitative methods texts and empirical studies related to COVID-19. All of these readings are digital and posted to Quercus. While I will make every effort to follow the schedule below, please note that it is subject to change at my discretion.

### **CLASS 1 (5 July): Qualitative Inquiry and COVID-19**

Collet, Jessica, Lisa Walker, and Alison Bianchi. 2020. "Is it Really Okay to Feel Not Okay? Reflections from Three Scholars of Emotion." *ASA Footnotes (Special Issue): Sociologists and Sociology during COVID-19*, 48(3):35.

Connell, Raewyn. 2020. "COVID-19/Sociology." *Journal of Sociology*: 1-7.

Reid, Colleen, Lorraine Greaves, and Sandra Kirby. 2017. "Demystifying Research" (Chapter 1), "What? The Research Question and Establishing Writing and Organizational Processes" (Chapter 4), and "How? Research Methods" (Chapter 6) in *Experience, Research, Social Change: Critical Methods*. University of Toronto Press.

### **CLASS 2 (7 July): Researcher Positionality**

Cherneski, Jennifer. 2020. "Evidence-Loving Rock Star Chief Medical Officers: Female Leadership amidst COVID-19 in Canada." *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(5):900-913.

González-Calvo, Gustavo. 2020. "Narrative Reflections on Masculinity and Fatherhood during COVID-19 Confinement in Spain". *Societies*, 10(2):1-14.

Reid et al. 2017. "Being a Researcher: Locating Yourself and Research Ethics" (Chapter 3).

Simmons, Amy L. 2020. "COVID-19 and Social Distancing: A Snippet View of the Autistic Social World." *Disability & Society*, 35(6):1007-1011.

### **CLASS 3-4 (12/14 July): Semi-Structured Interviews**

Brown, Sienna M. et al. 2021. "A Qualitative Exploration of the Impact of COVID-19 on Individuals with Eating Disorders in the UK." *Appetite*, 156:1-9.

Hertz, Rosanna, Jane Mattes and Alexandria Shook. 2020. "When Paid Work Invades the Family: Single Mothers in the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Journal of Family Issues*:1-27.

Pyrooz, David C. et al. 2020. "Views on COVID-19 from Inside Prison: Perspectives of High Security Prisoners." *Justice Evaluation Journal*:1-13.

Woodhead, Charlotte et al. 2021. "Race, Ethnicity and COVID-19 Vaccination: A Qualitative Study of UK Healthcare Staff." *Ethnicity & Health*:1-20.

### **CLASS 5 (19 July): Unobtrusive and Archival Data**

Bolsover, Gillian. 2020. "Black Lives Matter Discourse on US Social Media during COVID-19: Polarised Positions Enacted in a New Event." *Centre for Democratic Engagement*:1-10.

MacDonald, Shana. 2020. "What Do You (Really) Meme? Pandemic Memes as Social Political Repositories." *Leisure Sciences*:1-10.

Mukherjee, Utsa. 2020. "Rainbows, Teddy Bears and 'Others': The Cultural Politics of Children's Leisure amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Leisure Sciences*:1-8.

### **CLASS 6 (21 July): Research Design & Ethics**

Freitas-Jesus, Juliana et al. 2020. "The Experience of Women Infected by COVID-19 during Pregnancy in Brazil: A Qualitative Study Protocol." *Reproductive Health*, 17:1-8.

Reid, Colleen et al. 2017. "Who, Where, and When? Sampling and Finalizing the Research Proposal and Ethics Forms" (Chapter 7).

### **CLASS 7 (26 July): In-Class Test**

### **CLASS 8 (28 July): Data Collection**

Reid, Colleen et al. 2017. "Collecting, Organizing, and Managing Data" (Chapter 8).

### **CLASS 9 (4 August): Data Analysis**

Reid, Colleen et al. 2017. "Analyzing Data" (Chapter 9).

### **CLASS 10 (9 August): Existing and Adjacent Literature**

Reid, Colleen et al. 2017. "Why? The Literature Review" (Chapter 5).

### **CLASS 11 (11 August): Research Findings**

Reid, Colleen et al. 2017. "Writing the Report" (Chapter 10).

### **CLASS 12 (16 August): Qualitative Insights on COVID-19**

Grimwood, Bryan S.R. 2020. "On Not Knowing: COVID-19 and Decolonizing Leisure Research." *Leisure Sciences*:1-7.

Reid, Colleen et al. 2017. "Strategies and Approaches for Making Change and the Role of the Researcher" (Chapter 11).

Ward, Paul. R. 2020. "A Sociology of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Commentary and Research Agenda for Sociologists." *Journal of Sociology*, 56(4):726-735.

## COURSE POLICIES

### PREREQUISITE

The prerequisite to take SOC254H1 is SOC204H1. Be cautioned: students without this requirement will be removed from the course when discovered and without notice.

### ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Please check Quercus regularly for important course information, noting that all announcements I send will be mirrored as mass emails. If you need to contact me or the TAs, you must send a direct email from your UofT account, as messages sent to our Quercus inboxes will not be answered; nor will those from external accounts (e.g., Gmail). Please treat email as you would any other professional communication, and be formal and respectful addressing teaching staff. Always include SOC254 in the subject line so we can easily prioritize your question, which will reply to within 48 hours of receipt (excluding weekends and holidays). Lastly, please reserve email for questions that are clear, concise, and easily answerable. If your query is longer or more involved, you can email me to arrange office hours.

All term work for this course must be submitted on Quercus. Teaching staff will not accept emailed assignments, including those which are late. Prompts should be posted to the class-wide discussion fora, while Tutorial submissions and the Preliminary Research Report should be uploaded as “Assignments” to ensure student privacy. Please upload all attachments in .doc format only, with files named accordingly: “C# Tutorial\_Surname.doc” and “PRR\_Surname.doc”.

Since this course is online, all classes will be video-recorded and available to students for remote viewing. Course videos belong to the Instructor and the University, and are protected by copyright. Accordingly, you are prohibited from downloading, copying, or sharing any course video without explicit permission. Because I will be posting lectures to Quercus, you are also prohibited from creating additional audio- or video-recordings of lecture and tutorial. If you have any questions about use of course videos in which you may appear, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY

UofT is committed to ensuring equity and inclusion, and students with diverse learning styles are welcome in SOC254. If you have a disability or medical condition that requires accommodation, please approach me and/or Accessibility Services early in the term:  
<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>.

The ability to read critically, write clearly and authoritatively, listen attentively, and speak collaboratively and constructively are academic skills that will serve you well in this course. Please note that while these skills will develop naturally over our time together, they are not our exclusive focus here. If you want to further hone these skills, visit the UofT Writing Centre, which has a many online and in-person resources for domestic and international students:  
<https://writing.utoronto.ca/>.

## **MISSED OR LATE TERM WORK**

Due to the condensed and scaffolded nature of this course, late Prompts and Tutorial submissions will not be accepted. For each day the Preliminary Research Report is late (including weekends), 5% will be deducted from your overall grade.

If you miss the In-Class Test or cannot submit the Preliminary Research Report on time due to a personal emergency or religious observance, please contact me and ask your College Registrar to email me. In cases of illness, you must declare your absence on ACORN and submit a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form, which is available here: <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/index.php>.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is vital to well-being of UofT and the scholarly community writ large. To understand how nuanced plagiarism can be, and the severity of its consequences, please consult: <https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/how-not-to-plagiarize.pdf>.

In this syllabus, I cite course material in ASA (American Sociological Association) format, which you should also use in this course. The style is well summarized here: <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/sociology/sites/files/sociology/public/shared/pdfs/UTM%20SOC%20ASA%20format%20citation%20guide.pdf>.