

**University of Toronto | Department of Sociology**  
**Fall 2021**  
**SOC498H1 | New Topics: Advanced Qualitative Methods**  
***Interviewing***

Wednesdays 6:10p.m.– 9:00pm

Location: Zoom (until Sept 22) and 720 Spadina (Department of Sociology room 41 from Sept 29)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/81829364857>

Meeting ID: 818 2936 4857

Passcode: 681700

**Instructor:** Cinthya Guzman

Email: [c.guzman@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:c.guzman@mail.utoronto.ca)

Online Office Hours: TBD

*Statement of Acknowledgement*

We acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the HuronWendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory. [Council of Aboriginal Initiatives, 2014]

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**Course Description**

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How do we use data to tell stories?

Social scientists use a variety of data sources to make sense of our social world; some sources are better than others at getting at certain phenomenon. For instance, *interviewing* is a qualitative method used for learning about people's motivations, attitudes, feelings, and their lived experiences.

This course will train students in how to carry out research-oriented interviews. In the process, we will learn how to develop a researchable question, how to identify and recruit people to interview regarding it, how to prepare a comprehensive set of interview questions, how to conduct the interviews themselves, issues that can arise while conducting interviews, how to code and analyze interviews, and how to present one's findings at the end of a project. A keystone of this course is writing a sociological research paper using interview data that you gather for this

class. You must gather new data - by conducting at least 8 interviews - as part of the course. This course examines these issues both as epistemological and practical concerns and seeks to teach students how to conduct research interviews in a reflexive and rigorous way.

### Course Objectives

The course is organized in a way that encourages students to build and develop skills focused on collaborative learning, critical reading, writing, interviewing and the formation of arguments. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate and discuss a number of foundational texts on qualitative methodology.
- Conduct research-oriented interviews.
- Write analytically and critically using data gathered by the student.
- Make and support an academic argument through use of evidence.

*Prerequisite:*

The prerequisite for this course is 1.0 SOC FCE at the 300+level. Students who do not meet this requirement will be removed without notice.

*Accessibility needs:*

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit:

<https://lsm.utoronto.ca/ats>

### Description of Evaluation Components

Evaluation Component	Grade Weight	Due Date
Research Proposal	10%	Sept 29
Literature Review	10%	Oct 6
Draft of interview guide	10%	Oct 13
Transcription of Interview	5%	Nov 3
Preliminary coding assignment	10%	Nov 17
Analytical Memo	10%	Nov 24
In-Class Presentation	10%	Dec 1 or 8
Final Research Paper	25%	Dec 8
Participation and Attendance in Class Seminar	10%	Ongoing

### Grading Descriptions

**Research proposal (10%):** This short proposal (1-2 pages, double-spaced) will introduce your research question. Explain why the topic is of interest to you and why you think qualitative interviews are the best approach to researching it.

**Literature review (10%):** Identify at least 3 books or articles that are relevant for your research question and how they speak to one another. Please provide the full bibliographic reference and a short abstract of each. Make sure your abstract specifies how interview data are used in the

research project they are writing about. Do not just copy and paste the abstract from another source.

**Draft of interview questions (10%):** You will hand in a draft of your interview questions. Bring a copy to class to share, discuss, and receive feedback on.

**Transcription of an interview (5%):** Transcribe an entire interview, word for word. This can easily take several hours, depending on how long the interview goes. Bring a copy to class. We will discuss some of your results, reflections, and insights, and make suggestions to each other about how to improve.

**Preliminary coding assignment (10%):** Suggest some themes and issues that are emerging from your interview data.

**Analytical memo (10%):** After completing, transcribing, and coding several interviews, please write a two to three page (double-spaced) analysis of promising themes, processes, patterns, etc.

**In-class presentation (10%):** You will give a short presentation that: states your research question, your methodology, some of the themes that have emerged from coding, and some of your analysis.

**Final paper (25%):** The final product from your research project will be a complete paper that includes an introduction, a literature review, a methods section, a data analysis/findings section, and a conclusion. It should be between 12-16 double-spaced pages (12-point font, 1 inch margins).

**Participation and Attendance in Class Seminar (10%):** Participation grades will be based on two weighted components: attendance and active participation in class discussions. Students are expected to participate regularly and demonstrate an active and critical engagement of course materials. Class attendance is mandatory.

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### Late Policies

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**Handing in assignments:** All assignments must be handed to the instructor electronically via Quercus. *The instructor and TA will NOT accept electronic copies of assignments via email.*

**Deadlines:** The assignments are due by class time. Please refer to the Due Date stated on page 2 of the Syllabus. Late work will not be accepted without proper documentation.

If you are registered with Accessibility Services, your counselor will need to send an email message on your behalf (a one-week extension being the norm).

**Absence Declaration:** The University is temporarily suspending the need for a doctor's note or medical certificate for any absence from academic participation. Please use the Absence Declaration tool on ACORN found in the Profile and Settings menu to formally declare an absence from academic participation in the University. The tool is to be used if you require consideration for missed academic work based on the procedures specific to your faculty or campus. In addition to this declaration, you are responsible for contacting me to request the

academic consideration you are seeking. You will be notified by the University if this policy changes.

**Late Assignments:** Late term papers without a valid excuse will be deducted 5% per day, including weekends and holidays. We will not be accepting work submitted over a week late. Late discussion posts will not be accepted.

**Grade Appeals:** The instructor takes the marking of assignments very seriously, and will work diligently to be fair, consistent, and accurate. Nonetheless, mistakes and oversights occasionally happen. If you believe that to be the case, you must adhere to the following rules: If it is a mathematical error simply alert the instructor of the error.

In the case of more substantive appeals, you must:

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1. Wait at least 24 hours after receiving your mark.
  2. Carefully re-read your assignment, all assignment guidelines and marking schemes and the grader's comments.
  3. If you still feel the grade you received is not an accurate reflection of the work that you produced, you must discuss your grade within 3 days of the grade being returned to you, addressing the comments they provided to you.
  4. If you are unable to come to an agreement, you may request a regrade from the instructor. In your request, you must address your comments and explain why you feel they do not adequately reflect your assignment. Keep in mind that upon regrading, your mark may go up or down or stay the same.
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**Turnitin:** The term paper and take-home tests must be submitted to turnitin.com for review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their papers to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

Assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0%) unless a student instead provides, along with their assignment, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submitted was truly their own.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is fundamental to scholarship at the University of Toronto and beyond. Academic offenses include, but are not limited to, using someone else's ideas in a paper or exam without proper citations, submitting your own work for credit in multiple courses, obtaining assistance from others during exams (including having someone edit your work or looking at a classmate's work), and falsifying illness on the Absence Declaration tool.

Please familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters: <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/codebehaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>

Writing Support Each college has a writing centre with instructors who can assist you at various stages of writing projects. I highly recommend seeking help from your college writing

centre for your reading responses. Find your writing centre here:  
<https://writing.utoronto.ca/writingcentres/>

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## Student Responsibilities and Expectations

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As per the University Regulations, we will hold online seminars over Zoom Until Sept 24. At this point, we will transition back into in-person learning.

**Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively by 1) completing assigned readings, 2) writing the assigned discussion posts, and 3) keeping up to date on course information posted on Quercus. In all activities, students are to be respectful of fellow classmates and teaching staff.

**Email Policy:** I will respond to your email within two business days (48 hours, except weekends and holidays). Emails that do not follow these guidelines will not receive a response: Your use of an official U of T address is required. Please include the course code (e.g. SOC498) in the subject line and your full name and student number in your message. Please do not send a repeat email (e.g., “did you get my email?”).

In general, please treat emails as you would any other professional communication. You should be respectful in the way you address the instructor and the TA. Email is most suitable for questions that are clear, concise, and easily answerable; if you are confused about the course material or need to discuss a concept, I strongly encourage you to instead attend office hours or make an appointment. Please read the syllabus carefully before asking a general question about the course.

Please be judicious in your use of email. Use it only for questions that are brief and specific. Before sending a question by email, be sure to check the course outline to see if an answer is already available. Emails should not be seen as an alternative to doing the assigned reading or attending lectures.

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## Required Readings & Course Schedule

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**Materials for this class:** students will need an audio-recorder. You can use your smart phones as well.

**Required readings:** In addition to the articles available through Quercus, we will use one book for this course, listed below. You can purchase through the UofT Bookstore, Indigo, or Amazon. I also noticed there are 4 copies through the Library System. Other readings will be added to Quercus.

Weiss, Robert S., *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*.  
New York: The Free Press (1994).

**Highly Suggested readings:**

Swidler, A. (2001). *Talk of love: how culture matters*. University of Chicago Press.

**Course Schedule:** Students are expected to complete all required readings prior to each online lecture.

*Note:* every attempt will be made to follow this schedule, but it is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

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### **Sept 15: Introduction – Let’s Talk About “Love”**

Readings: no readings

*Activity:* Brainstorm ideas for potential research projects on “Love.”

### **Sept 22: How do we use interview data?**

Readings:

- Hochschild, Arlie, *The Second Shift*. Read Chapters 1 and 2; skim Chapters 4 and 6; and read the Appendix: My Study - A Naturalistic Approach (Pp. 1-21; 33-58; 75- 94; and 289-293). New York: Avon Books (1989).
- Luker, Kristin, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Read the Introduction; skim Chapter 6; and read the Appendix 1: Methodology (pp. 1-10; 126-157; 247-256). Berkeley: University of California Press (1984).

### **Sept 29: Situating our research within the literature**

Readings:

- Weiss, Robert S., *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-14). New York: The Free Press (1994).
- Hart, Chris, *Doing a Literature Review*. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-29). London: Sage Publications (2018).

### **Oct 6: Who do we interview?**

Readings:

- Weiss, Robert S., *Learning from Strangers*. Chapter 2 (pp. 15-37).
- Small, Mario Luis, "How Many Cases Do I Need? On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research," *Ethnography* 10, 1 (2009): 5-38.

### **Oct 13: How do we develop questions?**

Readings:

- Weiss, Robert S., *Learning from Strangers*. Chapters 3 (51-59) and 4 (read pp. 61-83; skim pp. 83-119).
- Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (3rd Edition). Chapters 9-10 (pp. 131-169). Los Angeles, CA: Sage (2012)

### **Oct 20: How do we protect those we interview?**

Readings:

- Newman, Katherine S., "Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy," *Sociological Methods and Research* 31, 2 (2002): 123-130.
- Adler, Emily S., and Roger Clark, *An Invitation to Social Research: How it's Done*. Chapter 3 (pp. 39-71). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth (2011).

### **Oct 27: How do we interview someone for research?**

Readings:

- Hermanowicz, Joseph C., "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed," *Qualitative Sociology* 25, 4 (Winter 2002): 479-499.
- Morrill, Calvin, David B. Buller, Mary Klein Buller, and Linda L. Larkey, "Toward a

Organizational Perspective on Identifying and Managing Formal Gatekeepers," *Qualitative Sociology* 22, 1 (1999): 51-72.

### **Nov 3: Interviewing Dilemmas**

Readings:

- Weiss, Robert S., *Learning from Strangers*. Chapter 5 (pp. 121-150).
- Riessman, Catherine Kohler, "When Gender is Not Enough: Women Interviewing Women," *Gender and Society* 1, 2 (June 1987): 172-207.
- Khan, Shamus, and Colin Jerolmack, "Saying Meritocracy and Doing Privilege," *Sociological Quarterly* 54 (1): 9-19.

### **Nov 10: Reading Week**

### **Nov 17: Coding and Analysis**

Readings:

- Auerbach, Carl F., and Louise B. Silverstein, *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis*. Chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 31-53). New York: New York University Press (2003).
- Lofland, John, and Lyn H. Lofland, *Analyzing Social Settings*. Chapter 9 (pp. 186-197). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth (1995).

### **Nov 24: Coding and Analysis Cont'd**

Readings:

- Weiss, Robert S., *Learning from Strangers*. Chapter 6 (pp. 151-182).

### **Dec 1: Presentations**

Readings: No readings

### **Dec 8: Presentations**

Readings: No readings