

Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Sociology

SOC204H1S

Winter 2026, University of Toronto, St. George Campus

Time: Thursday 11:10 – 1:00 pm

Professor: Yoonkyung Lee

Classroom: See ACORN

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Teaching assistants: TBA

Office hours: By appointment

TA office hours: TBA

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the logic and conduct of qualitative research methods. Sociologists inquire about human behavior and the interactions between structural forces and people's actions and perceptions, striving to explain why people do what they do and how people think about their social surroundings. In this class, students will learn how to formulate perceptive research questions about social phenomena and how to find answers to the posed questions by designing and executing qualitative research strategies. Students will be exposed to a variety of qualitative data collection methods and analytical tools and have hands-on experience of conducting research to gain competency in qualitative methods.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students are expected to learn how to (1) ask thoughtful and meaningful research questions, (2) develop qualitative research design and strategies, (3) collect qualitative data ethically and systematically and analyze them theoretically, (4) draw important insights from their qualitative research, and (5) evaluate the quality of qualitative research methods.

COURSE MATERIALS

Howard LUNE and Bruce BERG. 2017. *Qualitative Research Methods for Social Science*, Ninth Edition. New York: Pearson (Chapters available on Quescus).

Important announcements, course materials, and any additional learning aids will be posted on Quercus, so please check the website regularly.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Course Assignments	Points (100)	Due date
Midterm test	20	Feb 26
Method 1: Participant observation note	10	Jan 29
Method 2: Participant observation field note & analytic note	20	Feb 5
Method 3: Interview method note	10	Mar 5
Method 4: Interview transcriptions & analysis	20	Mar 12
Methodological review paper	10	Apr 2
Tutorials	10	9 sessions

1. Midterm test (20%): 11:10 am – 1 pm, Feb 26

There will be an in-class test to assess students' understanding of the key concepts and methods discussed in lectures and assigned readings.

2. Methods assignments (60%): Due 11 am, Jan 29, Feb 5, Mar 5, and Mar 12

- (1) Method assignment 1 (10 points): Participant observation note (600 words)
 - Choose a research question and explain the background of the question.
 - Choose a site in GTA where you can conduct participatory observation to address the research question.
 - Conduct participatory observation for one hour, the minimum.
 - Write a note that describes the entire process.
- (2) Method assignment 2 (20 points): Participant observation field note and analytic note (1200 words)
 - Write a note that includes your observations (600 words) and your preliminary analysis (600 words).
- (3) Method assignment 3 (10 points): Interview method note (600 words)
 - Choose a research question and explain the background of the question (Students may continue with the same question for participant observation).
 - Draft 5-10 interview questions that address the research question.
 - Reach out to a person who is willing to participate in the interview (not your direct family member or close personal friend) from a "low-risk" group.
 - Low-risk means the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life.
 - Ask your interviewees for verbal consent for interviewing and recording of the interview. Professor will provide a verbal consent form.
 - Conduct a face-to-face interview at 30 minutes, the minimum. Anonymize the interviewees. Questions might be modified during the interview process.
 - Write a note that describes the entire process.

(4) Method assignment 4 (20 points): Interview transcriptions and analysis (Length: Flexible, 1200 words, the minimum)

- Transcribe the entire interview.
- See how the data relates to your research question.
- Add your preliminary analysis of the interview transcripts (600 words).

3. Methodological review paper (10%): Due 11 am, April 2

Three sociology papers will be posted on Quercus. Students choose one paper and write a methodological review paper (1000 words) by addressing the following methodological questions.

- Which qualitative methods did the author use in the paper?
- Are the methods appropriate to examine the research questions posed in the paper?
- How did the author analyze the qualitative data?
- Did the author present the qualitative data in an effective and balanced way?
- Are you convinced by the methods and findings in the paper? Why or why not?

***Recommended format:** All written assignments should be within the word limit set for each assignment, excluding tables, figures, and bibliography. Font 12 and double-spacing recommended. If any sources are cited in the assignment, students need to provide full citations (in-text and bibliography) and use an appropriate reference style.

*** Turnitin:** Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service is described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0 %), unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via Turnitin) is in place because, strictly speaking, using Turnitin is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

***Writing skills:** The quality of writing will greatly impact the grade. Writing skills (clarity, logic, parsimony, organization) are probably the most important skills students need to develop in university. Students in need of improving their writing skills can be assisted by various services and workshops offered by the Academic Success Centre, the Career Centre, and UofT Libraries: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/news/writing-plus>

4. Tutorials (10%)

Students are required to participate in one of the mandatory tutorials with this course: TUT0101 (see ACORN) or TUT0201 (see ACORN). Tutorials will help you practice methodological skills and prepare you for the course assignments. The TAs, in consultation with the professor, will provide the details of the tutorials and the grading scheme.

RULES FOR GRADING

1. Grade scale

A+: Above 90	B+: 77-79	C+: 67-69	D+: 57-59	F: 0-49
A: 85-89	B: 73-76	C: 63-66	D: 53-56	
A-: 80-84	B-: 70-72	C-: 60-62	D-: 50-52	

2. Late submissions: Assignments that fail to meet the deadlines will result in losing one point for every 24-hour tardiness from the original due date.

3. Incomplete: No incomplete will be granted in this course unless the student provides evidence of emergencies such as family bereavement or medical treatment.

4. Missed deadlines and tests: Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. Within three days of missing a paper deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with one of the following:

- Absence declaration via ACORN (can only be used once during the semester)
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

ACADEMIC HONESTY and CLASS ETHICS

1. Academic integrity/Plagiarism: Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that students earn will be valued as a true indication of their individual academic achievement. Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behavior on Academic Matters:

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the Code. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on the student's transcript. If students have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, they need to seek out additional information from the professor or from other available campus resources like the U of T Writing Website.

2. AI use: Students may use AI for grammar-check and proof-reading purposes but not for generating the content of their assignments.

3. Electronic devices: Cell phones should be turned off during class. Laptops can be used in class for note-taking purposes only. No web browsing is allowed as it inhibits learning and disrupts class discussion.

4. Taping, recording, photographing lectures: Lectures and course materials prepared by the professor are the professor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record lecture or other course material are required to ask the professor's explicit permission and may not do so unless permission is granted. This includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, etc. Once obtained, such permission is only for that individual student's own study purposes and does not include permission to "publish" them in any way. It is absolutely forbidden for a student to publish the professor's notes to a website or sell them in other form without formal permission.

5. Accessibility needs: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if students have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach the professor and/or Accessibility Services at (416) 978-8060 or visit: <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>

6. Contacting the professor: If students feel overwhelmed by the course materials or encounter other personal difficulties that may affect their performance in class, they should immediately contact the professor and seek consultation EARLY in the semester. I will be happy to offer any additional guidance that might be needed for each student.

CLASS SCHEDULE

W	Date	Topic	Reading	Tutorial	Assignment
1	Jan 8	Course overview What is qualitative method?	Ch. 1	No	
2	Jan 15	Research design & ethics	Ch. 2-3	Yes	
3	Jan 22	Ethnography	Ch. 6	Yes	(Prepare for PO)
4	Jan 29	Participant observation	Ch. 6	Yes	Assignment 1 (Conduct PO)
5	Feb 5	Interview	Ch. 4	Yes	Assignment 2
6	Feb 12	Interview	Ch. 4	Yes	(Prepare for & conduct an interview)
	Feb 19	Reading week-No class		No	
7	Feb 26	Midterm		No	
8	Mar 5	Content analysis	Ch. 11	Yes	Assignment 3
9	Mar 12	Other qualitative methods	Ch. 9-10	Yes	Assignment 4
10	Mar 19	Evaluating research methods		Yes	
11	Mar 26	Writing research	Ch. 12	Yes	
12	Apr 2	Wrapping up		No	Method review paper