SOC204H1F – LEC0201
Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Sociology
University of Toronto
Fall 2024

Thursday, 11:10am-1pm
See Acorn for room information

Instructor: Dr. Jan Doering
- Email: jan.doering@utoronto.ca
- Office hours: Wednesday, 12:30-1:30pm. 17th floor, 700 University Ave. Please sign up online to avoid lines and let me know you are coming: https://calendly.com/jandoering. You can choose to attend in-person or via Zoom.

Teaching assistants:
- Andy Holmes. Email: andy.holmes@mail.utoronto.ca
- Michelle Nadon Belanger. Email: michelle.nadonbelanger@mail.utoronto.ca

Tutorials:
- You must enroll in one of the following tutorials. Tutorials do not take place every week. Check the course schedule further below. See Acorn for room information.
- TUT0101 - Tuesdays, 2-3pm
- TUT0201 - Tuesdays, 3-4pm
- TUT5101 - Tuesdays, 5-6pm

Course Description
The use of qualitative methods is rooted in the fact that humans inhabit cultural worlds of language, symbols, and meanings that they actively interpret and influence. Using qualitative methods can illuminate how people understand their lives and societies and how such understandings shape their emotions, behavior, and relationships. This course introduces students to the theory and use of qualitative methods in sociology, including participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and qualitative document and image analysis. In addition to learning about the foundations of qualitative methodology, students will conduct collaborative empirical exercises in groups.

Learning Goals
After completing this course, you should:
- know the theoretical foundations and methodological practices that constitute the basics of qualitative research.
- understand why social scientists conduct qualitative research.
- be able to prepare and conduct in-depth interviews and participant observation.

- be able to analyze interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and pre-existing documents and images to uncover human interpretations/meanings and their social implications.
- be able to distinguish good from bad qualitative research.

Readings
All readings will be made available through Quercus. We will sometimes work with the readings in class. I may also ask you to read additional materials during class time. <u>Please bring a laptop or tablet to class</u> that enables you to access those materials.

Assignments and Grading

Assignment	Date/due date	Grade weight
Midterm	October 17	30%
Final in-class test	November 28	25%
Group-based fieldwork assignments		
Observation summary report	October 15	20%
Interview summary report	November 12	20%
Group work peer evaluation	TBA	5%

Midterm (30%)
The midterm will take place in class on Thursday, October 17. It will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. If you have to miss the midterm test and provide acceptable documentation (see below), I will shift the midterm's grade weight onto the final. Since the final is cumulative and tests the entire course material, it is in your interest to take the midterm test if at all possible.

Final in-class test (25%)
The in-class final test will take place on Thursday, November 28. It will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. The type of accommodation I provide in case of acceptably excused student absences can include a make-up test, an oral exam, and/or a term paper. It is in your interest to take the final test if at all possible.

Group-based fieldwork assignments (40%)
You will be asked to complete two group-based fieldwork assignments together with two or three other students. Assignments to groups will be strictly random—no reassignments will be made under any circumstances. From the start, take a productive role in your group (even if others do not) and do everything you can to build a collegial work environment with your fellow students. <u>Important: If a student does not contribute to the group assignments even after repeated appeals, I can remove that student from their</u>

group if all other group members agree and want this to happen. In that case, the removed student will have to complete the second exercise on their own.

1) Participant observation exercise (20%). Together with your group members, I will ask you to conduct several participant observations in a public setting in the Toronto metropolitan area. The exercise entails conducting the observations, writing up fieldnotes, and submitting an observation summary report (one per group). Detailed instructions will be provided in the week 4 tutorials. The observation summary report will be due three weeks later (on Tuesday, October 15) on Quercus.

2) Interview exercise (20%). Each student will be asked to conduct one in-depth interview. The exercise requires creating an interview guide, recruiting participants, conducting a recorded interview, and submitting an interview summary report (one per group). Detailed instructions will be provided in the week 7 tutorials. The interview summary report will be due four weeks later (on Tuesday, November 12) on Quercus.

Group work peer evaluation (5%)
You will have the opportunity to evaluate your group members' contribution by the end of the course. Each student's peer evaluation grade will be computed as the simple average of the peer evaluations they receive and will constitute 5% of the overall course grade. Do not complain to me about your peer evaluation grade—I will not alter it. It is up to you to establish positive relationships with your fellow students. Please note that submitting your peer evaluation grades is mandatory and late submissions will not be accepted. If you do not submit a complete evaluation for all your group members by the deadline, you will receive a zero for own participation grade, independent of the grades your group members may have given you. The evaluation deadline and instructions will be shared with you towards the end of the course.

Missed Tests or Assignment Deadlines
Students who miss an assignment deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing a 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
- 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. Note, however, that academic accommodations must generally be requested before (rather than after) deadlines or tests.

Course Policies
- You are expected to consult the syllabus for relevant information if have questions about assignments and other course-related matters. If you email with questions that reading the syllabus would resolve, the instructor and teaching assistant(s) reserve the right to ignore your email.

- The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. The University of Toronto does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.
- Accessibility Services: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as as soon as possible.
- Kindly note that course lectures will be recorded to make the course more accessible to everyone. In coming to lectures, you agree to be recorded.
- As the instructor for this course, I strive to provide an accessible learning environment. If you have a consideration that may require accommodations, please contact Accessibility Services: https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as, 416-978-8060, or accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. Feel free to approach me as well if you believe I can improve your learning experience.
- Accommodations for religious holy days: The University provides reasonable accommodation for students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Please alert me as soon as possible about religious observances and anticipated absences that may interfere with assignments and other course requirements.
- If you come to class, make sure to arrive on time and stay for the duration of the course meeting. If you can, please bring a laptop or table to access readings and materials I might share with you.
- Do everything you can to meet assignment deadlines. Late assignments will incur a late penalty of 10% for any 24-hour period that has begun after the submission deadline. For example, an assignment that is one hour late will receive a 10% penalty, while an assignment that is 25 hours late will receive a 20% grade penalty.
- If you believe an assignment was graded incorrectly or unfairly, you may submit a regrade request. Before contacting me (the instructor), you must wait until three days have passed since the grade was shared with you. Write a memo in which you explain and justify your grade complaint and email it to me. I will regrade the entire assignment, not just specific parts or issues you may have flagged. Your grade may go up or down as a result.
- All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. You are expected to inform yourself about academic integrity. For general information, see https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/. If you have additional questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me.
- The use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps for assignments in this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, is prohibited.
- 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.

Schedule

Week 1
- Lecture on Thursday, September 5: Course overview.
- No readings assigned for this lecture.
- No tutorials this week.

Week 2
- Lecture on Thursday, September 12: Introduction to qualitative methods
- Assigned readings for the lecture:
  - Becker, Howard S. 1993. "How I Learned What a Crock Was." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(1):28–35.
  - Segment from Charmaz, Kathy, Scott R. Harris, and Leslie Irvine. 2019. *The Social Self and Everyday Life: Understanding the World through Symbolic Interactionism*. Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell. Read pages 16-28 (to the end of section "Premises of the Symbolic Interactionist Perspective") from chapter 2 ("Looking at Life from the Symbolic Interactionist Perspective").
- No tutorials this week.

Week 3
- Lecture on Thursday, September 19: What is the point of qualitative research?
- Assigned readings for the lecture:
  - Fielding-Singh, Priya. 2017. "A Taste of Inequality: Food's Symbolic Value across the Socioeconomic Spectrum." *Sociological Science* 4:424–48.
  - Segment from Goffman, Erving. 1967. Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior. New York: Pantheon Books. Read pages 5-23 from chapter 1 ("On Face-Work").
- No tutorials this week.

Week 4
- Lecture on Thursday, September 26: Participant observation and ethnography (1).
- Assigned readings for the lecture:

- - Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 (Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research).
  - Horgan, Mervyn, Saara Liinamaa, Amanda Dakin, Sofia Meligrana, and Meng Xu. 2020. "A Shared Everyday Ethic of Public Sociability: Outdoor Public Ice Rinks as Spaces for Encounter." *Urban Planning* 5(4):143–54.
- Tutorials: participant observation exercise will be introduced.

Week 5
- Lecture on Thursday, October 3: Participant observation and ethnography (2).
- Assigned reading for the lecture: Auyero, Javier, and Debora Alejandra Swistun. 2009. *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter selection: "Introduction," "Chapter 2: The compound and the neighborhood," "Chapter 4: The (confused and mistaken) categories of the dominated" (read up to page 94 to the bottom of the section "Understanding Uncertainty").
- Tutorials: support session/Q&A for participant observation exercise.

Week 6
- Lecture on Thursday, October 10: In-depth interviewing.
- Assigned readings for the lecture:
  - Weiss, Robert S. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 4 ("Interviewing"). Read pages 62-79 (up to "Examples of Interviewing").
  - Hart, Chloe Grace. 2021. "Trajectory Guarding: Managing Unwanted, Ambiguously Sexual Interactions at Work." *American Sociological Review* 86(2):256–78.
- Tutorials: midterm test Q&A and self-guided review.

Week 7
- **Thursday, October 17: Midterm test.**
- No new readings assigned.
- Tutorials: interview exercise will be introduced.

Week 8
- Lecture on Thursday, October 24: The ethics and politics of qualitative research.
- Assigned readings for the lecture:
  - Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(3):267–94.
  - Warren, Carol and Tracey X. Karner. 2014. *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Ethnography, Interviews, Documents, and Images*. Third edition. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 2 ("The Law, Politics, and Ethics of Qualitative Research").
- Tutorials: support session/Q&A for interview exercise.

Fall Reading Week: October 28 – November 1. – No Classes

<u>Week 9</u>
- Lecture on Thursday, November 7: Analyzing Qualitative Data.
- Assigned readings for the lecture:
    - o Charmaz, Kathy, and Linda Liska Belgrave. 2015. "Grounded Theory." In *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Blackwell Publishers.
    - o Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 6 ("Processing fieldnotes: coding and memoing").
- Tutorials: support session/Q&A for interview exercise.

<u>Week 10</u>
- Lecture on Thursday, November 14: Case selection and its implications.
- Assigned readings for the lecture:
    - o Chancer, Lynn S. 2020. "Elite Ethnography: Studying Up or Down in US and French Sociology." Pp. 238–62 in *Beyond the Case: The Logics and Practices of Comparative Ethnography*, edited by C. M. Abramson and N. Gong. New York: Oxford University Press.
    - o Corbin, Juliet, and Anselm Strauss. 2012. *Basics of Qualitative Research*. 3rd edition. New York, NY: Sage. Chapter 7 ("Theoretical Sampling").
- No tutorials this week.

<u>Week 11</u>
- Lecture on Thursday, November 21: Assessing the quality of qualitative research.
- Assigned readings for the lecture:
    - o Duneier, Mitchell. 2011. "How Not to Lie with Ethnography." *Sociological Methodology* 41:1–11.
    - o Small, Mario L. 2018. "Rhetoric and Evidence in a Polarized Society," March 1, ISERP, Columbia University.
- Tutorials: final exam test Q&A.

<u>Week 12</u>
- **Thursday, November 28: Final test.**
- No new readings assigned.
- No tutorials this week.