

University of Toronto | Department of Sociology
Summer 2023
SOC254H1S- Intermediate Qualitative Methods in Sociology

Crafting Qualitative Research: An Exploration of Methods and Design

Location: Quercus – Zoom
Mondays and Wednesdays 3-6pm

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Course Description

This course offers an in-depth exploration of qualitative research methods, designed to prepare students for advanced research projects. The course highlights the potential and limitations of different qualitative methods, enabling students to make informed decisions about which methods are most suitable for their research interests and questions.

Throughout the course, students will delve into the nuances of fieldwork, open-ended interviews, to content analysis, and more. Each method will be dissected to expose its strengths and weaknesses, along with its application in various research contexts.

Students will then apply this knowledge to their own research interests, crafting a comprehensive research program and honing the skills necessary to tackle future research projects. The culmination of this process will be the development of a research grant proposal, which serves as the capstone project for the course.

Course Objectives

The course is organized in a way that encourages students to build and develop skills focused around collaborative learning, critical reading, writing, and the development of their own research projects. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of a variety of qualitative research methods.
2. Formulate research questions suitable for qualitative research and select the best method(s) to study them.
3. Design a comprehensive research program that aligns with their specific research interests

- and questions.
4. Develop a compelling research grant proposal that incorporates the chosen qualitative research method and design.

Prerequisite:

The prerequisite for this course SOC254H1S. Students without this prerequisite will be removed from the class at any time discovered and without notice.

Accessibility needs:

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

<http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>

Description of Evaluation Components

Evaluation Component	Grade Weight	Due Date
Tutorial Exercises	10%	Ongoing
Research Statement and Literature Review	25%	July 17
Research Design	25%	July 31
Research Grant Proposal + 3 Minute Presentation	25%	August 9
Final Test	15%	August 15

Grading Descriptions and Late Policies

Tutorial Exercises (5 x through the term)

Worth 10% (2% each)

The tutorial exercises in this course are designed to provide practical, hands-on experience in understanding, designing, and applying qualitative research methods. The activities are intended to deepen understanding of the course material, stimulate critical thinking, and enhance the application of theoretical knowledge to real-world research contexts.

Research Statement & Literature Review

Worth 20%

Students will have to describe their research problem and situate it using four to six qualitative research articles that address the same (or similar) topic. More information will be provided on Quercus.

Research Design

Worth 25%

Students will have to describe their data collection methods and provide an analysis of their data. More information will be provided on Quercus.

Research (Grant) Proposal + 3 Minute Presentation

Worth 25%

For the capstone project of this course, students will be required to develop a comprehensive research grant proposal that showcases their understanding of qualitative research design and their ability to apply it to a practical research problem. This proposal will be a reflection of the various qualitative methods studied throughout the course, demonstrating an understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and applications.

Students will also create a 3-minute presentation (SSHRC storyteller presentation format). More information will be provided on Quercus.

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 the start of class. Please refer to the Due Date stated on page 2 of the Syllabus. Late work will not be accepted without proper documentation (the Declaration of Absence on ACORN).

Accessibility: If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

If you miss a paper deadline, do not contact the instructor or a TA unless you have followed the steps described here.

In case of illness, you must supply a completed the Declaration of Absence on ACORN.

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).

Student Responsibilities and Expectations

This class is completely online. All lectures will be provided to students via Quercus' BB Collaborate function asynchronously, so you can download lectures at your convenience. They will be made available by the date listed in the syllabus. Office hours for the TA and myself will also be held online, also using BB collaborate.

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. SOC254) 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.

HELP from your T.A.: Your T.A. will hold scheduled online office hours and respond to your emails within 48 hours. 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.

Required Readings & Course Schedule

Required readings:

Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Supplement course readings are accessible electronically. Unless otherwise stated, course readings will be uploaded on Quercus under the Modules tab.

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.

Intermediate Qualitative Methods in Sociology

Crafting Qualitative Research: An Exploration of Methods and Design.

Wednesday July 5. Introduction to Intermediate Qualitative Methods

Readings:

- Luker, Chapters 1-3.

Monday July 10. Developing Qualitative Research Questions

Readings:

- Luker, Chapters 4-5.

Wednesday July 12 Exploring Different Qualitative Research Methods

Tutorial 1: “Making a (Research) Statement!”

- Readings: Kristin G. Esterberg. 2006. “Deciding What to Research” (pp. 28-33). Chapter 2 in *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

- Michael Schwalbe. 2000. "The Elements of Inequality." Contemporary Sociology 29(6):775-81.

Monday July 17. Interviewing

***Assignment 1: Research Statement & Literature Review Due**

Readings:

- Weiss, Robert. 1995. Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies. New York: Free Press. Chapter 4, "Interviewing."
- Jerolmack, Colin and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk Is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." Sociological Methods & Research 43(2):178–209.
- Lamont, Michèle and Ann Swidler. 2014. "Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing." Qualitative Sociology 37(2):153–71.

Wednesday July 19. Observing People

Tutorial 2: "Picking the right method for the job"

Readings:

- Khan, Shamus R. 2011. Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 4.
- As a supplement, read the methodological appendix as well.

Monday July 24 Observing Texts

Readings:

- Stuart, F. (2020). Code of the tweet: Urban gang violence in the social media age. *Social problems*, 67(2), 191-207.
- Hughey, M.W. Show Me Your Papers! Obama's Birth and the Whiteness of Belonging. *Qualitative Sociology* 35, 163–181 (2012).

Wednesday July 26. Sampling, Operationalization and Generalization

Tutorial 3: "Design a Research Project"

Readings:

- **Luker, Chapters: 6-7**

Monday July 31. Making Sense of Data

***Assignment Research Design Due**

Tutorial 4: "Empirical Insights"

Readings:

- Berezin, M. How Do We Know What We Mean? Epistemological Dilemmas in Cultural Sociology. *Qualitative Sociology* 37, 141–151 (2014)
- Charmaz, K. 2012. “The Power and Potential of Grounded Theory.” *Medical Sociology Online* 6(3): 1-15.
- Tavory, I & S. Timmermans. 2009. “Two Cases of Ethnography: Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method.” *Ethnography* 10(3): 243-263

Wednesday August 2. So, what is this a case of?

Tutorial 5: “Finalizing your research programme.”

- Proposal Example 1
- Proposal Example 2

Monday August 7. Civic Holiday

No Lecture

Wednesday August 9. Research Presentation Day

***Research Grant Proposal Due**

***3-Minute Presentation Day**

Monday August 14. In-Class Test
