

**SOCI 3312 FDE
QUALITATIVE METHODS
Fall 2021**

Lecture: M/W 11:30am-1pm

Format: Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Sanders

Office hours: After lecture and by appointment



COURSE DESCRIPTION

What's this course about? Qualitative research focuses on retaining rich meaning when interpreting social data and is used to understand how people experience the world. This research approach involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, audio, images) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences within a particular context. SOCI 3312 introduces a selection of methods, epistemologies, and approaches associated with qualitative research. The objective is to provide students with basic knowledge of both the theory behind qualitative methods and their actual practice.

What's the game plan? We will begin by learning about the history and development of qualitative methods in sociology. We will focus on the "how to" of executing qualitative research. Political and ethical issues will be highlighted in an effort to promote more critically informed inquiry. We will work on developing research questions, study designs, and interview guides. Analysis, interpretation, and qualitative writing will also be emphasized. The final product will be a research proposal for a future qualitative study.

Why does this stuff matter? Qualitative research can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. It can identify shifting attitudes within a target group such as consumers, employees, patients, and voters to list a few. It adds context to phenomena and research questions that numbers alone are unable to reveal. It provides a flexible approach that is responsive and adaptable to changing contexts or unexpected events that complicate research projects. For all these reasons and more, competency with qualitative methods is a highly valued practical skillset that will make you employable in professional environments ranging from universities and private sector research firms to non-profit organizations and government agencies.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the goals of qualitative methods and why some research questions are best exploring using qualitative methodologies;
- Develop knowledge about qualitative paradigms and research design;
- Develop qualitative research skills and understand the process of qualitative research (methods, ethics, data collection, data analysis, communicating findings);
- Develop university-level research, analytical, and writing skills by developing a full qualitative research proposal.

COURSE READINGS

The following textbook available in print or digital versions through the LU bookstore:

- Aurini, Janice, D., Melanie Heath, and Stephanie Howells. 2016. *The How To of Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Additional readings will be posted to the Desire to Learn (D2L) course website.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE

This class is synchronous. Our class will meet weekly on Zoom (zoom links are available on the D2L course site). Attendance is mandatory and full participation in class is required. Before logging on each class, you should complete the required readings and come prepared to discuss the topic at hand. We will work in small groups regularly and this work will contribute to your participation grade. Our classes will consist of lectures, in-class discussions and small group work. Your participation grade will be assigned based on your contributions in the zoom classroom. I encourage you to work across distance and undertake learning with your classmates through the D2L course site.

COURSE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments will be discussed in class and you will have the opportunity to ask questions about expectations.

Description	Final Submission Date	Weight
Pre-proposal assignment 1	Oct 18	20%
Pre-proposal assignment 2	Nov 17	20%
Final research proposal	Dec 10	20%
Activities/quizzes	Ongoing	20%
Participation	Ongoing	20%

Assignments: One of the goals of this course is to help students prepare a research proposal on a topic suitable for a master's degree program. To this end, there will be two intermediate assignments that will lead to development of a final research proposal. You make work individually or in groups of 2-3. Precise guidelines for all assignments will be provided.

Pre-proposal assignment 1: The objective of this assignment is to explore a possible research topic by developing a sociological research question, a research rationale, locating the topic and research questions in the existing academic literature, and discussion of ethical considerations.

Pre-proposal assignment 2: The objective of this assignment is to describe the research methodology for the proposed study (primary/secondary data collection methods, sample procedures, sample instruments, etc. This assignment builds on the previous assignment.

Activities and quizzes: Individual and group activities, quizzes, and other short in-class exercises that evaluate basic application skills. Activities and quizzes cannot be made up under any circumstances.

Participation: Your learning is dependent on your participation and engagement with classmates! Participation mark will be based on your attendance, your observable engagement with the readings and in-class discussions, and your completion of various in-class activities and group work, which you will be asked to hand in at the end of class into the D2L Assignments Folder. Participation cannot be made up under any circumstances.

Extra credit: A short research report on field research along with a annotated bibliography. Students interested in this option must meet with me at least once outside of class to receive specific instructions. Extra credit assignments are due by December 08 at 5pm.

Late work: Assignments must be submitted on time so that I can provide feedback that you will need for the final assignment. Please understand that effectively grading assignments also requires a considerable amount of my time and therefore I must plan my schedule around due dates. I simply will not be able to dedicate as much time to providing feedback on late work. Additionally, late assignments will be penalized 5% per day excluding weekends.

COURSE POLICIES

Zoom etiquette: As a courtesy, I ask that you participate in our Zoom class with your video link turned "on" and your sound "muted" unless you are speaking. This will minimize the sound distractions of many microphones while enabling us to see one another, which will help us get to know one another. If you are unable to keep your video on throughout class (personal, technological or other reasons), upload a pic to your Zoom profile.

Email: I encourage you to deal with issues related to your course assignments in person during class or class breaks. For more in-depth discussion of course issues, please see me during office hours or make an appointment. In situations when email is necessary, please consider email equivalent to any other form of written communication. Email should be brief and require a brief 1-2 sentence response. Students who write to their professors are expected to follow rules of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. In addition, please include a proper greeting, such as "Dear Dr. Sanders," and a closing that includes your full name, such as "Sincerely, Joe Biden." In the subject heading, please put the Course Number: SOCI 3312. Email failing to meet these standards may be returned with a request to revise appropriately. Please note that I will only respond to emails sent from a Lakehead university email account.

Grades: I do not discuss grades by email. Grade inquiries must be in person during office hours or by appointment.

Plagiarism: All work must be completed with academic integrity. Please review the Lakehead University policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty; it can be accessed from the LU homepage or the course information module of the course website. Please discuss with me any questions or concerns about this policy prior to handing in assignments or taking the tests. Ignorance of LU policy will not be accepted as an excuse if violations occur.

Copyright compliance: I understand and agree that all instructional, reference, and administrative materials to which I am given access in this course (the course materials), whether they consist of text, still or kinetic images, or sound, whether they are in digital or hard copy formats, and in whatever media they are offered, are protected in their entirety by copyright, and that to comply with this copyright and the law.

1. I may access and download the course materials only for my own personal and non-commercial use for this course; and
2. I am not permitted to download, copy, store (in any medium), forward or share, transmit, broadcast, show, post or play in public, adapt, or change in any way any text, image, or sound component of the course materials for any other purpose whatsoever except as expressly authorized, and only to the extent authorized, in writing, by the course instructor. I further understand and agree that, if I infringe the copyright of the course materials in any way, I may be prosecuted under the Lakehead University Student Code of Conduct—Academic Integrity, which requires students to act ethically and with integrity in academic matters and to demonstrate behaviors that support the University's academic values.

Exam/assignment integrity

Plagiarism: All work must be completed with academic integrity. Please review the LU policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, accessible from the LU homepage or the course information folder on the website. Please come to me with any questions or concerns about this policy prior to handing in assignments or taking the tests. I understand and agree that:

1. Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must complete the assignments in this course without the assistance of anyone else.
2. Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must not access any sources or materials (in print, online, or in any other way) to complete any course exam.
3. I further understand and agree that, if I violate either of these two rules, or if I provide any false or misleading information about my completion of course assignments or exams, I may be prosecuted under the Lakehead University Student Code of Conduct—Academic Integrity, which requires students to act ethically and with integrity in academic matters and to demonstrate behaviors that support the University's academic values.

Accommodations: LU is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. This commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as early as possible. Please visit: <http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

As a university student, you may sometimes experience mental health concerns or stressful events that interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily activities.

All of us can benefit from support during times of struggle. If you or anyone you know experiences academic stress, difficult life events or feelings of anxiety or depression, **Student Health and Wellness** is here to help. Their services are free for Lakehead Students and appointments are available. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on and off campus at: lakeheadu.ca/shw

Remember that getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do - for yourself, for those you care about, and for those who care about you. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE*

Week 1: Welcome!

- Sept 08: *HTQR* (Ch 1, pp. 3-7)

Week 2: Conceptualizing Qualitative Research

- Sept 13/15: *HTQR* (Ch 2, pp. 8-33)

Week 3: Developing a Research Question and Designing a Study

- Sept 20/22: *HTQR* (Ch 3, pp. 34-76) and D2L, Morse (2015)

Week 4: Sampling Considerations

- Sept 27/29: *HTQR* (pp. 54-58); "Conducting and In-depth Interview Study: Identifying Participants" (van den Hoonaard 2015); "Theoretical Sampling" (Orne & Bell 2015); "Snowball's Chance in Hell" (Wright et al. 2003)

Week 5: Ethical Considerations

- Oct 04/06: *HTQR* (pp. 59-60), and D2L "Ethical Gatekeeping" (O'Neill 2002), "Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork" (Weinberg 2002), "Observing Teens" (Irwin 2018) and "Doing Research Undercover" (Caliskan 2018)

Week 6: Reading Week

- Oct 11/13: No class, no assigned readings

Week 7: Pre-Proposal Conceptualization

- Oct 20: Assignment 1 due

Week 8: Individual Interviews

- Oct 25/27: *HTQR* (Ch 4, pp. 79-116) and D2L, Jackson et al. (2015)

Week 9: Focus Groups

- Nov 01/03: *HTQR* (Ch 5, pp. 117-138)

Week 10: Unobtrusive Methods

- Nov 08/10: *HTQR* (Ch 7, pp. 162-176)

Week 11: Pre-Proposal Methodology

- Nov 15: Nov 17: Assignment 2 due

Week 12: Doing Data Analysis

- Nov 22/24: *HTQR* (Ch 8, pp. 179-201)

* Weekly schedule subject to change.

Week 13: Presenting Findings

- Nov 29/Dec 01: *HTQR* (Ch 9, pp. 202-219)

Week 14: Course Conclusion

- Dec 06: Wrap-up and Final Research Proposal Q&A