

INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE METHODS
SOCI 3312
September-December 2020
Monday 2:30-5:30

Dr. Barbara Parker

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Office Hours: 1-2pm Tuesday's or by appointment / Zoom

Welcome to SOC 3312 Introduction to Qualitative Methods. In this course, we will examine qualitative sociological research methodology and methods. To do this, we will begin by reviewing the differences between qualitative from quantitative frameworks and learn how and why a qualitative approach can be employed to understand social issues and problems. We will explore qualitative, interpretive and critical approaches and query the relationship between theory, methodology and methods. We will learn about qualitative research design, and explore methods such as interviewing, ethnography and observation, content analysis including textual and image analysis. We will also learn about the process of qualitative analysis, writing up findings and representing the results. Throughout the course and our discussions, we will think about researcher reflexivity and ethical issues relating to a qualitative research process.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop knowledge about qualitative paradigms and research design;
- Understand the relationship between qualitative research and the construction of theory;
- Explore the university library databases, research guides and recognize evidenced-based research vs. other forms of information;
- Develop qualitative research skills and understand the process of qualitative research (methods, researcher reflexivity, ethics, data collection, data analysis, writing up); and
- Develop university-level research, analytical and writing skills.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (available through the University Bookstore)

1. *The Practice of Qualitative Research* (2017), by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber.

** Additional required readings will be posted on the Desire to Learn (D2L) course website that accompanies this course.

HOW THE COURSE IS ORGANIZED

This class is synchronous. Our class will meet on Monday's at 2:30 on Zoom (zoom links are available on the D2L course site, and will be emailed separately to you each week). Because we only meet once a week, your attendance and full participation in class is required. Before logging on each Monday, 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.

Please be advised that for each hour of class time, students will typically spend another 2 hours outside the classroom in preparation. This means that on average, per week, you can expect to spend about 6 hours reading and completing assignments in addition to our 3 hour class time.

Email: Please consider email equivalent to any other form of written communication. Students who write to their professors and teaching assistants (TAs) are expected to follow rules of spelling, grammar and punctuation. In addition, please include a proper greeting, such as "Dear Dr. Parker," and a closing that includes your full name, such as "Sincerely, Anita Cocktail." In the subject heading, please put the Course Number: SOC 3312. Email failing to meet these standards may be returned unanswered. ***Please note that I will only respond to emails sent from a Lakehead university email account.***

If you have questions, at any time during this course, email me at: barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca I will do my best to reply to your emails within 24 hours.

ZOOM ETIQUETTE: 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. As a courtesy to your peers and myself, please turn off or mute all phones while in our Zoom Room.

LEARNING ACCOMODATIONS: Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of 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 strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, please visit: <http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with what it means to plagiarize the words or ideas of others and your responsibilities as a student at Lakehead University. From the Course Calendar:

<http://navigator.lakeheadu.ca/Catalog/ViewCatalog.aspx?pageid=viewcatalog&catalogid=21&chapterid=3506&loaduserredits=False>

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 behaviours that support the University’s academic values.

Exam/Assignment Integrity: 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.

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 behaviours that support the University’s academic values.

If you have questions, consult the professor.

COURSE EVALUATION

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Participation (including Group Work)..... | 20% Ongoing |
| Self-Reflexivity Paper..... | 20% (Due Oct 5) |
| Literature Review & Research Question..... | 25% (Due: Nov 2) |
| Final Methods Paper (choose A or B) | 35% (Due: Dec 7) |

* **Late Penalty** Students are reminded that late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends and holidays, unless PRIOR approval for an extension has been obtained. All written work will be evaluated based on organization, presentation, grammar and clarity as well as content. For your own protection, keep a hard copy of all work submitted for this course.

EVALUATION INFORMATION

All assignments will be discussed in class and you will have the opportunity to ask questions about expectations. All assignments/papers will have a separate title page and references page. You are required to use ASA (American Sociological Association) Referencing Style for all assignments (see the D2L course website for ASA resources). All assignments are to be submitted to the Assignments Folder on D2L by 11:59pm on the due date.

1. Participation

Due: Ongoing

Worth: 20%

Your learning is dependent on your participation! 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. Please recognize and respect the diversity of experiences and perspectives your classmates represent when speaking in class.

2. Self-Reflexivity Paper

Due: Oct 5

Worth: 20%

This assignment requires that you find a journal article that uses qualitative research. Be sure to select an article that interests you! I will provide you with a list of qualitative journals (available on D2L). I *encourage* you to use the Sociology Research Guide on the Library website to locate the article. See: <https://libguides.lakeheadu.ca/?b=s>

Once you have found a suitable article, provide a brief overview of the research being described paying attention to the theoretical approach, the methodology and methods. Include a

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discussion of the research question, sampling and recruitment of participants, ethical considerations (if discussed), methods employed, and the analytical process.

Finally, reflect on the role played by your own social location in shaping your interest and choice of article. Include a discussion of how your social location affects:

- the kinds of research / research questions that interest you;
- your philosophical or theoretical approach to research;
- what you are able to find out as you do research; and
- with reference to your identified interest, are there ways in which your social location *constrains* what you can learn?

Your paper will be 5 pages in length, double-spaced with 12 font. Please remember to reference using ASA style. Your paper must be handed into the Assignments Folder on D2L, which will close at 11:59pm on the due date.

3. Literature Review & Research Question

Due: Nov 2

Worth: 25%

This assignment requires you to conduct a systematic literature review on your chosen research topic. Using the Library Research Guide (see link above), you will find a minimum of 6-8 qualitative research articles on your topic. Once you have *collected and carefully read* each of the articles, you will write up your literature review.

Based on your reading of the literature, you are then required to develop a qualitative research question. This research question will be "evidenced-based", or emerge from your reading of the research articles and the evidence presented in these articles. For this reason, your research question will follow your literature review in your paper as you will have presented an argument for your inquiry in the literature review.

Your paper will be 6-8 pages in length, double-spaced with 12 font. Please remember to reference using ASA style. Your paper must be handed into the Assignments Folder on D2L, which will close at midnight on the due date.

4. Final Methods Paper

Choice of *either*: A) Participation Observation or B) Media Content Analysis

Due: Dec 7

Worth: 35%

A) Participant Observation

Participant Observation (PO) is 'unobtrusive research' in a naturalistic setting, where we can observe a public space through a systematic approach. It is used as a method of

ethnography. Ethnographic research attempts to uncover how social patterns emerge, and the meanings that are constructed through behaviours, shared symbols and space of cultures and subcultures.

1. For this assignment, you are required to observe a public place 2-3 times for 45min-1 hour and record fieldnotes. Good sites for observation include a coffeeshop, the mall, a restaurant or cafeteria, a hotel lobby, a bus depot or bus stop, or the library. As discussed in class and in the text, you will act as a 'Complete Observer' (See page 193) when doing fieldwork.

2. Once you have selected a public place to observe, you will email me to let me know the site of your participant observation. Once approved by the Instructor, you will determine times to go and conduct your fieldwork. In the field, you will record jottings and write fieldnotes to develop a rich ethnographic account of the setting. Describe what you see, hear and feel in this social setting. Please use the Guidelines for How to Set Up Fieldnotes when completing your fieldnotes.

3. Once you have written up your fieldnotes, you will write a paper that provides a descriptive analysis of what you observed. In addition to providing this analysis, you will also consider about participant observation as a method of social research. Your paper should consider when, how and why this method is used? Connect this method with ethnography or other theoretical approaches that 'fit' with participant observation. Reflect on your experience with the method. How does this approach to data collection expand our understandings of social processes? What are some of the ethical concerns about participant observation? Reflect on your experience conducting participant observation. Would you use it or incorporate it as method of social research for your own research? Why or why not?

Your paper will be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced with 12 font. You must cite a minimum of 6-8 references. Please remember to use ASA referencing style. Fieldnotes will be handed in with your paper as an Appendix and thus are not included in the paper length - rather they are in addition to the final paper length of 8-10 pages.

B) Media Content Analysis

Media content analysis is a systematic review of media content (usually mainstream) to identify and analyze dominant ideologies present in the texts or images. Hesse-Biber (2017) says, "mainstream or dominant ideology refers to sets of interrelated ideas that are accepted as commonsense by most people in a society" (p. 248). Through qualitative content analysis, you will be able to systematically elicit the dominant discourses / narratives (messaging) on current popular beliefs and stereotypes. In particular, media content analyses lend themselves to unpacking critical gender or racial stereotypes and thus, feminist theory or critical race theory are often used to understand how power is operating through discursive narratives.

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1. For this assignment, you are required to choose a topic that is suitable for a qualitative media content analysis. Topics might include #Metoo, #Blacklivesmatter or some other gender, racial or social justice topic of meaningful social and cultural significance. Once you have selected your research focus, you will email me to let me know your topic.
2. Once your topic is approved by me, you are ready to collect data. You will collect data over a set period of time for 2 weeks (14 days minimum). Over this time period, you will find 3-4 different types of media artifacts (sources) to analyze. These media artifacts or sources can be electronic news, social media content (Twitter, Facebook, etc), image sources (Instagram or online content) or any print sources. The point is to collect as much data as you can find which speaks to your research topic in the 2 week designated timeframe.
3. Each piece of data you collect will need to be collated. You will organize data sources by date, time and source or place of collection (ie. Twitter newsfeed, Nov 3/20, 11:05pm). You can screenshot or print out and scan data - remember that all of your data sources will be handed in as an appendix to your final assignment. My expectation is that in addition to finding 3-4 different sources / types of data, you will have 4-5 examples in each (ie. examples of Twitter or social media content, or electronic or print news,etc.)
4. Once you have all of your data collected, you will write a paper that provides a discursive or textual analysis of the media content data you collected. Describe your findings. What do the media sources say about your research question / topic area? In addition to providing this analysis, you will also consider media content analysis as a method of social research. Your paper should consider when, how and why this method is used? Connect this method with critical theory or other theoretical approaches that 'fit' with media content analysis. Reflect on your experience with the method. How does this approach to data collection expand our understandings of social processes and power? What are some of the ethical concerns about media content analysis? Reflect on your experience with data collection. Would you use it or incorporate it as method of social research for your own research? Why or why not?

Your paper will be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced with 12 font. You must cite a minimum of 6-8 references. Please remember to use ASA referencing style. Fieldnotes will be handed in with your paper as an Appendix and thus are not included in the paper length.

Further details will be provided in class.

READINGS BY WEEK

Week 1 – Sept 14

Welcome & Overview: Introduction to Qualitative Research

Review Syllabus and discuss expectations

Read:

Chapter 1: *An Invitation to Qualitative Research* (pgs. 2-19)

Week 2 – Sept 21

Epistemology and Qualitative Research Paradigms

Chapter 2: *Paradigmatic Approaches to Qualitative Research* (pgs. 20-35)

Week 3 – Sept 28

Designing Qualitative Research

Read:

Chapter 3: *Designing Qualitative Approaches to Research* (pgs. 36-65)

Week 4 – Oct 5

Ethics in Qualitative Research

Read:

Chapter 4: *The Ethics of Social Research* (pgs. 66-101)

*Self-Reflexivity Paper Due by 11:59pm

Week 5 – Oct 12

NO CLASS - FALL READING WEEK

Week 6 – Oct 19

Interviewing

Read:

Chapter 5: *In Depth Interviewing* (pgs. 104-147)

Week 7 – Oct 26
Focus Groups

Read:

Chapter 6: *Focus Group Research* (pgs. 148-181)

Week 8 – Nov 2
Ethnography

Read:

Chapter 7: *Ethnography* (pgs. 182-217)

*Literature Review & Research Question Due by 11:59pm

Week 9 – Nov 9
Content Analysis

Read:

Chapter 9: *Researching Mass Media: Images and Texts* (pgs. 246-268)

Week 10 – Nov 16
Case Study

Read:

Chapter 8: *Case Study* (pgs. 218-245)

Week 11 – Nov 23
Methods Tutorial

This class will be an opportunity for you to work on your final project. More details will be provided in class.

Week 12 – Nov 30
Qualitative Data Analysis

Read:

Chapter 11: *Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data* (pgs. 306-338)

Week 13 – Dec 7

Writing Up and Representing Qualitative Data

Read:

Chapter 12: *Writing and Representation of Qualitative Research Projects*

*Final Methods Paper Due by 11:59pm

** Please note that the Readings may change with notice from the Professor.

Have a great winter break!