Department of Sociology
SOC 3312 WA - Qualitative Methods
January - April 2026

Professor: Dr. Barbara Parker
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Office Hours: Tuesday 1-2pm or by appointment

Class Time: Wednesday's 11:30-2:30

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, focus groups, and 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 social positionalities in relation to qualitative epistemologies & ontologies;
- Understand how to design qualitative research;
- Develop qualitative research methods skills & understand the process of qualitative research;
- Develop knowledge of research ethics;
- Explore the university library databases, research guides and recognize evidenced-based research vs. other forms of information;
- Understand knowledge dissemination;
- Develop university-level research, analytical and writing skills.

THANKS MUM, BUT I PREFER TO USE TWITTER TO ENLARGE THE MICROCOSMS OF DAILY LIFE
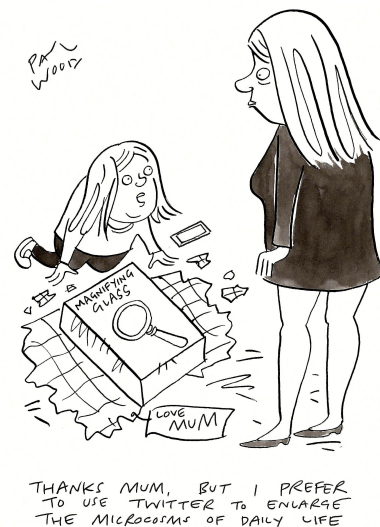
CartoonStock.com

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK The textbook cost reflects current LU bookstore pricing. The text may be available from other sources at reduced prices.

The Practice of Qualitative Research 3rd Edition (2017), by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber. Hardcopy $175.85; EBook $79.99

** Additional required readings will be posted on Desire to Learn (D2L) and are free of charge.

HOW THE COURSE IS ORGANIZED

Our class will meet Wednesday's 11:30-2:30 on Zoom (zoom links are available on the D2L course site). Before logging on each week, 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 D2L.

ZOOM ETTIQUETTE: I encourage you to 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.

DESIRE TO LEARN (D2L): In this course we will be using Desire2Learn (D2L), through MyCourselink. Students should be aware that when they access the electronic component of this course, private information such as first and last names and program affiliation, may become apparent to all other users in the same course. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure.

LEARNING ACCOMODATIONS: If you have a learning accommodation or you think you need an accommodation regarding the format of the course, or the due dates for assignments, please contact Student Accessibility Services at this link as soon as possible. Lakehead University is committed to ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities and I will work with you to ensure that you have appropriate access to the course materials and learning opportunities.

Your mental health is important! 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. If you or anyone you know experiences academic stress, difficult life events or feelings of anxiety or depression, Student Health and Wellness is available 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 this link. If you require immediate support regarding a mental health crisis, call Crisis Response at 346-8282 (24 hours/day). For non-crisis issues, please call Good To Talk at 1-866-925-5454. For additional resources, see the tab "Other Important Information" on D2L. 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.

HOW TO CONTACT THE PROFESSOR: If you have questions, at any time during this course, please email me to set up an individual appointment (see above).

Email: When emailing, it is good practice to use professional etiquette: emails should be brief, include a salutation (eg. Hello, Hi, Dear) and signature (your name), be coherent and use complete sentences, avoid emojis and texting jargon/slang, and be courteous in tone. Please include the course number (SOCI 3312) in the subject line so I can easily identify you.

COURSE EVALUATION

Assessment	Due Date	Weight
Participation	Ongoing	15%
Academic Integrity Matters	Jan 21	5%
Assessing Qualitative Research	Feb 4	20%
Literature Review and Research Question	Feb 25	20%
Media Content Analysis and Coding Assignment	March 18	20%
Knowledge Dissemination Assignment	April 1	20%

Grades: Please note that I do not discuss grades by email or provide detailed breakdowns of graded work by email. All grade inquiries must be in person during office hours or by appointment.

EVALUATION INFORMATION

Assignment Submissions: The written assignments in this course will be submitted via the Assignments Folder on D2L.

Written Assignments: All written assignments or components of assignments are to be typed and double-spaced using 12pt, Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Please include a title page with your name, student number and email address, the title of the assignment and the date submitted. *Note: Only submit **.doc** files; "pages" documents and PDF files will not be marked

ASA Referencing Style: Please use ASA for all referencing in this course. Details on the D2L.

Assignment due dates: All assignments must be handed in by the specified due dates by 11:59pm. If you have trouble meeting a due date, please discuss it with me at least one week prior to your due date and, if accepted, we will negotiate a new due date. Missing due dates without prior approval will result in a deduction of 5% per day.

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

1. Participation (15%)

Participation marks will be assigned based on your engagement with the course material. You will be given lots of the opportunities to participate in interactive learning and discuss the key concepts and ideas that emerge from the course readings each week. Your participation mark will be based on your ***presence***, and **evidence** that you are doing the readings through your

contributions to small group activities, meaningful discussion in small groups and in the wider class, and overall engagement with course material. To do this well, you must come to class each week prepared by having completed the assigned course readings and be ready to listen, learn and contribute. It's also important to recognize and respect the diversity of experiences and perspectives your classmates represent when speaking in class.

To help you prepare for class, use the questions below to guide your weekly assigned reading:

- What are the main themes in the assigned chapter or reading?
- What concepts/words are bolded? Make a list and describe or define (use the glossary!)
- Answer the Discussion Questions at the end of each chapter;
- Reflect on how your learning about qualitative research fits with your understanding of research;
- Bring any questions you have to class!

2. Academic Integrity Matters (5%)

The Academic Integrity Matters (AIM) course is an 8-module course designed to assist you with academic writing and research. As well, the modules clearly explain the academic expectations that you are to adhere to during your studies as a Lakehead student.

Once you have completed each module and passed each of the 8 quizzes, you will be awarded an "AIM Certificate of Completion" to verify that you have successfully completed this course. Download and save the certificate as a pdf file, and then submit it to the D2L course Assignment Folder "AIM Certificate".

To access the AIM Certificate modules:

- Go to MyCourselink (https://mycourselink.lakeheadu.ca)
- Log in using your Lakehead username and password
- Click "Self Registration" from the menu at the top of the page
- Select "Academic Integrity Matters (AIM)" from the list
- Follow the steps presented until it confirms that you've been registered
- Complete the modules

*Note: It will take you about 1 hour to complete AIM.
** If you have already completed the AIM modules, there is a Refresher course that you can do to update your skills. Please submit the PDF Refresh Course Certificate to D2L.

3. Assessing Qualitative Research Assignment (20%)

This assignment requires that you find a journal article that uses qualitative research. To help you narrow this down, think about a research topic that interests you and how this topic might be studied qualitatively. Think about key words related to the topic that can help you with your search (for example, climate crisis, eco-anxiety *and* interviews; or eating disorders, covid 19, *and* focus group) Be sure to select a topic and article that interests you! I have provided you with a list of qualitative journals on D2L to help you with your search. We will have a library tutorial in Week 3 and learn how to search the library academic databases to find literature on our topic.

Once you have found a suitable article, and have this 'approved' by me, you will write a paper of about 1000-1200 words (4-5 pages) discussing a brief overview of the research. Pay attention and focus your writing on a description of <u>the methodology and methods.</u> In the article, find the research question, and how the authors (researchers) discuss sampling and recruitment of participants, ethical considerations, methods employed, and the analytical process. *Do not worry too much about the findings of the research, as this assignment is focused on identifying and recognizing Qualitative Research design. Finally, using reflexivity, think about the role played by your own social location or positionality in shaping your interest and choice of research article.

Don't forget to include a Title page and References page at the end of your paper.

3. Literature Review and Designing a Research Question (20%)

Choose a contemporary research topic. Some topic ideas include: AI and education; housing crisis, climate crisis, cell phone restrictions, supervised consumption, Reconciliation, food insecurity, basic income, or some other gender, racial or social justice topic of meaningful social, cultural, and political significance.

Once you have selected your research focus, you will find five <u>(5) qualitative research articles</u> on the topic. Please read each of the articles carefully, and write a short literature review of about 1000-1200 words (4-5 pages). This will involve your assessing each article for their research question and discussing the findings of each article, looking for similarities across the articles, but also gaps in the literature. Think about your own academic curiosities and questions in relation to the topic and the literature, and develop a qualitative research question.

More details will be provided in class.

4. Media Content Analysis and Coding Assignment (20%)

This assignment requires you to collect, code and analyze qualitative data. Our data sources for this exercise will be media articles on your research topic (identified in earlier assignment). 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 common sense by most people in a society" (p. 248). Through qualitative content or discourse analysis, you will be able to systematically uncover the dominant discourses / narratives (messaging) on current popular beliefs and stereotypes. In particular, media content analyses lend themselves to unpacking how power is operating through discursive narratives by using critical theories.

<u>Collect 3 different media sources</u> (data) to analyze. These media sources can be electronic news from national newspaper sources (ie. cbc.ca, globeandmail.com, theguardian.com etc.), articles from weekly media magazines (ie. The Walrus, The Narwhal, The Atlantic etc.). *If you are not sure about a particular source, please ask me before you include it (ie. social media source).

Screenshot / print and scan each source (data) before you undertake coding (analysis). Coding occurs through a discursive or content analysis of the media content data you collected. You

can use highlighters, coloured pens or some other means to code as you undertake a close reading of the sources. You are paying attention to themes present in the pieces, "voice" as in who is reporting and who is featured in the media source, tensions or conflict in the narratives, context, and outliers (anything new or distinct to your collated data). Be sure to consider your research question and think how what you are reading in the narratives adds to your understanding of the topic.

Write up a short 1000-1200 words (4-5 pages) paper describing the coding process and your findings. Think about using content or discourse analysis of media sources as a qualitative method and describe any challenges or the benefits of this method or approach.

Note that all of your data sources must be handed in with your analysis at the end of your paper. Also be sure to include a Title page and References page.

5) Knowledge Dissemination Assignment (20%)

This final assignment requires you to disseminate the research results of your previous assignment - the media content analysis. Select one of the two options A) Poster or B) Presentation.

A) Posters are commonly used at academic conferences as a way to communicate research results and illustrate the new knowledge produced from your research. The poster project is an opportunity for you to think and be creative! In creating your poster, be sure to include: your research question, a brief description of your methods and methodological/theoretical approach, your findings and any recommendations you might make based on your results.

B) Prepare a pptx presentation to share in a recorded video. The presentation will include your research question, a brief description of the literature, discussion of your method and coding and importantly, your findings. You can make recommendations for future research. Please talk about the process and any specific learning or challenges you faced in conducting a media content analysis. The presentation will be 10-12 min. In addition to handing in the video recording, please hand in the pptx presentation materials to the Assignments Folder.

*Students will have the option to present final assignments in the last class for up to 5 Bonus marks!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask!

OTHER IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION – Please read completely

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Presenting an idea, words, or an exact phrase of another author as your own work constitutes plagiarism. Other instances of Academic Dishonesty, including but not limited to double submission (submitting your own work across courses, or within the same course), purchasing of assignments (either online or from another student on campus), or copying of assignments will be dealt with in accordance to the University regulations on Academic Dishonesty. All students are required to know what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. To review the Student Code of Conduct-Academic Integrity, see this link to review the policy on Academic Dishonesty.

Other Regulations: In taking this course, you are agreeing to the following:
GenAI Use Prohibited

Generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI or GenAI) is a category of AI systems capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. These systems include ChatGPT and its variants Bing (built by OpenAI) and Bard (built by Google) among several others. Other Generative AI models include artificial intelligence art systems such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, and DALL-E.

Any use of GenAI systems to produce assignments for this course is not permitted. All work submitted for evaluation in this course must be the student's original work. The submission of any work containing AI generated content will be considered a violation of academic integrity ("Use of Unauthorized Materials").

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask!

READING SCHEDULE BY WEEK
Please note that all readings are in the textbook unless otherwise noted and subject to change at the discretion of the professor

Dates	Topic	Readings
Week 1 Jan 7	Welcome / Overview Introductions	Review Course Syllabus / Expectations
Week 2 Jan 14	Introduction to Qualitative Research	Chapter 1: *An Invitation to Qualitative Research* (pgs. 2-19)
Week 3 Jan 21	Epistemology and Qualitative Research Paradigms ***Library Tutorial (11:45am)**	Chapter 2: *Paradigmatic Approaches to Qualitative Research* (pgs. 20-35) ***Academic Integrity Matters (AIM Certificate)** <mark>Due Jan 21</mark>
Week 4 Jan 28	Designing Qualitative Research	Chapter 3: *Designing Qualitative Approaches to Research* (pgs. 36-65)
Week 5 Feb 4	Ethics and Data Collection:	Chapter 4: *The Ethics of Social Research* (pgs. 66-101) ***Assessing Qualitative Research Assignment** <mark>Due Feb 4</mark>

Week 6 Feb 11	Writing a Literature Review and Designing Research Questions	**https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/writing_a_literature_review.html**
Week 6 Feb 18	**NO CLASS** **Reading Week**	
Week 7 Feb 25	Interviewing	Chapter 5: *In Depth Interviewing* (pgs. 104-147) ==***Literature Review & Research Question**== ==**Due Feb 25**==
Week 8 March 4	Content Analysis	Chapter 9: *Researching Mass Media: Images and Texts* (pgs. 246-268)
Week 9 March 11	Qualitative Data Analysis	Chapter 11: *Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data* (pgs. 306-338)
Week 10 March 18	Community-based Research	Chapter: *Why Research is Reconciliation* by Shawn Wilson and Margaret Hughes *PDF on D2L ==***Media Content Analysis and Coding Assignment**== ==**Due March 18**==
Week 11 March 25	Writing Up & Representing Qualitative Data	Chapter 12: *Writing and Representation of Qualitative Research Projects*
Week 12 April 1	Presentations and Reflections on Learning	==***Knowledge Dissemination Assignment**== ==**Due April 1**==

Have a great Winter Break!