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Office Hours: Tuesday's 2-3pm or by appointment

Class Time: Tuesday & Thursday's 10-11:30  
Online 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 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.



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### REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

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

\*\* Additional required readings will be posted on Desire to Learn (D2L).

## HOW THE COURSE IS ORGANIZED

This class is synchronous. Our class will meet on Tuesday and Thursday's 10-11:30am 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 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.

**DESIRE TO LEARN (D2L):** In this course we will be using Desire2Learn (D2L), also known as 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 ACCOMMODATIONS:** 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 visit me in my Office Hours or email me to set up an individual appointment (see above).

**Email:** Emails should require only a brief response. More detailed inquiries should be reserved for office hours. When emailing professors, 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. **Note:** Please include the course number in the subject line.

## COURSE EVALUATION

Assessment	Due Date	Weight
Participation	Ongoing	15%
Academic Integrity Matters	Sept 22	5%
Assessing Qualitative Research	October 6	20%
Participant Observation	Oct 27	20%
Media Content Analysis & Coding Assignment	Nov 17	20%
Knowledge Dissemination Assignment	Dec 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 digital Drop-Box function on D2L, found under the “Assignments” tab. Each assignment will have its own designated folder and students are asked to submit in the appropriate folder.

### Submitting your Assignment, please ensure:

1. Your assignment has been saved in **.doc** format for marking. Please *do not* submit any "Pages" documents or PDF files.
2. Individual assignments submitted electronically must include your last name in the filename: e.g. Ahmed\_ActiveReadingAssignment.doc.
3. You should receive confirmation that your assignment has successfully submitted. If you do not receive confirmation, it is a sign that there may be a problem. If this happens, please contact the instructor or your TA to ensure your assignment is properly uploaded.  
\* Improper uploading will not be accepted as an excuse for late papers.

**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.

**ASA Referencing Style:** In Sociology, the standard referencing guide is American Sociological Association (ASA). Please use ASA for all referencing in this course. More 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.

### 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 change, 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. 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, in a paper of about 1000-1200 words (4-5 pages) provide an overview of the research being described paying attention to the methodology and methods. Include a discussion of the research question, sampling and recruitment of participants, ethical considerations (if discussed), methods employed, and the analytical process. 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.

### 4. Participant Observation Assignment (20%)

This assignment requires you to undertake participant observation (PO) and write a paper about the method and your experience of conducting PO.

Participant Observation (PO) is a form of data collection that is considered 'unobtrusive research', 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.

For the assignment, you will begin by observing a public place for 30-45 minutes and recording 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. \*This means that you will not interview or talk to anyone while conducting PO. It is purely an observational method.

1) 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 conduct your fieldwork. In the field, you will record jottings, write memos and fieldnotes to develop a rich ethnographic account of the setting. Describe what you see, hear and feel in this social setting. Pay attention to not only the explicit ongoingings but also what is implicitly taking place.

2) Following data collection, you will type up your fieldnotes. Use the "Guidelines for How to Set Up Fieldnotes", available on D2L. Once you have your fieldnotes typed up, you will write a short paper of 1200 words (5 pages) describing the method and your experience conducting PO. Think about PO as a method of social research and consider:

- How PO is used in ethnography;
- The various roles the researcher can play including Complete Observer;

- How does participant observation expand our understanding of social processes?
- What are some of the ethical concerns you have about participant observation?
- Reflect on your experience with the method.

Be sure to include your typed field notes at the end of your paper. Also, don't forget to include a Title page and References page.

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

This assignment requires you to collect, code and analyze qualitative data collected through the media. 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.

1) First, you are required to choose a topic that is suitable for a qualitative media content analysis. Topics might include: climate change, #Metoo, #Blacklivesmatter, reconciliation, resurgence, food insecurity, basic income, [over]consumption or some other gender, racial or social justice topic of meaningful social and cultural significance. Once you have selected your research focus, create a research question based on your topic and email me to let me know your topic and research question. \*Be sure the research question is qualitative!

2) Once your topic is approved by me, you are ready to collect data. You will then collect a minimum of 6-8 different sources (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.), song lyrics, or image / video sources such as tv shows, movies/films, or music videos. \*If you are not sure about a particular source, please ask me before you include it (ie. social media source).

3. You will 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.

4) Write up a short paper of 1200 words (5 pages) describing the coding process and your analysis. 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 Presentation or B) A Research Brief Report.

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.

Alternatively, you can prepare a brief Research Report, which would be given to stakeholders of your research project. The report will 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. The Research Report should be written in lay language and be accessible. The Research Report should be no longer than 500-600 words (2-3 pages).

\*More details will be provided in class.

**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](#) and [this link](#) to review the policy on Academic Dishonesty.

**Other Regulations:** In taking this course, you are agreeing to the following statements,

**(1) 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.

(a) I may access and download the course materials only for my own personal and non-commercial use for this course; and

(b) 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.”

**(2) Exam/Assignment Integrity:** “I understand and agree that:

(a) Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must complete the assignments in this course without the assistance of anyone else.

(b) 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 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
<b>Week 1</b> Sept 6 & 8	Welcome / Overview	Review Course Syllabus / Expectations
<b>Week 2</b> Sept 13 & 15	Introduction to Qualitative Research	Chapter 1: <i>An Invitation to Qualitative Research</i> (pgs. 2-19)
<b>Week 3</b> Sept 20 & 22	Epistemology and Qualitative Research Paradigms	Chapter 2: <i>Paradigmatic Approaches to Qualitative Research</i> (pgs. 20-35)  <b>*Academic Integrity Matters (AIM Certificate)</b> <b>Due Sept 22</b>
<b>Week 4</b> Sept 27 & 29	Designing Qualitative Research	Chapter 3: <i>Designing Qualitative Approaches to Research</i> (pgs. 36-65)
<b>Week 5</b> Oct 4 & 6	Ethics in Qualitative Research	Chapter 4: <i>The Ethics of Social Research</i> (pgs. 66-101)  <b>*Assessing Qualitative Research Assignment</b> <b>Due Oct 6</b>



**Oct 11 & 13 NO CLASS - FALL READING WEEK**

<b>Week 6</b> Oct 18 & 20	Interviewing & Focus Groups	Chapter 5: <i>In Depth Interviewing</i> (pgs. 104-147) Chapter 6: <i>Focus Group Research</i> (pgs. 148-181)
<b>Week 7</b> Oct 25 & 27	Ethnography	Chapter 7: <i>Ethnography</i> (pgs. 182-217)  <b>*Participant Observation Assignment Due Oct 7</b>
<b>Week 8</b> Nov 1 & 3	Content Analysis	Chapter 9: <i>Researching Mass Media: Images and Texts</i> (pgs. 246-268)
<b>Week 9</b> Nov 8 & 10	Qualitative Data Analysis	Chapter 11: <i>Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data</i> (pgs. 306-338)
<b>Week 10</b> Nov 15 & 17	Tues - Tutorial on Coding Data  Thurs - Case Study	Ch. 8 Case Study  <b>*Media Content Analysis and Coding Assignment Due Nov 17</b>
<b>Week 11</b> Nov 22 & 24	Writing Up & Representing Qualitative Data	Chapter 12: <i>Writing and Representation of Qualitative Research Projects</i>
<b>Week 12</b> Nov 29 & Dec 1	Wrap Up	TBA  <b>*Knowledge Dissemination Assignment Due Dec 1</b>

**Have a great Winter Break!**