



**The University of Western Ontario**  
**SOCIOLOGY 9021B**  
**Qualitative Research Methods**  
**Winter 2026**  
**Mondays, 9:30am-12:30pm**

**DRAFT**

**Professor: Tracey L. Adams**

Office Hours: by appointment and after class  
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### **Enrollment Restrictions**

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Department of Sociology, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

### **Course Description**

This course introduces students to the epistemology and ontology underlying qualitative methods, as well as the pragmatics of conducting qualitative research. It provides an overview of several different types of qualitative research methods. Furthermore, it considers ethical issues and data analysis and management challenges that are associated with qualitative research. Details on course requirements are provided below.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- \* Analyze, evaluate, and utilize a variety of qualitative methodological approaches in Sociology
- \* Understand and critically evaluate current research and scholarship within sociology
- \* Conceptualize, design, and implement original research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding that makes a sustained, evidence-based, sociological argument and presents ideas, concepts, and results clearly
- \* Conduct original research and write a theoretically informed research paper that makes a sustained, evidence-based, sociological argument and presents ideas, concepts, and results clearly
- \* Understand and apply standards of academic integrity and appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct and presentation of research
- \* Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss ideas clearly and articulately through effective oral and written communication
- \* Demonstrate an ability to engage in scholarly discussion and debate in learning environments

\* Demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the complexity of knowledge, the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines, and the limitations of one's own work and of the discipline more generally

## Course Materials

There are no required textbooks in the course. All required readings will be made available, free of charge, on OWL Brightspace and/or through the library. No software is required.

## Methods of Evaluation

Research Proposal	15%	February 9 2026
Final Paper	40%	April 17 2026
In-Class Activities (2)	10%	Jan 26, March 2, 2026
Seminar Presentation	10%	Week to be determined
Class Attendance & Participation	10%	All Weeks
3 Minute presentation of research	15%	March 30 2026

Students must complete all assignments and receive a passing grade in each to pass the course. Please find further information below. More detail will be provided in class. Please also note that I have a flexible deadline policy. Larger written assignments are due within 1 week of the official deadline. Smaller assignments are due within 48 hours of the deadline. I urge you to aim for completion of assignments by the deadline or as close to the deadline as possible.

## Evaluation Breakdown

### *1. Research Proposal (15%); Due February 9, 2026*

Pick a research topic you can study with the use of qualitative methods. Given the constraints put upon us by Western's Research Ethics Board, keep the following in mind:

- 1) For an interview project: please pick a non-sensitive topic, and also one that does not involve participants who cannot give their own consent,
- 2) For an ethnographic project: please pick a public location that does not require consent from those you observe.
- 3) For a content analysis, please analyze publicly available content that does not require consent or permission to use the data.

The research proposal should include: 1) a statement of the problem and its significance; 2) a description of your research methodology, including data collection strategy, sampling strategy, and recruitment strategy, 3) a brief discussion of the challenges, benefits and limitations of the proposed study, and 4) a bibliography of 10 articles you found that inform your research. These articles need to be different from any listed on the course outline. Only the bibliography is needed. You do not need to discuss or describe these articles at this stage. **If you are doing an interview, I will also need to see a letter of information that you will share with your participants, and any recruitment email / script.**

The proposal should be 5-10 pages. Upload the assignment to OWL Brightspace.

## ***2. In-Class Assignments (10%); Jan 26 and March 2, 2026***

We will have some hands-on activities completed in class on Jan 26, and March 2. A response based on these activities should be handed in after class (or within 48 hours). Each will be marked out of 5.

## ***3. Final Project as per Proposal (40%), Due April 17, 2026***

Expand your proposal into a project. Given the unique circumstances of each proposal, we will develop specific details in personal consultations, but here are a few guidelines:

- 1) Your final paper should follow the structure of a research article.
- 2) You need to follow all the necessary steps you would in any research project (e.g., consider research ethics implications, include Letters of Information if needed, and carefully consider sampling).
- 3) Keep in mind that you have time constraints in the course and do not have time to collect or analyse a lot of data. Try to keep in manageable. For interviews, depending on length, no more than two (or three, if one of them is very short). For ethnographies, you should spend at least a few hours in the space (on one or more occasions), and record your detailed observations. For content analysis, make sure the amount and length of the content is manageable.

The final paper should be 15-20 pages. Upload the assignment in OWL by the due date.

## ***4. Presentation (10%)***

Each week includes a presentation topic. In first class, students sign up for a topic. Given the expected size of the seminar, presentations will be two to three students per topic. The presentation should give an overview of the assigned topic. Highlight its importance for our understanding of qualitative methods. Present to the class evidence from academic sources and provide a balanced perspective on the topic (e.g., where applicable, present to the class arguments for and against something). After the formal presentation, there will be a question-and-answer period. If you wish, you can prepare discussion questions to facilitate this part of the presentation. The presentation itself should be no longer than 15-20 minutes (total), with an additional 10 minutes for questions. Use PowerPoint.

## ***5. 3-Minute Presentation (15%), March 30 2026***

In the last class, all students will give a 3-Minute presentation using one slide to sum up their project, methodology, and its findings.

## ***6. Class Attendance and Participation (10%), All Weeks***

Class attendance is encouraged, although it is understood that illness and other extenuating circumstances may require you to miss class from time to time. When you are in class you are encouraged to engage in class participation.

# Course Schedule

## 1. Introduction: January 5, 2026

- \* Introduction to the course: content, assignments, expectations
- \* Discussion of major assignment project; Signing up for presentations

## 2. Research Design in Qualitative Methods: January 12, 2026

- \* Key concepts of ontology, epistemology, and paradigm
- \* Formulating Research Questions/Objectives
- \* Research Design

Readings: Agee, J. (2008) Developing qualitative research questions: a reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 22(3): 431-447. Doi:10.1080/09518390902736512  
Flik, U. (2018) How to design qualitative research. In *Designing Qualitative Research*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Sage.  
<https://methods-sagepub-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/book/mono/designing-qualitative-research-2e/chpt/how-design-qualitative-research>

***Presentation topic: integrating good principles of EDID in a project***

## 3. Ethics in Qualitative Research: January 19, 2026

- \* Research ethics in academic and non-academic research
- \* Ethical principles and policies.
- \* Ethical implications for your assignments (and research more generally)

Reading: TCPS2 – chapters 1-3: [https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique\\_tcps2-eptc2\\_2022.html](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html)

***Presentation: researching sensitive topics***

## 4. In-depth interviews: January 26, 2026

- \* Developing interview guides & strategies and techniques for successful interviews
- \* Interview exercise in class
- \* **Brief reflection**

Readings: Hermanowicz, J.C. (2002). The Great Interview: 25 strategies for studying people in bed. *Qualitative Sociology* 25(4).  
Roulston et al. (2003). Learning to interview in the Social Sciences. *Qualitative Inquire* 9(4), 643-668.

***Presentation: what is data saturation?***

## 5. Ethnography and Observational Field Work: February 2, 2026

- \* Sampling and techniques of ethnographic research
- \* Ethics in ethnographic research
- \* Auto-ethnography

Readings: Khan, S. & Jerolmack, C. (2013). Saying Meritocracy and Doing Privilege. *The Sociological Quarterly* 54(1): 9-19.  
Fine, G.A. (1993). Ten Lies of Ethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(3), 267-94.

***Presentation: auto-ethnography***

**6. Content Analysis: February 9, 2026**

- \* What is content analysis; how is it done?

Readings: Marvasti, A.B. (2019). Qualitative Content Analysis: A Novice's Perspective. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 20(3):a32.

Sheppard, A & Ricciardelli, R. (2023). Bio-citizens online: A content analysis of pro-ana and weight loss blogs. *Canadian Review of Sociology* 60(259-275).

***Presentation: sampling in content analysis***

**READING WEEK; FEBRUARY 16, 2026**

**7. Other Qualitative Research Methods: February 23, 2026**

- \* Case Study Analysis
- \* Institutional Ethnography
- \* Indigenous Research Methods (and PAR)
- \* Photo-voice and Arts-Based Research

Readings: Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>

Smith, D.E. and Griffith, A.I. (2022). *Simply institutional ethnography: creating a sociology for people* (excerpts).

***Presentation: Participatory Action Research***

**8. Historical Research Methods: March 2 2026**

- \* How is qualitative historical research accomplished?
- \* Hands-on experience using historical research methods.
- \* **In-class assignment / exercise.**

Reading: Kiser, E. and Pfaff, S. (2010). Comparative-Historical Methodology in Political Sociology. In K.T. Leicht and J.C. Jenkins (eds). *Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global perspective*. Springer. TBD.

***Presentation: Bias, Inequalities, and Silences in the Historical record.***

**9. Analysis and Coding of Qualitative Data: March 9, 2026**

- \* Transcribing, coding, organizing and interpreting data
- \* Hands-on work in class: Coding exercise

Readings: Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77-101. Doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

***Presentation: grounded theory***

**10. Writing up and presenting research: March 16 2026**

- \* Writing effective qualitative research papers and reports
- \* How to prepare effective presentations of your results

Reading: Matthews, S.H. 2005. Crafting Qualitative Research Articles on Marriages and Families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 67 (Nov): 799-808.

***Presentation topic:*** Reporting Qualitative Research (including COREQ and its critics).

**11. No class today; Optional consultations on final project: March 23, 2025**

**12. Three-Minute Presentations: March 30, 2026**

Everyone presents their key findings in 3 minutes using one infographic slide

***NOTE: SOME PRESENTATION TOPICS AND READINGS COULD CHANGE***

## **Important Policies**

### **Policies for Assignment Deadlines**

#### **Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com

(<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Completion of Course Requirements**

Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall-December 31; Winter-April 30, Summer-August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook: [http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate\\_handbook/course\\_information.html](http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html)

## **Standards of Professional Behaviour**

It is the responsibility of all members of the Department of Sociology to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- **respect for others** both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy)
- **active engagement in learning** and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best)
- **personal integrity** (following through on commitments; doing own work)

Students should also be aware of the **UWO Student Code of Conduct** found at <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

## **Accessible Education Western (AEW)**

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

## **Health/Wellness Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

## **Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:**

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).