



Western University

SOCIOLOGY 3307G – 002 **Investigating the Social World:** **Qualitative Research**

Winter 2021/22

Thursday, 9:30am-12:30pm, TC-204

Instructor: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann

Office Hours: by appointment
Department of Sociology, Office: SSC 5430
Email: wlehmann@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant: Andrea Dean

How Will the Course Be Taught?

Due to the disruptions caused by Omicron variant of COVID-19, we will begin the semester online. Delivery will be synchronously, using Zoom. We will transition to in-person learning once the local health authority and Western University consider it safe to do so. Assessments and grading schemes are not affected by this shift.

- During online delivery, the seminar will be run as a “flipped classroom.” All lecture material and readings will be made available on OWL with the expectation that you complete the readings and review the materials **PRIOR** to class. Class time is used to discuss the material, and work with hands-on examples.
- We will discuss Zoom etiquette in our first live meeting on Thursday, January 13, 2022.

Technical Requirements While We're Online



Stable internet connection.



Laptop or computer



Working microphone



Working webcam (preferred)



Thursdays 9:30am to 12:30pm via Zoom meeting. See OWL 'Zoom' tab for Zoom meeting links. In order to protect the Zoom meetings, only Western authenticated users can join (please use your Western account to join) and a password is required. The password is: (TBA). Please do not share it.

Course Description

In this course, students will learn to investigate the social world using a variety of qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviewing, observation, or content analysis. Students will explore the principles underlying qualitative inquiry and acquire a general understanding of the theoretical positions that underlie qualitative methodology. Through lectures, readings, guest presentations, and hands-on research activities, students will explore different ways of investigating the social world in a scientific but non-statistical way that gives voice to the people we are studying. The ultimate goal is to let students experience the ways that qualitative sociologists do research. We will therefore emphasize applied aspects of qualitative research.

Prerequisite(s)

Sociology 2205A/B and 2206A/B.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Antirequisite(s)

Sociology 3310F/G, Family Studies and Human Development 3230A/B, the former Sociology 3311F/G.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate different research methods, and their usage.
- Formulate research questions and choose a qualitative research design to examine those questions.
- Understand and meet the ethical standards for conducting research with human subjects.
- Design and carry out a research project, including conducting in-depth interviews, ethnographic field observations, and content analysis.
- Analyze and interpret qualitative data.
- Write an effective research report.
- Prepare an effective oral presentation that presents key information in a narrow time frame.

Required Text(s)

No textbook will be used. Articles are assigned weekly and will be posted on OWL.

Method of Evaluation

1) Interview Project Proposal & Presentation	February 3, 2022	10%
2) Ethnography assignment <i>OR</i> content analysis	March 3, 2022	25%
3) Group Presentation: Research Findings	April 7, 2022 (last class)	10%
4) Interview Project Term Paper	Due April 8, 2022 (last day of term)	40%
5) Five Reading Responses (you pick your week)		15%

Evaluation Breakdown (detailed information provided in class)

1) Ethnography or Content Analysis (25%); details provided in class and on OWL

Due March 3, 2022; length: 7-10 pages, double spaced

Note: late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless accommodation has been given

Option 1.1) Ethnography Exercise

- Spend some time observing a specific site; collect field notes.
- Write a short essay describing your observations, and the challenges of being an observer

Option 1.2) Content Analysis Exercise

- You will be assigned a specific content analysis question and the media to review

ASSIGNMENT 2), 3) AND 4) ARE BASED ON A GROUP INTERVIEW PROJECT

This project is designed to give you hands-on experience in all phases of an interview-based qualitative research project. Some of this work will be done in groups; some of it will be done individually. I will provide topics in class, and you can sign up for a topic.

The exercise will require that you complete the following stages of a research project:

- 1) Design the project, including a small literature review, research questions, a discussion of ethics and an interview guideline. (group work)
- 2) Data collection: conducting interviews (each group member conducts one interview; the groups shares all the interviews for analysis)
- 3) Data analysis (both group and individual)
- 4) Presentation of findings in an individual paper.
- 5) Group presentation of findings

2) Interview Project Proposal (10%) and Presentation; one submission per group; all group members receive the same mark

- You have to submit a proposal for your group's interview project
- The proposal needs to include the following:
 - A short literature review giving the context of the study. This should be no more than 1-2 pages and include at least 3 references to studies on your topic.
 - A set of research question you will answer with your project.
 - A description of your sample and your recruitment strategy.
 - Your letter of information and consent form.
 - A first draft of your interview guide.

Due: February 3, 2022 (together with your presentation)

Note: as this is a group proposal, late assignments will not be accepted

3) Interview Project Results: Group Presentation (10%)

- Combine the findings from your individual term papers to prepare a group presentation for the class
Presentation held last class, April 7, 2022

4) Individual Interview Project Term Paper (40%); detailed information to be provided in class

- Use all interview transcripts from your team (not just yours), code and analyze them, and write a research report individually

Term paper due April 8, 2022 (last day of term); length: 10-15 pages double-spaced

Note: late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless accommodation has been given

5) Five Reading Responses (you pick your week) (15%)

- On five different weeks of your choice, you are to submit a short comment and/or question regarding the assigned readings for that week. In this submission, you should pose one comment or question regarding the articles' key findings/positions.
- In total, this will be five (5) submissions. Each submission will earn you three marks if the submission indicates that you actually read the texts and critically engaged with them. There will be deductions for superficial readings and no marks for submissions that do not engage with the text in any meaningful way. For instance, comments such as "I really liked the article" or "The author did a great job explaining xyz" or "There are too few participants to make the research generalizable" will not gain you any marks. You need to demonstrate that you read and thought about the article.
- You need to submit before class of the week you picked. Submissions after class will not be accepted.

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann

- By email: wlehmann@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant: Andrea Dean

- By email: asdean@uwo.ca

Important Policies

How to Get Important Information

Make sure to check the course OWL site regularly for course updates, cancellations, and other course-related postings.

Course Attendance Requirements:

With the exception of legitimate medical/personal excuses (documentation required to be submitted) students are expected to attend **at least 80%** of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade in the course cannot be obtained without meeting this attendance requirement.

Standards of Professional Behaviour

It is the responsibility of all of us in this class 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)

Discrimination and Unconscious Bias

- **Zero-tolerance** for discrimination. I encourage students to “call out” comments or content that may be marginalizing, oppressive, or discriminatory. If students are uncomfortable raising concerns in class, please speak to me immediately about any discriminatory conduct.
- **Unconscious/implicit bias.** We all have unconscious biases. Yes, everyone! Our brains unconsciously process huge amounts of information without us even being aware of it. This can include snap judgements about people we meet and situations we encounter. People have unconscious preferences for people who are similar to them and situations that are familiar. This unconscious bias can exclude, marginalize, and discriminate against minorities. As sociologists, it is our duty to use our sociological imaginations to combat unconscious bias.
 - **Here is some additional information and tips to combat unconscious bias:**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP-cqFLS8Q4>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKHSJHkPeLY>

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

Digital Student Experience

Students should also consider checking out the Western University Digital Student Experience website for additional information about online learning <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>.

If you need assistance with OWL and/or online access, you can seek support on the [OWL Help page](#).

Alternatively, you can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

What do you need?

What do you need to work at your best? Please let me know how I can help you. Western provides a number of resources for students who need accommodation or who are having mental health challenges (see below) but I encourage students to speak to me if there is anything I can do to improve their learning experience.

Policies for Assignment Deadlines:

There two ways in which make exams will be granted.

1) ***Self-Reported Absence (SRA)*** form: you now have the option of submitting Self-Reported Absence (SRA) form a maximum of two times between September and April and one time between May and August. That means, you don't have to go through academic counselling or provide documentation. The duration of the excused absence will be for a maximum of 48 hours. You must be in touch with your instructor (Dr. Lehmann) no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by the SRA. SRAs will not be allowed for assessments worth more than 30%. And SRA will extend any deadline by 48 hours. If that is not enough, please use option 2) below.

2) **Approved Documentation:** Longer deadline extensions will be granted with approved documentation. Depending on the accommodation, we will determine new deadlines on a case-by-case basis. If you miss a deadline due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, please notify me (Dr. Lehmann) within 24 hours of the missed deadline. No documentation is required when you notify me, but I need to know that you missed the deadline within 24 hours (or I assume you will not be submitting at all). You then must provide notification and documentation to your Academic Counselor within 48 hours. If your problem is medical in nature, you should be seen by your doctor on the date an assignment is due. If your Academic Counselor agrees that your reasons are legitimate and are supported by your medical doctor's documentation, you will be allowed to hand in your assignment at a later date.

A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

Students may be required to submit their assignments to turnitin.com on the class WebCT website after they are completed. These papers will be subject to submission for textual originality.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic 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: www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western (http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Compassionate Grounds

Serious Illness of a Family Member: Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a medical certificate from the family member's physician to your home faculty's Academic Counseling office.

In Case of a Death: Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a copy of the newspaper notice, death certificate or documentation provided by the funeral director to your home faculty's Academic Counseling office.

Grade Guidelines

The Department of Sociology has grade distribution guidelines that all instructors are required to follow. For Sociology courses at the 3000 level, class averages must be in the range of 73-80%.

Course Schedule

1. Introduction: January 13, 2022

- Introduction to the course: content, assignments, expectations
- Discussion of major assignment project; formation of groups.

2. Defining Qualitative Methods and Preparing for Research: January 20, 2022

- What is qualitative methods. The difference between quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Understanding the context of your project: literature reviews
- Formulating Research Questions/Objectives
- Choosing the right methodology

Reading 1: *Krahn and Taylor*

Reading 2: *Taylor and Krahn*

3. Ethics in Qualitative Research: January 27, 2022

- Research ethics in academic and non-academic research
- Hands-on Exercise: ethics implications for your assignments (and research more generally)

Reading 2: Duncan et al: *Is my mum going to hear this? Methodological and ethical challenges in qualitative health research with young people*

Reading 3: Gibson et al: *Talking about suicide: Confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative research*
Ethnography/content analysis due today

4. Presentation of Research Proposals: February 3, 2022

- Your groups will be presenting to the class your research proposals

Group proposal due today

5. Content Analysis: February 10, 2022

- What is content analysis; how is it done?
- Use of art, photos and other visual data for qualitative research
- Hands-on work: Content analysis exercise

Reading 1: Raby: *Polite, well-dressed, and on time* or Reading 1: Jackson and Gee: *Look Janet, no you look John*

Reading 2: Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes: *Picturing Protest: The Visual Framing of Collective Action by First Nations in Canada*

6. Ethnography and Observational Field Work: February 17, 2022

- Sampling and techniques of ethnographic research
- Ethics in ethnographic research
- Hands-on exercise; field notes

Reading 1: Calarco: *"I Need Help!" Social Class and Children's Help-Seeking in Elementary School*

Reading 2: Manzo: *Social Control and the Management of "Personal" Space in Shopping Malls*
Other options: "paying for the party", "no exit"; a street corner ethnography could be good

READING WEEK; FEBRUARY 24, 2022

7. In-depth interviews: March 3, 2022

- Developing interview guides & strategies and techniques for successful interviews
- Interview exercise in class

Reading 1: Lehmann: *Extra-credential Experiences and Social Closure*

Reading 2: Mullins & Preyde: *The lived experience of students with an invisible disability*

Content analysis/ethnography assignment due today

8. Other interviewing options: focus groups and photo elicitation: March 10, 2022

- Focus groups; Art based and photo solicitation, Oral histories, Virtual methods

Reading 2: Young et al: *Drinking Like a Guy: Frequent Binge Drinking among Undergraduate Women*

Reading 3: Raby, Lehman et al: *Reflections on Using Participant-Generated, Digital Photo-Elicitation in Research With Young Canadians About Their First Part-Time Jobs*

9. Analysis and Coding of Qualitative Data: March 17, 2022

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

Reading 1: Saldana: *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (Chapter 1)*

Reading 2: I will provide an example of a transcript which we will use to practice coding. Read ahead of class.

10. No class today: Drop-in consultation on group projects: March 24, 2022

- I will schedule meetings with each group about their projects.

11. Writing up and presenting research; and summary of learning: March 31, 2022

- Writing effective qualitative research papers and reports
- How to prepare effective presentations of your results; debriefing of project; wrap up and summary

Today's readings are examples of the differences between a scholarly article and research report from the same study:

Reading 1: Lehmann et al: *Youth apprenticeships in Canada: on their inferior status despite skilled labour shortages* (Journal Article) compared to Reading 2: Taylor et al: *High School Apprentices: Experiences and Outcomes*

12. Group Presentations: April 7, 2022

Individual term paper: due April 8 (last day of term)