

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Department of Sociology

SOCIOLOGY 382:
QUALITATIVE INQUIRY WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS
WINTER 2016, TERM 1

Instructor: Dawn Currie
Wednesday, 5:30-8:30PM
Location: AnSo 207/9

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3 – 4:30PM
By appointment

Teaching Assistant: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Taught from a feminist perspective, we will begin Sociology 382 with an introduction to the ethics of social research, the importance of reflexivity, and an exploration of key approaches to qualitative research employed by sociologists. Within this context the bulk of the course is dedicated to developing the practical skills necessary to carry out qualitative research with human subjects. Given the limitations of the venue for this course, we will introduce observational research and group discussions, but focus on interviewing as the method of data generation most widely used by sociologists working with various qualitative methodologies.

The course is organized around the tasks and related decisions that researchers face at each stage of a systematic research programme: the identification of a topic and formulation of research questions; consideration of ethical issues; choosing a method of data generation and preparing for fieldwork; how to write good field notes; generating data through observation, unstructured interviews, and focus group discussions; management and analysis of qualitative data (with a focus on interview data); writing up qualitative research; ensuring accountability and rigor in designing a qualitative study. Students will have the opportunity to explore these topics through participatory class exercises and graded assignments. The pedagogical goal is to enable students to design and implement an independent research programme; student participation and assessment reflect this goal.

The success of this course depends on active and respectful participation by all members. Students who are not prepared to engage with classmates in a student-centered environment or to carry out independent research activities are advised to look for a different course.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

While including lectures, as noted above the emphasis of this course is development of your skills as a qualitative researcher. This course is designed to enhance your capacity to:

- identify research topics that are suitable for qualitative researching and transformation of these topics into productive research questions;
- carry out ethically sound research with human subjects, particularly on topics that are sensitive and emotionally-laden;
- generate observational data;
- conduct open-ended interviews and facilitate focus group discussions;
- organize and analyze interview transcripts;
- design a qualitative study;
- assess published qualitative research.

In order to meet these objectives, this course employs student-centered learning that develops the capacity for independent critical thinking but also equips learners to work collaboratively. It is the responsibility of the instructor to help students reach these goals by maintaining high standards of academic performance and helping students develop their research skills.

This course is designed on the principle of students as active learners rather than recipients of knowledge. It is the responsibility of students to complete assigned work (including weekly readings) according to the course schedule, and to conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful of others and conducive to collaborative learning.

REQUIRED READING:

In order to keep costs to a minimum, only one textbook has been assigned; this text is supplemented by required readings that can be downloaded from Connect at no cost to students. The **required** textbook is available at UBC Bookstore:

Maxwell, Joseph A. 2013. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. SAGE

Also Recommended:

Delamont, Sara. 2012. *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd

COURSE POLICIES:

Maintaining a *Respectful Learning Environment*

According to UBC Policy (2014):

“The best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued. Everyone at the University of British Columbia is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds these principles in all communications and interactions with fellow UBC community members and the public in all University-related settings.” Students who behave in ways that are not respectful of others will be asked to drop Sociology 382.

Attendance

Following UBC regulations, regular attendance is expected of students. Students who neglect their academic work and assignments may be excluded from final examinations. Students who are unavoidably absent because of illness or disability should report to their instructor on return to classes.

The University accommodates ***students with disabilities*** who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled assignments. Please let Dawn know in advance, preferably during the first two weeks of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. Absence for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments will not be accommodated as a matter of course; students should discuss these commitments with Dawn before the date that allows students to drop courses without penalty. Students missing classes are not entitled to personal ‘tutorials’ to catch up on missed lectures.

Late Assignments

When exceptional circumstances will prevent you from completing an assignment on time, you may request an extension; where possible and appropriate an extension will be permitted. In the absence of an approved extension, a 1% reduction of grade will be assigned for each day an assignment is late beyond the required due date.

Academic Dishonesty

Review the UBC Calendar “Academic Regulations” for the university policy on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. All forms of academic dishonesty are serious and can result in a failing grade.

Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments (in case of loss) and also retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of

Assigned Standing. Students have the right to view all marked assignments with their Instructor or Teaching Assistant, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. This review is for pedagogic purposes; final examinations remain the property of UBC.

COURSE TOPICS AND READING SCHEDULE:

I will assume that students have read the assigned readings *before* class meetings; lectures and class activities will amplify (not repeat) what is covered in these readings. It is important that we move through the course material at a pace that encourages student participation and maximizes learning; the dates indicated below may be adjusted. Changes will be announced in class and posted on Connect.

September 7: What is qualitative research? Why is qualitative research important in sociology?

Joseph Maxwell. 2013. Chapter One, 'A Model for Qualitative Research Design' in *Qualitative Research Design*

Jennifer Mason. 2002. Pages 13-23 Chapter One, 'Finding a Focus and Knowing Where you Stand' *Qualitative Researching*. SAGE

September 14: Research Ethics

Linda Tuhiwai Smith. 1999. Chapter 2 "Research through Imperial Eyes" Pp. 42-57 in L. T. Smith *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Marilyn Lichtman. 2014. Pages 31-37 (end of 'Subjectivity and Its Meanings') in Chapters Two, 'Qualitative Research – A Reflexive Stance' *Qualitative Research for the Social Sciences*

September 21: What makes a good research topic? How do I focus my study?

Joseph Maxwell. 2013. Chapters Three and Four, 'Conceptual Framework: What Do You Think is Going On?' and 'Research Questions: What Do You Want to Understand?' in *Qualitative Research Design*

September 28: How do I get ready for fieldwork? How do I keep good notes? Why are 'research memos' important?

Joseph Maxwell. 2013. Chapter Five, 'Methods: What Will You Actually Do?' in *Qualitative Research Design*

Gretchen B. Rossman and Sharon F. Rallis. 2003. Pages 145-166 in Chapter Six, 'Entering the Field' *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research* SAGE

Carol A. B. Warren and Tracy Xavia Karner. 2010. Pages 107-125 in Chapter Five, 'Writing Fieldnotes' *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Field Research, Interviews, and Analysis*. Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press

October 5: Watching People: How is observation 'data'?

October 12: Mid-term Exam

October 19 and 26: Interviewing: How is talk 'data'?

Bruce L. Berg. 2009. Pages 127-146 in Chapter Four, 'A Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing' *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Allyn & Bacon

Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin. 2014. Pages 71-90 in Chapter Six, 'Conversational Partnerships' *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. SAGE

November 2: Focus Group Discussions: How are group discussions 'data'?

Helen Fitch and Jane Lewis. 2003. Pages 170-198 in Chapter Seven, 'Focus Groups' Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis (eds) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. SAGE

November 9: What does it all mean? How do I code data?

Joseph Maxwell. 2013. Chapter Five, Pp. 104-120 in *Qualitative Research Design*

Jamie Harding. 2003. Chapter Five, 'Using codes to analyze an illustrative theme' Pp. 81-105 in *Qualitative Data Analysis from Start to Finish*. SAGE

Carol. A. B. Warren and Tracy Xavia Karner. 2010. Pages 226-229 in Chapter 9, 'Analyzing Qualitative Data: Fieldnotes, Transcripts, Documents, and Images' *Discovering Qualitative Methods*. Oxford

November 16: How do I Organize Coded Data? A Workshop on Using a Data Matrix

November 23: What kind of story can I tell with my data? How can I assess the quality of qualitative research?

Clarissa White, Kandy Woodfield, Jane Ritchie and Rachel Ormston. 2014. Pages 367-400 in Chapter Thirteen, 'Writing up Qualitative Research' J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C.

McNaughton Nicholls and R. Ormston (eds) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. SAGE

Joseph Maxwell. 2013. Chapter Six, 'Validity: How might you be wrong?' in *Qualitative Research Design*

November 30: Wrap-Up: Am I ready to do my own research? Preparing Research Proposals

Joseph Maxwell. 2013. Chapter Seven, 'Research Proposals: Presenting and Justifying a Qualitative Proposal' in *Qualitative Research Design*

STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Your final grade is based on four required assignments:

Participation	20%
Mid-term Examination	15%
Interview Assignment	30%
Final Examination / Assignment	35%

Participation: Your grade for participation is based on completion of Participatory Activities, worth two points each. You will receive 1 point for simply completing the assigned task; the second point will be based on evidence of engagement in the activity. Some of these Activities will be carried out as small group activities during class meetings; some will be completed as homework. Examples of planned activities include (these may change as the course unfolds):

- Introductory In-class activity on qualitative research
- Reflexivity homework
- Ethics tutorial (RISE)
- In-class activity on research questions
- Online search comparing sources
- Observational field notes
- Notes from in-class interview
- Letter of Consent for your interview
- FGD questioning route
- Coded transcript and data matrix
- Self-assessment of your interview

These assignments will be discussed in detail in class. In order to receive credit for participation, these assignments must be handed according to due dates announced in class. Make sure that your name (or group members' names) is clearly printed on the papers you hand in. These assignments will not be returned but we will provide feedback. Participation grades will be available by November 25th. Participation accounts for **20% of your final grade**.

Mid-term Exam: A closed-book examination is set for **October 12th**. The examination will take place during the first half of our scheduled meeting time. It will be based on all materials covered up to, and including, October 5th. The mid-term accounts for **15% of your final grade**.

Interview Assignment: Interviewing is the most commonly used method of data generation by qualitative researchers. Your interview assignment is completion of an interview that you have audio-recorded and transcribed. This assignment will give you the opportunity to hone your interviewing skills and to code your data. Techniques of interviewing will be discussed in lectures and class time will be provided for the development of an Interview Guide and Consent Forms. The topic of your interview will be assigned. Guidelines for this exercise will be discussed during class and a detailed handout will be available. Emphasis will be given to your reflections and self-assessment. Taking into consideration the amount of time and effort needed for this assignment, it is worth **30% of your final grade**. It is due November 30th.

Final Examination / Assignment: You have the choice of your last assignment, **worth 35% of your final grade**. The first option is a final examination, held during the December examination period set by the Registrar's Office. This written examination will be based on: the assigned textbooks and readings, lectures, and class discussions. This 3-hour examination will consist of short answer and essay-style questions. Examinations will not be returned. The date for the final assignment is TBA.

The second option is completion of a research proposal. Students who are planning to apply for our Honours Programme or a Masters Programme or are especially encouraged to take advantage of this option – it provides the opportunity for feedback on a 'first version' of a research proposal because feedback on proposals will be made available. Research proposals are due on the December date set for the final examination. A detailed handout with instructions will be available. You should indicate to Dawn if you are choosing this option.

GRADING:

Students in this course are not graded on a 'curve'. Your assignments are assessed according to demonstration of both *comprehension* (understanding) of key concepts and principles and *competence* in the skills promoted by the course (that is, an ability to apply these concepts and principles as research practice). Your work will be assessed according to the following expectations:

Fail – A failing grade results when assignments do not demonstrate comprehension of course content or mastery of research skills this course is designed to promote. Failure can also be the result of missed assignments or excessive absence from class.

Pass (50-60%) – A Pass is granted to students who have attended all classes and completed all assignments, but demonstrate limited comprehension of course material and/or competence in the research skills this course is designed to promote.

Adequate (61-70%) – Adequate performance reflects comprehension of key elements of the course content and competence in some (but not all) of the research skills this course is designed to promote.

Good Work (71-80%) – Good Work entails comprehension of course content and competence in most of the skills this course is designed to promote. It signals a solid grasp of the foundations of qualitative researching.

Very Good Work (81-90%) – Very Good Work demonstrates both comprehension of course content and competence in the research skills this course is designed to promote. Completed assignments also demonstrate reflexivity and creativity. A grade above 80% signals that you are ready to undertake independent research. A grade above 90% indicates that completed assignments exceed expectations for work at this level.

We do not give individual tutorials to students who have not attended class meetings. If you are unable to attend class, you should contact a classmate who is willing to share their lecture notes.

THREE classmates willing to share lecture notes are:

Name	Email Address	Phone
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Name	Email Address	Phone
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Name	Email Address	Phone
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THE END