**COURSE TITLE**
Qualitative Methods – 7420 A01
Graduate, Fall 2013

**DEPARTMENT**
Sociology

**INSTRUCTOR**
Dr. Dale C. Spencer
Email: Dale.Spencer@ad.umanitoba.ca

**Course Type**
Seminar

**Credit Hours**
3.000

**Class Location**
216 Tier

**Office Location and Phone Number**
306 Isbister Building. (204) 480-1039

**MEETING TIMES**
Tuesday, 11:30 – 2:30 pm

**Office Hours**
Tuesday, 3:00 – 4:00 pm

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

**Calendar Course Description:** This course provides an overview of the methods of qualitative research. Discussion focuses on the philosophical foundations of qualitative methods, the variety of techniques available within interpretive and conflict paradigms, issues of sampling, analysis, validity, and report writing.

**GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, students will learn the logic of the qualitative research process from conception to execution. We will survey the various methods related to qualitative research in terms of data collection, ethics, data analysis, and write up. Students will be able to create, evaluate and critique methodologically sophisticated qualitative research methodologies in the social sciences. This course will involve student and guest presentations and to a lesser extent, traditional lecture.

With such a variegated and complex tradition as qualitative research methods, some topics are ineluctably covered more than others. In this course, more emphasis is placed on the ethnographic tradition and ethical issues related to qualitative inquiry.

In this course, we will consider some fundamental questions related to qualitative methods: How are qualitative methods different from quantitative methods? What are some of the critiques of qualitative methods from a quantitative perspective? Does the field of qualitative
methods have appropriate methodological responses to these criticisms? What philosophical perspectives underpin qualitative methods? How is qualitative methods geared for theory and concept development?

REQUIRED MATERIALS


Required and recommended course readings are available on Desire2Learn and the University of Manitoba online library.

GRADERS & SCORING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations (X2)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>See Sign Up Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Paper Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Final Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics in Qualitative Research Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>October 8th, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Paper: Issues in Qualitative Research Paper or Autoethnography research paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>December 3, 2013</td>
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Grades: Percentage, Letter Grade and Descriptive Scale GPA

Grading Scheme: The following letter/percentage grading scheme will be adopted: A+=90% and above (Exceptional); A=80-89% (Excellent); B+=76-79% (Very Good); B=70-75% (Good); C+=66-69% (Satisfactory); C=60-65% (Adequate); D=50-59% (Marginal); F=under 50% (Failure).

ASSIGMENTS/REQUIREMENTS

Participation (10%)

Students who are not presenting are expected to attend each presentation and are responsible for engaging in scholarly debate, posing critical questions, or raising scholarly points for
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discussion on the assigned readings and the presentation of the assigned readings (10%). It is not enough to be in attendance to receive a participation grade; students must verbally contribute to the discussion.

**Presentation (25% - 12.5% per presentation)**

Each student will conduct two presentations. See sign-up sheet.

Presentations will introduce the class to the major issues related to the designated topic, will synthesize the required reading of the respective week, and will evaluate the material in terms of its strengths and limitations (presenters are encouraged to include their own views, criticisms, and interpretations).

The presenter will prepare a presentation of approximately 25-30 minutes in length. The remainder of the class will be dedicated to a discussion of the issues. The use of visual aids is encouraged as the aim of the presentation is to promote class discussion and debate not only on the content of the material but also on the general theme.

**Research Paper Discussion/Presentation (5%)**

Students are required to present some of the main ideas of their research paper in a short presentation (5-7 minutes) during the final seminar (December 3, 2013). This session will be organized as a mini-conference or workshop where students can share ideas and receive feedback on their work before submitting their final paper.

**Ethics in Qualitative Research Assignment (25%) – October 8, 2013**

The purpose of this assignment is to critically examine ethical issues in qualitative research. Students are expected to develop a ethical position in relation to qualitative research by drawing from course readings and external materials that speak to the principles that may guide qualitative inquiry. Papers must address the initial and ongoing tensions between the needs and goals of the research and the rights of participants. Questions to consider: What should ethics imply in relation to qualitative research? At what junctures in the research process does ethics matter? Does ethics matter in relation to qualitative research?

This assignment is to be no more than 1500 words (plus references) and will be evaluated on the sophistication of your argument and the level of brevity in your response (i.e. how adequately you keep to the word length).

**Major Paper (40%) – December 3, 2013**
Students are to choose between the “Issues in Qualitative Research” paper and the “Autoethnography” paper for the major paper assignment. Below is a description of the respective assignments.

A. Issues in Qualitative Research Paper

For this assignment, students are required to choose one debate in the qualitative research methods literature and offer a position piece. It is not enough to submit a literature review for this assignment. Students will be evaluated on their ability to outline the debate and the sophistication of their argument(s).

Papers shall be limited to 20 pages (plus references) and must be typed and double-spaced. Students should format their essays according to the Harvard style.

Layout of “Issues in Qualitative Research” Paper

Introduction: The introduction presents the theme or issues explored in the essay. It briefly outlines your approach to the topic and the major ideas and argument(s) advanced in the main body of the essay. This section is usually 1 to 2 pages in length.

Main body of the research essay: This section develops and contains the central thesis or argument(s) of the essay. This main body should review and assess the appropriate literature, while providing an exposition of the central points. The research theme, together with ideas relating to the central thesis, should be clearly presented and substantiated. Ideally, each paragraph should focus upon a major point related to the central argument(s) or theoretical framework. Internal headings and sub-headings are useful as a device to mark shifts in discussion while, at the same time, maintaining an integration of points to the central theme. This section is usually 15-18 pages in length.

Conclusion: This last section provides a brief summary of the essay's major argument(s) within the context of the central theme addressed. The conclusion is usually 1 to 2 pages in length.

Bibliography: Each research paper must make direct references to appropriate course readings on your specific topic.

A minimum of twenty cited scholarly references is required including; at least five references from course reading materials and at least ten separate scholarly journal articles or academic quality book chapters on your selected topic by different reputable social scientific authors.
B. Autoethnography

Students will conduct an autoethnography of a subject of your choice for this assignment. You are required to situate yourself in relation to the extant literature on autoethnography and engage in the process and the product relevant to this approach. It is recommended that students choosing this option start their autoethnography as soon as possible in order to be able to give adequate time to conduct such a project.

Papers shall be limited to 20 pages (plus references) and must be typed and double-spaced. Students should format their essays according to the Harvard style.

Layout of “Autoethnography” Assignment

Introduction: The introduction presents the theme or issues explored in the autoethnography. It briefly outlines your approach to the topic and a brief commentary on how you conducted your autoethnography. This section should be 1 to 2 pages in length.

Main body of the research essay: This section develops and contains the central thesis or argument(s) of the essay. This main body should review and assess the appropriate literature, while providing an exposition of the central points. The research theme, together with ideas relating to the central thesis, should be clearly presented and substantiated. Ideally, each paragraph should focus upon a major point related to the central argument(s) or theoretical framework. Internal headings and sub-headings are useful as a device to mark shifts in discussion while, at the same time, maintaining an integration of points to the central theme. This section is usually 15-18 pages in length.

Conclusion: This last section provides a brief summary of the essay's major argument(s) within the context of the central theme addressed. The conclusion is usually 1 to 2 pages in length.

Bibliography: Each research paper must make direct references to appropriate course readings on your specific topic.

A minimum of twenty cited scholarly references is required including; at least five references from course reading materials and at least ten separate scholarly journal articles or academic quality book chapters on your selected topic by different reputable social scientific authors.

Citations

Citation of the sources must always be given for the following: all direct quotations;
 paraphrases of the statements of others; opinions, ideas, and theories not your own; and, information which is not a matter of general knowledge. Even when using proper citation, it is a mistake to place too much reliance on one source. Furthermore, direct quotations from one or more authors should seldom occur in an essay and should not be longer than two or three sentences in length. All quotations of over four text lines should be indented and single spaced with quotation marks omitted. Quotations of any kind, however, must be acknowledged by a reference to the source, and include the page number(s). Quotations should be used as a way to emphasize a point or because the original author has an authority of expertise that can be best expressed by her/him).

**ATTENDANCE & TARDINESS POLICY**

Students are expected to attend all seminars and read all **required** readings.

If you are tardy for class, try to minimize disruption when coming into class. You are not that important that everyone else should be made aware of your late arrival.

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**Guide to Readings**

Students come to methods classes with different strengths and academic backgrounds with regards to qualitative methods. As such, the Marshall and Rossman text is assigned as a primer to the material covered in class. Presenters can use this text as a background to their presentations. At the risk of stating the obvious, students are *not* required to read the recommended readings but can use the recommended readings for their major paper.

*Students can expect to read 60 journal-article-length pages per week.*

**Weekly Breakdown**

**Week 1: Introduction and sign up week – September 10, 2013**

**Primer:** Marshall and Rossman, Chapters 1 & 2

**Week 2: Epistemological Underpinnings – September 17, 2013**

**Required:**


**Week 3: Ethics – September 24, 2013**

**Primer:** Marshall and Rossman, Chapter 3

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


Week 4: Sampling and Case Selections – October 1, 2013

Primer: Marshall and Rossman, Chapter 5

Required:


Recommended:


Week 5: Participant Observation – October 8, 2013

*Ethics Assignment Due

Primer: Marshall and Rossman, Chapter 6

Required:


Recommended:


**Week 6: Interviewing – October 15, 2013**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 7: Ethnography I – October 22, 2013**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 8: Ethnography II – October 29, 2013**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 9: Hermeneutics and Discourse Analysis – November 5, 2013**

**Primer:** Marshall and Rossman, chapter 7


**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 10: Historical Methods – November 12, 2013**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**

Week 11: Narratives and Narrative Analysis – November 19, 2013

Required:


Week 12: Writing and Quality in Qualitative Research – November 26, 2013

Required:


My Philosophy of Teaching

I believe that the purpose of education – my philosophy on life – is to inquire and to reflect on the past, present, and future and to carry this quest for understanding beyond this educational institution into the world. What I can promise is that what you will learn and the skills acquired in this class will help you critically engage with what you hear and see in the world. I am inimical to forms of education that are predicated on indoctrination for conformity and the pursuit of a high grade without actual reflection on the academic material.

Other matters
**Late Assignments:** Late assignments will receive a 10% deduction for every day the assignment is late. Only under exceptional circumstances (e.g., medical issues accompanied by a valid doctor’s note) will a student be able to receive an extension. To be clear, in the event of a medical issue or death in the family, you **must** submit a doctor’s note or a death certificate. Unless you can demonstrate through documentation that you need or deserve an extension, you will receive the 10% deduction for every day that your assignment is late. Students that miss their presentations will receive ‘0’ their presentation grade.

**Student Concerns/Complaints:** From time to time students object to or have concerns about the grade they receive on a given assignment. While students may raise concerns regarding the grade they receive from me, you must wait two days after the assignment was handed back and must put your specific reasoning of why you deserve a higher grade in print. There is also a chance – upon reevaluation of the grade you received – that you will receive a lower grade on your assignment. To be clear, it is **not** enough to say that you worked really hard on an assignment, that you get higher grades in other classes, or that you believe, without a rationale, you deserve a higher grade.

**Your feedback about the course:** If you have any suggestions about the course, they are encouraged at any time. I have incorporated a number of students’ suggestions in the past.

All final grades in this course are subject to the approval of the Department head. Students must retain a clean hard copy of their assignments.

**Voluntary Withdrawal:** The final date for voluntary withdrawal from this course is November 13, 2013. There are no refunds on this date – see the Fall/Winter Calendar for details.

**Academic Dishonesty:** University policy on academic integrity will be enforced. A full description of academic integrity matters, including plagiarism and cheating, can be found in Section 8 of the General Academic Regulations and Requirements of the University of Manitoba.

**Unclaimed term work disposal:** This statement must be included on course outline. Any term work that has not been claimed by students will be held for four (4) months from the end of the final examination period for the term in which the work was assigned. At the conclusion of this time, all unclaimed term work will become property of the Faculty of Arts and be destroyed according to FIPPA guidelines and using confidential measures for disposal.
**Electronic Devices:** Students are required to silence all electronic devices (cellular phones, Blackberries, I-phones, pagers, ipods, etc.) when in the classroom. If there is a reason that you require your device to remain on ‘ring’ mode (i.e., sick child at daycare), please inform me at the start of the class. Students are not permitted to send or receive text messages during class. *If a student is found texting during class or their phone rings, she or he will be asked to leave.*

**Classroom Disruptions:** Students should recognize that excessive talking, late arrival, or early departures from the classroom are disrupting for both the instructor and classmates. Please be considerate of others in the class. Continual disruption by a student may result in disbarment from the course. Please notify the instructor at the onset of class if you need to leave early or if you have to come late to the next class.

**Religious Holidays:** The University recognizes the right of all students to observe recognized holidays of their faith, which fall within the academic year. With instructor discretion, necessary arrangements can be made to ensure studies are not jeopardized. The instructor should be notified of a student’s intended absence in advance and at least three weeks notice of absence should normally be given where special arrangements are sought.