

Soc 7420 Qualitative Research Methods for Sociological Inquiry (3 credit hours)
Fridays 11:30-2:15 p.m., 335 Isbister

On Treaty One territory, Anishinaabe traditional territory and homeland of the Métis Nation

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Office hours (307 Isbister) 2:30-3:30 p.m. Fridays by appointment

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Course Description and Goals

This course provides an overview of methodologies of qualitative research for sociological inquiry. Discussion focuses on the ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative methods and the variety of approaches and techniques available within interpretive and critical paradigms. Issues such as sampling, reflexivity, analysis, interpretation, theoretical development, rigour, and representation will be addressed.

I designed this course for Sociology graduate students planning to conduct qualitative research theses. Previous training in social science research methods (preferably SOC 3820 or equivalent) is strongly recommended. The course **purpose** is a) to provide practice in qualitative research design, data collection, and analysis; and b) to help you to understand the spectrum of qualitative approaches in social science and their ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings.

Classes will integrate traditional lecture, free-writing, group and pair discussion, and guest speakers. You are expected to contribute high quality, original written work and contribute respectfully and meaningfully to class discussions.

Learning Outcomes - through actively participating in this course, **you will be able to:**

1. Explain how you would learn something different through qualitative inquiry than you would learn from quantitative inquiry.
2. Distinguish between the paradigmatic foundations underlying qualitative inquiry, and identify your own paradigmatic approach to your research
3. Generate a clear, feasible research question amenable to qualitative inquiry
4. Explain what it means to practice reflexivity in qualitative inquiry
5. Justify your choice of data collection procedures
6. Explain the value of, and specify procedures for, documenting research steps and analytic decisions through research logs and memos
7. Appreciate the wide range of analytic possibilities of qualitative inquiry and more confidently conduct rigorous qualitative data analysis
8. Understand the role of theory in qualitative inquiry; identify how to use and develop theoretical interpretations in your own research
9. Explain the debates around qualitative research validity and reliability, and identify ways to promote rigour throughout the research process
10. Engage with and critically evaluate existing qualitative research studies

Class Schedule¹ and Required Readings

Required readings MUST be read in ADVANCE of the class for which they are listed. **Each week, prepare 2 response comments or questions on each reading** and be prepared to discuss these in-class. You are strongly encouraged to independently seek additional readings to supplement your learning and enhance the quality of your submitted work.

Date	Focus	Required Preparation (full references below)	Due Dates
Jan 11	Paradigmatic Foundations of Qualitative Inquiry		
Jan18	Theory and Methodology in Qualitative Inquiry	Glaser (2002) Timmerman & Tavory (2012)	
Jan25	Rigour, Resonance and Reflexivity	Pillow (2003) Tracy (2010)	Assign#1
Feb1	Ethnography and Auto-Ethnography • Brief practice observation	Adler & Adler (1998) Beach (2005)	
Feb8 *Assign#1 returned	Constructionist and Narrative Approaches • Brief practice interview • Options for analyzing talk	Doucet & Mauthner (2008) Pugh (2013)	Assign#2
Feb15	Texts and Discourse Analysis • Institutional ethnography • Critical & Foucauldian discourse analysis Kevin Walby: FOI research	Taylor (1997) Manning & Cullum-Swan (1998)	
** (Reading Break Feb 18-22)***			
Mar1 *Assign#2 returned	Anti-Oppressive and Participatory Approaches Dan Henhawk: Indigenous Research Paradigms	Potts & Brown (2005)	Assign#3
Mar8	Interaction as Data: Focus Groups AND Research logs and writing	Smithson (2000) Richardson (1998)	
Mar15 *Assign#3 returned	Approaches to Coding • In-class coding practice	Morse (1994) Coffey & Atkinson (1996)	
Voluntary Withdrawal Deadline March 20			
Mar22	Analysis, Continued Collective debrief of Assignment #4 Thematic analysis and framework method Dan Albas: Ethnographic concept development	Ritchie et al. (2003) Attride-Stirling (2001)	Assign#4
Mar29	Analysis, Continued • Intersectional analysis • Comparative case study analysis Sonia Bookman: Semiotics/Visual analysis	Christensen & Qvotrup Jensen (2012) Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) Rose (2016)	
Apr5 *Assign#4 returned	Moving to Interpretation; Mixed Methods	Ely et al. (1997) Mason (2011)	Assign#5

¹ This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor and/or based on the learning needs of the students but such changes are subject to Section 2.8 of the – [ROASS](#)- Procedure.

Full Reading List

- Adler, P.A., and Adler, P. Observational techniques. In Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp.79-109). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385-405.
- Beach, D. (2005). From fieldwork to theory and representation in ethnography. In Troman, G., Jeffrey, B., and Walford, G. (Eds.), *Methodological Issues and Practices in Ethnography - Studies in Educational Ethnography*, Vol. 11 (pp.1-17). Emerald Group Publishing.
- Christensen, A.D., and Qvotrup Jensen, S. (2012). Doing intersectional analysis: Methodological implications for qualitative research. *NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 20(2), 109-125.
- Coffey, C., & Atkinson, P. (1996). Concepts and coding. Chapter 2, pp.26-53 in Coffey, A., and Atkinson, P., *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complimentary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Doucet, A., and Mauthner, N.S. (2008). What can be known and how? Narrated subjects and the Listening Guide. *Qualitative Research*, 8(3), 399-409
- Ely, M., Vinz, R., Downing, M., & Anzul, M. (1997). Working in interpretive modes. Chapter 5 (pp.223-73) In Ely, M., et al., *On Writing Qualitative Research: Living by Words*. Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 219-245.
- Glaser, B. (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1 (2). Article 3. Retrieved Dec 11, 2017 from <http://www.ualberta.ca/~ijqm/>
- Manning, P.K. and Cullum-Swan, B. (1998). Narrative, content, and semiotic analysis. In Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.,) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (pp.246-273). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mason (2011). Facet methodology: The case for an inventive research orientation. *Methodological Innovations Online*, 6(3), 75-92.
- Morse, J.M. (1994). 'Emerging from the data': the cognitive processes of analysis in qualitative inquiry. Pp.23-43 in Morse, J. (Ed.), *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. *Read only to p.34*
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175-196.
- Potts, K., & Brown, L. (2005). Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher. Pp.255-286 in Brown, L., and Strega, S. (Eds.), *Research as Resistance*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Pugh, A.J. What good are interviews for thinking about culture? Demystifying interpretive analysis. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, 1, 42-68.
- Richardson, L. (2008). Writing: a method of inquiry. Pp.345-71 in Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ritchie, J., Spencer, L., and O'Connor, W. (2003). Carrying out qualitative analysis. In Ritchie, J., and Lewis, J. (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp.219-262) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rose, G. (2016). Towards a critical visual methodology (pp.24-47). In *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Smithson, J. (2000). Using and analyzing focus groups: limitations and possibilities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 3(2), 103-119.
- Taylor, S. (1997). Critical policy analysis: exploring contexts, texts and consequences. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 18(1), 23-35.

Timmerman, S., and Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3), 167-186.

Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: eight “big tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.

Course Evaluation Methods

Evaluation will be based on grades assigned for each of the following components below. Note that you can use whatever standard social science referencing style you prefer (MLA, APA, Harvard, etc.) as long as it is consistent.

Assignment 1 (10%) Due Jan 25th, 11:30 a.m. In-Depth Methodological Review

For this assignment, **select one qualitative method** that you would like to learn more about; after approval from the instructor, locate and review a selection of *methodological* (i.e., not empirical) writing pertinent to that method. This might include relevant theoretical material. Then, clearly synthesize what you have learned into a class handout (no more than 2 single spaced pages). Make enough copies for everyone. Include a list of references (approx. 5 articles or chapters should be consulted). Your mark will be based on demonstrated comprehension of the method, and quality and clarity of your synthesis and written communication.

Assignment 2 (15%) Due Feb 8th, 11:30 a.m. Resonance in Qualitative Research

Tracy (2010) suggests that one indicator of the quality of qualitative research (e.g., empathic validity) is that the final product *resonates* emotionally with readers, who identify or empathize with the experiences or topic being examined. Choose a **qualitative research study** (as reported in a published paper or book chapter) that demonstrates resonance. In 2 pages (single spaced), concisely and clearly describe and illustrate *why and how* this article has resonance, drawing on specific examples from the text. Submit both a copy of the article and your paper. Your mark will be based primarily on the quality of your explication of resonance, demonstrated comprehension of the study, and quality and clarity of presentation. Please distinguish between emotionally laden topics and resonant or evocative writing (and focus on the latter). Where relevant, discuss whether the article would resonate with other audiences, and what the authors might do to enhance the resonance of their paper.

Assignment 3 (20%) Due March 1st, 11:30 a.m. Data Collection Experience. Choose ONE of either:

a) **Observation:** Conduct about 2-2.5 hours of inconspicuous observation in an assigned public area *on campus*, addressing a research question of your choice (with approval of instructor). Submit your field notes and an 8-10 page (typed, double spaced) paper, devoting approximately 50% to an informed reflection on what the process was like for you, the challenges you faced, reflexivity, etc. (making connections to class readings and

material), and approximately 50% to what you learned about your research question (include detailed description and preliminary analytic insights).

OR

b) **Interview:** Conduct about 1-1.5 hour-long in-person qualitative interview *with a class-mate* to address a research question developed in consultation with Dr. Funk. **DO NOT AUDIO RECORD the interview.** Submit your question guide, handwritten notes made during the interview and an 8-10 page (typed, double-spaced) paper, devoting approximately 50% to an informed reflection on what the process was like for you, the challenges you faced, reflexivity, etc. (making connections to class readings and material), and approximately 50% to what you learned about the research question (include description of content and preliminary analytic insights).

For **excellent** marks, demonstrate superior quality work including but not limited to:

- a) Frequent, accurate links between your reflections and readings from class and other sources, as well as what we have learned in class.
- b) High quality writing (e.g., publishable style, no grammatical or spelling mistakes; the writing flows and transitions well and your points are easy to understand).
- c) Considerable “intellectual meat” (i.e., not simply saying the same thing in multiple ways with little depth of thinking). Try to communicate many different, significant points within the constraints of the page limit: to do this you must write concisely.

Assignment 3 (20%) Due March 22nd, 11:30 a.m.

Data Analysis Experience

This is a paired activity. In pairs, you will collaboratively **analyze a qualitative interview transcript** (provided in-class). Submit a paper of 8-10 pages (typed, double spaced), devoting approximately 50% to describing what the process was like for each of you, challenges you faced, reflexivity, etc. (with links to class readings and content about methodology), and approximately 50% to a memo about the data that summarizes your analytic insights. NOTE: You may or may not want to formally ‘code’ the data. While some level of abstraction is welcomed, make it clear how your ideas are grounded in the data (e.g., refer to specific examples in the transcript). You must **ALSO return** the hard copy of the transcript with your paper.

For **excellent** marks, demonstrate superior quality work including but not limited to:

- d) Frequent, accurate links between your reflections and readings from class and other sources, as well as what we have learned in class.
- e) High quality writing (e.g., publishable style, no grammatical or spelling mistakes; the writing flows and transitions well and your points are easy to understand).
- f) Considerable “intellectual meat” (i.e., not simply saying the same thing in multiple ways with little depth of thinking). Try to communicate many different, significant points within the constraints of the page limit: to do this you must write concisely.

Qualitative Research Design (25%) Due April 5th, 11:30 a.m.

Submit a **qualitative research design** for a hypothetical or actual qualitative thesis project. Build on your previous in-class work as much as possible. The design (not to

exceed 15 double spaced pages) should be structured like a thesis proposal, but with *only minimal reference to substantive literature*. Provide detail to explain and justify your methodological decisions and approach, but be concise. Address the following aspects:

- Qualitative Research Question
- Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry
- Paradigmatic, Theoretical, Methodological Framework (as appropriate)
- Data sources, Data collection strategies;
- Sampling, Recruitment, Participant/Text Selection (as appropriate)
- Ethics, Reflexivity, Rigour
- Data Analysis Plan and Strategies

Marks will be based on demonstrated comprehension of the purpose of qualitative methods and class content, demonstrated coherence or alignment between your design elements, and the quality of attention to the abovementioned issues within a clearly communicated proposal. Please write in first person language. Accurate links to supporting methodological references (especially those from class) are required. However, directly connect any methodological literature to your project – i.e., do not just tell me how others say something should be done. Rather, explain *how* you will employ a particular strategy or perspective in relation to your particular research study. Limit the use of direct quotes.

Class Participation (10%)

Your participation mark will be based on the quality and quantity of your contributions to group activities and discussions² including discussions about the course readings. Although quantity of verbal participation is encouraged, please ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute and that you focus your comments on methodologically relevant points. On the last day of class you will also write an in-class summary of how your thinking has evolved over the course of the term, for submission as part of your participation mark. This should draw on your freewriting activities.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Grading Scheme: The following letter/percentage grading scheme will be used: 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).

Disruptions: Disruptions due to excessive or persistent talking/whispering, late arrivals or early departures are especially distracting. Respect your classmates and your instructor.

Statement of Consequences of Late Assignments: Late assignments will receive a penalty of a 15% deduction. In exceptional circumstances an extension may be granted if you receive my permission in advance and provide documentation (e.g. medical note).

Academic Integrity: 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. All work is to be completed independently unless otherwise specified.

² This is a class that is primarily concerned with methodology. Try to focus your comments on the paradigmatic and methodological approach rather than substantive content of research.

Unclaimed term work disposal: 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.

Copyright: Please respect copyright³. We will use copyrighted content in this course. I have ensured that the content I use is appropriately acknowledged and is copied in accordance with copyright laws and University guidelines. Copyrighted works, including those created by me, are made available for private study and research and must not be distributed in any format without permission. Do not upload copyrighted works to a learning management system (such as UM Learn), or any website, unless an exception to the *Copyright Act* applies or written permission has been confirmed.

Class Communication: All communication between myself and you as a student must comply with the electronic communication with student policy.⁴ You are required to obtain and use your U of M email account for all communication between yourself and the university.

STUDENT SERVICES

Campus and Disability Services: If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, or have a disability or illness which may affect your learning or assessment, discuss these issues with me and/or one of the following: Disability Services; Student Counselling and Career Centre; University 1; Learning Assistance Centre.

Student Accessibility Services⁵: If you are a student with a disability, please contact SAS for academic accommodation supports and services such as note-taking, interpreting, assistive technology and exam accommodations. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. mental illness, learning, medical, hearing, injury-related, visual) are invited to contact SAS to arrange a confidential consultation. 520 University Centre, 204-474 7423 Student_accessibility@umanitoba.ca

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³ <http://umanitoba.ca/copyright/>

⁴ http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/electronic_communication_with_students_policy.html

⁵ <http://umanitoba.ca/student/saa/accessibility/>