

The Craft of Inquiry
Sociology 4496E, Section 530
2013 - 2014

Department of Sociology
Brescia University College

Class Meetings: Mondays: 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in BR-14

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Prerequisites: Enrollment in fourth year of one of the Honors Specializations or Honors Double Majors in Sociology, Community Development, or Family Studies, or permission of the instructor.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

While methods textbooks often present the research process in a recipe-like fashion, the reality of social inquiry is that it is a craft that needs to be cultivated through direct and on-going experience. The Craft of Inquiry focuses on teaching you how to bridge the divide between theory and research by demonstrating, in an applied fashion, the interplay between theoretical assumptions and inquiry. In our course you will be focusing on learning about and applying qualitative, ethnographic research and interpretive theory. To accomplish this, you will be engaged in firsthand research that will call on you to combine theory and method in order to build rich, empirical statements about the social world. In working with the theoretical, methodological, and substantive literature in your area of interest, you will see your own research project through from start to finish. As such, you will be responsible for developing a research proposal and ethics statement, reviewing literature relevant to your chosen topic, collecting and analyzing data, and producing a final research report and presentation. This course represents a significant culmination of your undergraduate training. The aim of the course is to solidify your ability to craft worthwhile empirical insights about the social world and showcase your skills at developing theoretically informed social research.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Understand the link between theory and research, especially interpretivist theorizing and ethnographic methods;
- Collect ethnographic data using field research and in-depth interviewing;
- Appreciate the realities of collecting and analyzing ethnographic data;
- Analyze data using qualitative coding techniques;
- Develop, apply, and extend conceptual ideas through inductive theorizing;
- Deliver an oral presentation based on firsthand research and analysis; and,
- Write a scholarly ethnographic research paper.

REQUIRED READING MATERIALS

1. Prus, R. (1997). *Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities: An Ethnographic Agenda for Pragmatizing the Social Sciences*, New York: SUNY Press. **(P)**
2. Shaffir, W. & Stebbins, R. (Eds). (1991). *Experiencing Fieldwork: An Inside View of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE. **(S&S)**
3. Puddephatt, A., Shaffir, W. & Kleinknecht, S. (eds). (2009). *Ethnographies Revisited: Constructing Theory in the Field*. London and New York: Routledge. **(PS&K)**
4. Material on OWL Sakai site for this course. **(OWL)**
5. Material on reserve at the Beryl Ivey Library.

It is essential that you keep up with the readings. Readings listed in the Class Schedule (see below) are to be completed before the classes for which they are assigned so that you can fully participate in seminar discussions. You will be expected to incorporate this material into your projects, and discuss and work with the ideas from the readings in class.

E-MAIL

I will not be answering questions regarding course material (e.g., definitions of concepts, differences between theoretical perspectives, etc.) via e-mail. I find that these types of questions are best answered by meeting in person. I suggest that you use e-mail for addressing administrative issues about the course and arranging to meet with me. I will do my best to respond to e-mail messages within 24 hours. Please use “Sociology 4496E” as part of the subject line. I also encourage people to setup and use their UWO e-mail account for school business.

OFFICE HOURS

Do not hesitate to come to see me during my office hours. I am here to help with any questions you might have. This time not only serves as a great way to clarify understandings of the course material, but I also enjoy talking with people about sociology in general, educational pursuits, and career aspirations. If you are unable to make it to my office hours I will usually be around after class, or you can make an appointment to meet with me.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Please respect your classmates and your instructor. To help everyone stay focused keep cell phones turned off and put away and use computers only for class related activities. If there is a problem with classroom conduct you may be asked to leave for the duration of the class.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Class Participation (10%)

Much of this course will involve class discussion regarding issues presented in the readings and the insights you develop and obstacles you encounter during your research. Therefore, you will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and your research, and provide feedback to your classmates about their projects. In addition, during class you will be working both individually and in groups to carry-out exercises designed to extend your knowledge of course material through direct application of research techniques and creative theorizing.

Seminar Presentation (10%)

Working either individually or with a partner (depending on class size), you will develop a brief presentation (approx. 15 minutes) and facilitate discussion on one of the course topics. For your seminar you will draw on readings for a given topic from the Class Schedule marked with a ❖. I will provide additional details and guiding questions to help you in developing your seminar. By working with the material in this way you will acquire a deeper understanding of the theoretical and methodological ideas important to ethnographic research and interpretive theory.

Research Project

Ethnographic research is predicated on the researcher's ability to gain an inside look at how people go about their lives. In doing so, the goal for the researcher is to achieve a sense of *intimate familiarity* with people and their social settings. This can only be accomplished by getting close to those whom we are attempting to understand. Adopting the perspective of "the other," through in-depth inquiry with them in their social settings provides us with the opportunity to more fully appreciate the world from their perspectives. This will be your goal in carrying out your research project. Although ethnographic research is quite demanding, the reward of acquiring an up-close look at how people experience the world and go about their everyday lives is without comparison. The underlying philosophy of this project, and the course more generally, is that a hands-on approach is essential for learning the ins and outs of collecting and analyzing qualitative data. This project will allow you to better appreciate ethnographic research and interpretive theory through direct and sustained application of different qualitative research and analysis techniques.

A brief overview of the various project components is presented here. Detailed instructions will be provided and discussed in class.

Research Proposal and Ethics Application (20%) – Due October 21. Upload your work to Turnitin and hand in a hard copy.

To help generate a research plan, consider ethical implications, and communicate your ideas, you will be submitting a research proposal and ethics application that clearly outlines the direction you plan to take your research in and foresee ethical and feasibility concerns that might arise as the project progresses.

Data Transcript & Reflection Submissions (15%) – Due December 2, February 3, & March 3.

You will periodically submit interview and field note transcripts, along with methodological, conceptual, and substantive reflections, to permit ongoing feedback from me regarding the data collection and analysis processes. The expectation is that you will submit 2 transcripts per due date (i.e., 2 interview transcripts, 2 field note transcripts, or 1 interview transcript and 1 field note transcript).

Research Presentation (10%) – Given on March 24 or 31

At the end of the course you will be showcasing your research projects by presenting them to the class as part of a research symposium—a class mini-conference. This experience will provide you with an excellent opportunity to share your research findings and hone your presentation skills in a supportive environment. Characteristic of an academic conference, you will provide a brief (12 to 15 minutes) presentation and receive constructive feedback from the audience (your classmates).

Final Paper (35%) – Due April 7. Upload your paper to Turnitin and hand in a hard copy.

Your final paper represents the culmination of your research experience. You will use journal article format to present the findings of your project. Your submission will include the following components: abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, findings, conclusion, and references.

Late Penalty: Any project component that is submitted late will incur a 5% penalty per day.

To be successful at carrying out your project it is important to engage in your research on an on-going basis and be ever mindful of your ethical commitments to project participants. It is incumbent upon you to ensure “minimal risk” to all those involved in the project. The weekly class meetings, course materials outlined in the class schedule, and your professor and classmates more generally will help to prepare you for and see you through your project.

For academic accommodation to be considered for any course component worth less than 10% of the final course grade, it is the responsibility of the student to approach the course instructor(s) in a timely fashion. Documentation may be required to be submitted to the academic advisor. If documentation is required, the request for accommodation will be decided by the academic advisor in consultation with the instructor. If documentation is not required, the instructor will make the final decision as to whether or not accommodation will be granted. The policies governing requests for academic accommodation for course components worth 10% or more of the course grade are outlined in the Academic Policies section included at the end of the course outline.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Fall Semester

September 9. **Introduction: Course Overview and Meeting your Classmates**

- *Start thinking about a research topic that you would like to investigate through ethnographic methods and interpretive theory. It must be ethical and feasible.*

September 16. **Developing an Interpretivist Ethnographic Understanding of Social Life**

- P: Ch. 1: Studying the Human Condition
- On Library Reserve: Pages 1-21 of Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

September 23. **Doing Ethnographic Research**

- P: Ch. 7: Doing Ethnographic Research
- S&S: Introduction

September 30. **Ethical Issues**

- OWL: Ch. 10: Qualitative Research, *2nd edition of Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 4: Experiencing Research on New Religions and Cults
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 7: Secrecy and Disclosure in Fieldwork

October 7. **Studying Subcultural Life through Ethnographic Research**

- P: Ch. 2: Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities
- P: Ch. 3: Subcultural Involvements

October 14. **Thanksgiving Holiday**

October 21. **Key Interpretivist Conceptual Ideas & Debates**

- OWL: Fine, G. A. (1993). The Sad Demise, Mysterious Disappearance, and Glorious Triumph of Symbolic Interactionism. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 61-87.
- OWL: Prus, R. (1990). The Interpretive Challenge: The Impending Crisis in Sociology. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 15(3), 355-363.
- **RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND ETHICS APPLICATION DUE (20%)**

October 28. **Field Observations I: Getting In**

- ❖ S&S: pp. 25-30: Getting in
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 1: Playing Back the Tape: Early Days in the Field
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 5: Managing a Convincing Self Presentation

November 4. **Field Observations II: Learning the Ropes**

- ❖ S&S: pp. 83-86: Learning the Ropes
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 6: A Walk through the Wilderness
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 8: The Researcher Talks Back

November 11. **Field Observations III: Maintaining Relations**

- ❖ S&S: pp. 143-148: Maintaining Relations
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 13: Stability and Flexibility
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 14: Field-workers' Feelings

November 18. **Interviewing I: Preparing for & Conducting In-depth Interviews**

- OWL: Marsiglio's summary of Steinar Kvale's (1996) *An introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*.
- ❖ OWL: Becker, H. S. and Geer, B. (1957). "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison." *Human Organization*, 16(3): 28-32.
- ❖ OWL: Trow, M. (1957). "Comment On 'Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison.'" *Human Organization*, 16(3): 33-35.

November 25. **Interviewing II: After the Interview & Issues in Qualitative Interviewing**

- ❖ OWL: Warren et al., (2003). "After the interview." *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(1): 93-110.
- ❖ OWL: Ostrander, S. (1993). "Surely you're not in this just to be helpful:" Access, rapport, and interviews in three studies of elites. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(1): 7-27.

December 2. **Taking Stock & Moving Forward**

- *Consider what you have accomplished and where your research will take you next. What have you done thus far? What have you been finding both methodologically, theoretically/conceptually, and substantively? What directions should you take your research in going forward?*
- OWL: Becker, H. S. (1967). "Whose Side Are We On?" *Social Problems*, 14: 239-247.
- **FIRST DATA TRANSCRIPTS DUE (5%)**

Winter Semester

January 6. **Theorizing and Conceptual Development in Ethnography**

- PS&K: Introduction: Exercises in Reflexivity: Situating Theory in Practice

January 13. **Developing Grounded Theory**

- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 1: Learning How to Speak of Sadness
- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 3: Colorful Writing: Conducting and Living with a Tattoo Ethnography

January 20. **Working with Sensitizing Concepts**

- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 4: Improvising on Sensitizing Concepts
- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 6: Behind the Conceptual Scene of Student Life and Exams

January 27. **Extending Theoretical Frames**

- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 8: Researching Alcoholics and Alcoholism in American Society
- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 11: Telling Tales about How Concepts Develop: Stories from Ethnographic Encounters with the Moog Synthesizer

February 3. **Analyzing Ethnographic Data**

- P: pp. 243-247: Analyzing Human Lived Experiences
- On Library Reserve: Ch. 8 Making Sense of Data of Esterberg, K. (2002). *Qualitative methods in Social Research*.
- **SECOND DATA TRANSCRIPTS DUE (5%)**

February 10. **Conceptualizing Community & Social Organization**

- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 13: On Piecing the Puzzle: Researching Hassidic Jews
- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 14: Using a Gestalt Perspective to Analyze Children's Worlds

February 17. **Reading Week**

February 24. **Challenging Established Wisdom**

- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 17: Solving the Mysteries of Shelter Work for the Battered Woman
- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 18: The Path Taken: Opportunity, Flexibility, and Reflexivity in the Field

March 3. **Writing an Ethnographic Research Paper**

- P: Ch. 8: Writing Ethnographic Research Reports
- **THIRD DATA TRANSCRIPTS DUE (5%)**

March 10. **Theorizing from Alternative Data**

- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 21: Conceptualizing a Profession in Process: The New Pediatrics Revisited
- ❖ PS&K: Ch. 22: The History, Myth, and Science of Masada: The Making of an Historical Ethnography

March 17. **Leaving the Field**

- ❖ S&S: pp. 107-110: Leaving and Keeping in Touch
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 17: Leaving, Revisiting, and Staying in Touch
- ❖ S&S: Ch. 19: Leaving the Field

March 24 and 31. **Ethnographic Research & Interpretive Theory Symposium**

- **RESEARCH PRESENTATION (10%)**

April 7. **Course Wrap-up & Discussion**

- **FINAL PAPER DUE (35%)**

BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are not grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded under the Medical Documentation heading of the following website: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm> . If it is not possible to have an SMC completed by the attending physician/nurse practitioner, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student "was seen for a medical reason" or "was ill" is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation. All documentation is to be submitted to an Academic Advisor.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full statement of University policy regarding extensions of deadlines or makeup exams can be found at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2013/pg117.html>

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, www.registrar.uwo.ca, for official dates). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory.

3. ABSENCES

Short Absences: If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

Extended Absences: If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage 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 academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

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.

Computer-marked Tests/exams:

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar.

6. PREREQUISITES AND ANTIREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This 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.

Similarly, you will also be deleted from a class list if you have previously taken an antirequisite course unless this has the approval of the Dean. These decisions may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course because you have taken an antirequisite course.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar_services/index.html . The Western Registrar's website is at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/index.cfm> . The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/> . 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.

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.