

Investigating the Social World: Qualitative Research

School of Behavioural and Social Sciences

General Information

Course #:	Sociology 3307F
Section #:	530
Term:	Fall
Year:	2021
Delivery:	In-person ¹
Course Day and Time:	Tuesdays 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Course Location:	BR-UH30

Instructor Information

Name:	Dr. Steven Kleinknecht
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Office location:	BR-UH323

Course Description

The goal of qualitative research is to develop an in-depth, firsthand understanding of how people go about their everyday lives. As such, it is necessary to venture into people's life-worlds and acquire an intimate awareness of the meanings they attribute to the world around them. The main objective of this course is for you to learn about qualitative research by doing it yourself. Along with observation and interview assignments, you will develop your own qualitative content analysis research project and see it through to completion. As such, you will: pick a topic of sociological interest to you; design your project and develop a research proposal; collect and analyze qualitative data; and, write a paper based on your research. Each week you will have the opportunity to discuss your research experiences with the professor and your classmates. You will also take part in exercises designed to expand your knowledge of qualitative methods.

Prerequisites: Sociology 2205A/B and Sociology 2206A/B.

Antirequisites: Sociology 3310F/G, Family Studies and Human Development 3230A/B.

¹ In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course moving away from in-person delivery, course content may be delivered online either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). There may also be changes to any remaining assessments at the discretion of the course instructor. In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence, detailed information about the impact on this course will be communicated by the Office of the Dean and by the course instructor.

Required Course Materials

1. van den Hoonaard, Deborah K. (2018). *Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer (3rd Edition)*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
2. Additional readings available on our OWL site.

Learning Outcomes

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

1. Participate knowledgeably in discussions about the ins and outs of qualitative research
2. Design a qualitative research project
3. Describe the various ethical issues encountered during qualitative research
4. Collect data on social life using a variety of qualitative research techniques
5. Code and analyze qualitative data
6. Write a research report using qualitative data
7. Explain many of the complex issues encountered when collecting qualitative data
8. Develop theory grounded in analyses of the social world

Note: Generally speaking, you might find this course to be more demanding than other half credit courses. The main reason for this is that you will be conducting original research, which is always time-consuming. At the same time, you will likely find the process of engaging in your own research project to be quite rewarding.

Brescia Competencies

You will develop the Brescia competencies at an advanced level in this course. The Brescia competencies include:

Communication

The ability to exchange information and meaning effectively across cultures, space and time through appropriate modes of communication. Includes oral, written, and interpersonal or group communicate, as well as the ability to use current or innovative media.

Critical Thinking

The ability to engage in thinking characterized by the rational, informed, independent, and open-minded exploration of issues, ideas, and events before accepting or formulating a conclusion.

Inquiry and Analysis

The ability to reach informed decisions by breaking down complex issues, exploring evidence, demonstrating information literacy, and describing relationships among persons, things, or events.

Problem Solving

The ability to create and execute a strategy to answer a question or achieve a goal. Includes being able to anticipate the consequence of a potential solution, select a strategy among several alternatives, and decide when an acceptable outcome has been reached.

Self Awareness and Development

The ability to draw meaning, knowledge and value from honest and fair reflection and self-evaluation. Students are able to recognize their values and their impact on others, and make a commitment to personal growth.

Social Awareness and Engagement

The ability to respect and be open to diversity (e.g., cultural, religious, political). Students take personal responsibility to actively engage in and contribute to creating positive change in local, regional, national, or global communities and societies.

Valuing

The ability to make decisions or choose actions based on the consistent application of moral principles and ethical codes. Students must also be able to understand the ideas informing one's beliefs and be accountable for their actions.

Expectations of Students**Course Delivery**

This course will be run in-person. Each week there will be lecture and class discussion on the qualitative research process. Readings should be completed in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Applied learning exercises will be used to reinforce key aspects of conducting qualitative research. There are no tests or exams. You will be assessed based on the completion of research assignments. You will use our course OWL site for retrieving lecture slides, uploading your completed assignments, and checking your marks.

E-mail

Please e-mail me with questions you have about the course. E-mail can also be used for addressing administrative issues about the course and arranging to meet with me over Zoom. I will do my best to respond to e-mail messages within 24 hours. Please use "Sociology 3307F" as the subject line. Please use your Western e-mail account for school business.

Office Hours

I will be holding online office hours using Zoom by appointment. To schedule a time to meet, please e-mail me with a few different times that you are available. Do not hesitate to reach out to me – I am here to help with any questions you might have. These meetings not only serve 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.

Zoom is a webconferencing app that is free to Western students. Instructions for downloading and running Zoom can be found at: <https://wts.uwo.ca/zoom/>. **IMPORTANT:** When logging in to Zoom, select *Sign In with SSO*. On the Sign In with SSO screen, enter *westernuniversity*, then click Continue. You will login to Zoom using your Western user ID and password.

Classroom Etiquette

Please respect your classmates and your instructor during lecture. We only have a short amount of time each class to cover a lot of material. To help everyone stay focused keep phones turned off and put away, avoid whispering with your neighbours, 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.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

PowerPoint lecture slides and notes, lists of readings, in-class activities, assignment guidelines, and other components of the course materials are typically the intellectual property of the instructor. Unauthorized reproduction through audio-recording, video-recording, photographing, sharing on social media, or posting on course-sharing websites is an infringement of copyright and is prohibited. Such action may be considered a Code of Conduct violation and lead to sanctions.

Evaluation

Participation and Applied Learning Exercises (10%)

Course Learning Outcomes: 1, 3, and 7.

Brescia Competencies: All.

You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and your research (e.g., obstacles and triumphs), and provide feedback to your classmates about their research. In addition, you will be working both individually and in groups to carry-out brief in or out of class exercises designed to extend your knowledge of course material through the direct application of research techniques. You are permitted 1 missed class without penalty. Otherwise, you must seek accommodation through your Academic Advisor.

Observation Assignment (20%) - Due October 26.

Course Learning Outcomes: 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8.

Brescia Competencies: All.

You will be observing and taking field notes on social life as it happens in a public setting of interest to you. You will reflect on your experience and note sociological themes arising out of your observation.

Interview Assignment (20%) - Due November 16.

Course Learning Outcomes: 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8.

Brescia Competencies: All.

You will be interviewing a friend or family member about a sociological issue of interest to you. You will submit an interview transcript along with a reflection on your interview experience and sociological themes arising out of your interview.

Qualitative Content Analysis Research Project

For this project, you will select a sociological topic of interest to you that can be researched by collecting and analyzing qualitative data from publicly accessible online sources. Detailed instructions will be provided in class.

Statement of the Research Problem (20%) - Due October 12.

Course Learning Outcomes: 2, 3 and 7.

Brescia Competencies: All.

To help generate an initial research plan and communicate your ideas, you will be submitting a preliminary statement of your research problem.

Final Paper (30%) - Due December 7.

Course Learning Outcomes: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Brescia Competencies: All.

Your final paper represents the culmination of your qualitative research experience. In it you will present the findings of your research project.

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

Academic Accommodation

For course components worth 10% or more of the total course grade, please see the Academic Policies and Regulations section at the end of this course outline or consult the Academic Calendar. For course components worth less than 10% of the total course grade, documentation will be required. Medical or other supporting documentation should be submitted to your Academic Advisor.

Course Content

September 14. **Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods**

- Ch. 1: *Introduction*

September 21. **Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approaches**

- Ch. 2: *Asking Questions and Identifying Goals*

September 28. **Selecting a Research Topic and Designing a Qualitative Project**

- Ch. 3: *Strategies for Designing Research*

October 5. **Politics & Ethical Issues**

- Ch. 4: *Ethics on the Ground: A Moral Compass*

October 12. **Field Research**

- Ch. 5: *Observing Social Life through Field Research*
- **STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM DUE (20%)**

October 19. **In-depth Interviews**

- Ch. 6: *In-Depth Interviewing*

October 26. **Focus Groups**

- Ch. 7: *Focus Groups*
- **OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT DUE (20%)**

November 2. **Fall Reading Week**

November 9. **Unobtrusive Measures**

- Ch. 8: *Unobtrusive Research*

November 16. **Coding & Data Analysis**

- Ch. 9: *Trust the Process: Analyzing Qualitative Data*
- **INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT DUE (20%)**

November 23. **Writing the Research Paper**

- Ch. 10: *Writing Up Qualitative Research*

November 30. **Innovations in Qualitative Research**

- OWL: *Ethnography in Inaccessible Fields: Drawing on Visual Approaches to Understand the Private Space of the Home*
- OWL: *Dissemination and Social Justice*

December 7. **Project Findings and Course Discussion**

- **RESEARCH PAPER DUE (30%)**

2021-22 BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

1. POLICY REGARDING ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

The complete policy regarding [Accommodation for Illness - Undergraduate Students](https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12) can be found at https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12 .

Students who have long-term or chronic medical conditions which may impede their ability to complete academic responsibilities should seek Academic Accommodation through Student Accessibility Services (https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_10).

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.

Students who experience an illness or extenuating circumstance sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

1. Submitting a **Self-Reported Absence** form provided that the conditions for submission are met;
2. For medical absences, submitting a **Student Medical Certificate (SMC)** signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner;
3. For non-medical absences, submitting **appropriate documentation** (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to their Academic Advisor. Students are encouraged to contact their Academic Advisor to clarify what documentation is acceptable.

Requests for Academic Consideration Using the Self-Reported Absence Portal

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance of 48 hours or less that is sufficiently severe to render them unable to meet academic requirements should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours. Note that the excused absence includes all courses and academic requirements within the up to 48 hours, it is not intended to provide an excused absence from a single course while students fulfill their academic responsibilities in other courses during that time.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

1. Students will be allowed **a maximum of two self-reported absences** between September and April and one self-reported absence between May and August;
2. The duration of the absence will be for a maximum of 48 hours from the time the Self-Reported Absence form is completed through the online portal, or from 8:30 am the following morning if the form is submitted after 4:30 pm;
3. The excused absence will terminate prior to the end of the 48 hour period if the student undertakes significant academic responsibilities (writes a test, submits a paper) during that time;
4. Self-reported absences will **not** be allowed for scheduled final examinations; midterm examinations scheduled during the December examination period; or for final lab examinations scheduled during the final week of term;
5. Self-report absences may **not** be used for assessments worth more than 30% of any course;
6. Any absences in excess of 48 hours will require students to present a Student Medical Certificate (SMC), or appropriate documentation;
7. Students **must** communicate with their instructors **no later than 24** hours after the end of the period covered by the Self-Reported Absence form to clarify how they will fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence.

Request for Academic Consideration for a Medical Absence

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 for illness 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 their academic responsibilities. Minor ailments typically treated by over-the-counter medications will not normally be accommodated.

The following conditions apply for students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds:

1. Students must submit their Student Medical Certificate (SMC) along with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities. An SMC can be downloaded from http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf ;
2. In cases where there might be an extended absence or serious issue, students should submit their documentation promptly and consult their Academic Advisor for advice during their recovery period;
3. Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, scheduled tests or examinations, and other academic requirements;
4. Students **must** communicate with their instructors **no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by the SMC to clarify how they will fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence;
5. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office/Academic Advisor in consultation with the course instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements, arranging Special Exams (make-ups), re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawal without academic penalty.

The [full policy on requesting accommodation due to illness](#) can be viewed at:

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal challenge 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 are not normally considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor (https://www.brescia.uwo.ca/enrolment_services/academic_advising/index.php). If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines; please refer to <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> or the list of official sessional dates in the Academic Calendar (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm?SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=>).

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.*

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.

Please note that for asynchronous online courses, attendance or participation requirements maybe different than for synchronous or in-person courses.

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 and warranted.

It is important to note that the Academic 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 (http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=5&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_68).

4. 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: http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_20.

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. 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 Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students in the Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Academic Dean's Office, 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.

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 (<http://www.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 is to be sent to the School Chair. If the response of the Chair is considered unsatisfactory to the student, they may then submit a written appeal to the Office of the Dean. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Dean, they may appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA), if there are sufficient grounds for the appeal and if the matter falls

within the jurisdiction of the SRBA. For information on academic appeals consult your Academic Advisor or see the Student Academic Appeals – Undergraduate in the Academic Calendar http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_14.

Note that final course marks are not official until the Academic Dean has reviewed and signed the final grade report for the course. If course marks deviate from acceptable and appropriate standards, the Academic Dean may require grades to be adjusted to align them with accepted grading practices.

6. PREREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written Special Permission from the 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 prerequisite(s).

7. SUPPORT

Support Services

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> . Students can access supports through Brescia's Student Life Centre (<http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/student-life/>) and Learning Skills Services at Western (<https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/>)

Mental Health and Wellness

Students may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to your learning, such as increased anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, feeling down or lost, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. Services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can obtain information about how to obtain help for yourself or others through **Health & Wellness at Brescia** (https://brescia.uwo.ca/student_life/health_and_wellness/index.php) and **Health and Wellness at Western**, http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html.

Sexual Violence

All members of the Brescia University College community have a right to work and study in an environment that is free from any form of sexual violence. Brescia University College recognizes that the prevention of, and response to, Sexual Violence is of particular importance in the university environment. Sexual Violence is strictly prohibited and unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Brescia is committed to preventing Sexual Violence and creating a safe space for anyone in the Brescia community who has experienced Sexual Violence.

If you or someone you know has experienced any form of Sexual Violence, you may access resources at https://brescia.uwo.ca/safe_campus/sexual_violence/index.php .

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.
