

SOCI 374

Qualitative Research Methods

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to several of the more common qualitative research methods used in sociological research. Together, we will engage with academic literature, rooted in both mainstream and Indigenous research practice.

Students will also be expected to participate in both class-based discussions and critical analysis of contemporary research practices, and hands-on applications of qualitative methodologies.

Each week, we will examine new elements of a cohesive qualitative research program. We will assess the strengths and weaknesses of various qualitative methodologies, and we will (re)examine several of these methods from within a de-colonizing framework.

Course exams and assignments will be assessed using grading rubrics and matrices which will be made available to students. The assessment tools for course projects like the research paper will be available at the start of the semester, during the first week of classes.

Spring, 2020
Jan 06, 2020 - Apr 03, 2020
TWF: 9:30 –10:20pm
Classroom: CORA225

Instructor: Dr. Carol Rocker
Email: crocker@uvic.ca
Phone: (250) 709-7700
Office: A365
Office Hours: Wed & Fri: 1030 –
11:30am

Course Materials

Textbook

Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, “Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers”, Sage Publications

Wilson, Shawn, 2008, “Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods”, Fernwood Publishing

*Additional Articles & Resources:
Found on CourseSpaces*

Teaching Assistants (TA)

Your teaching assistant is here to support your learning. She will be responsible for grading exams and assignments, using materials and directions I provide.

TA Name: Manda Roddick
PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology
Vanier Scholar (2010-2013)
University of Victoria
Office: CORA335

Course Evaluation

Mid-term Exam: 20% of total grade *Mid-term*

Final Exam: 30% of total grade

Paper Proposal & Ethics Outline: 15% of total grade

Research Paper: 35% of total grade

Examinations:

Each examination is an opportunity for you to show me your grasp of the core concepts and debates in contemporary qualitative research practice. One week before each exam, I will provide you with a short list of possible examination questions. I will select one of those questions on the day of the exam. Your exams will be assessed using a rubric and grading outline that I will post to CourseSpaces once all grades have been returned.

Research Paper:

This is a formal, academic investigation of a specific research question. You will be encouraged to make use of **one of two** potential research styles – interviews or critical discourse analysis – to investigate your chosen topic.

Interviews: You will be required to conduct two qualitative interviews with *two of your class-mates*.

Critical Discourse Analysis: You will be required to conduct research using a minimum of five (5) online sources (public Facebook pages, blogs, community forums or image boards, for example). Your paper will require an appendix containing your list of codings (we'll discuss this in class).

Important Dates

Mid-term Exam 50-minutes:

28 February, in-class

Final Exam 50-minutes:

TBA

Paper Proposal & Ethics Outline:

25 February, 6pm via CourseSpaces

Research Paper & Appendices:

17 March, 6pm via CourseSpaces

For all assignments and exams: Teaching

Assistants have **two weeks** to grade. I will update you if there are any delays.

The final exam will be graded within one week.

I assess all assignments and exams according to a grading rubric, which I make available to students on CourseSpaces. The proposal and research paper outlines and rubrics will be available on the first day of class, and I will post the grading rubrics for exams once the grades have been posted to CourseSpaces.

My assessments are based on UVic's grading guidelines for undergraduates (see the end of this syllabus).

Course Schedule

6 January - 12 January

7,8,10 January - Week 1

Introductions & Course Breakdown

Course overview and discussion: What is qualitative research? What is Indigenous Research?

Video: Indigenous Research Methodologies: chuutsqa's Story

Video: Decolonizing Methodologies: Can relational research be a basis for renewed relationships?

Guest Speaker (Human Research Ethics Liaison) 10 January – IRB Process

13 January - 19 January

14, 15, 17 January - Week 2

The history and basics of qualitative research - Where does contemporary qualitative research come from?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 1; Wilson, Chapter 1

Friday Conversations: What have we learned?

20 January - 26 January

21, 22, 24 January - Week 3

Designing research How do we choose what to study? What sorts of questions do we ask?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 3; Wilson, Chapter 2

Friday Work: Piecing together the puzzle: Research questions and research frameworks

27 January - 2 February

28, 29, 01 January/February – Week 4

Being “good” researchers: Ethics in qualitative research - What is “ethics” in a research context? How have Indigenous researchers and communities approached the issue of ethics?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 4; Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and “ethically important moments” in research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 10(2), 261-280.

Friday Conversations: What does it mean to be “ethical”? Why might that mean something different from an Indigenous perspective?

3 February - 9 February

4, 5, 7 February - Week 5

Qualitative sampling - How do we select appropriate samples? What methods of sampling are there?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 5; Wright, K. B. (2005). Researching Internet-based populations: Advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services. *Journal of computer-mediated communication*, 10(3), JCMC1034

Friday Work: Finding appropriate samples in online research

10 February - 16 February

11, 12, 14 February – Week 6

The Interview - What makes a good interview? How do we construct and manage the interview space?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 7; Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408-1416.

Friday Conversations: Active listening as a skill and life-hack: How do we listen to others?

17 February - 23 February

Week 7 | February 17 to 23 (Reading Break February 17 to 21)

24 February - 1 March

25, 26, 28 February – Week 8

Focus Groups as research sites: Why might we want to use a focus group instead of one-on-one research? What sorts of information can we get from focus groups? How can they be used for community research?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 8; Cyr, J. (2016). The pitfalls and promise of focus groups as a data collection method. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 45(2), 231-259.

Wednesday Conversations: Power and knowledge co-construction in interview settings: what can Indigenous research teach us?

Proposals due TUESDAY February 25 @ 6PM via CourseSpaces

Mid-Term Exam (Friday) February 28

2 March - 8 March

3, 4, 6 March – Week 9

Participating and Observing How do we ‘observe’ people in a research setting? Are we a part of the setting, or are we detached? Can we ever truly be separate?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 9 Video: Participant

Observation Friday Work: Stalking your classmates...FOR SCIENC

9 March - 15 March

10, 11, 13 March – Week 10

Analyzing our Data

Now that we’ve got our data, what do we do with it? How do we ensure that we are analyzing it in a rigorous fashion?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapters 10 & 11; Wilson, Chapter 6

Friday Conversations: How are we accountable to the people we involve in our research?

16 March - 22 March

17, 18, 20 Week 11

Making claims using qualitative research: How much can we generalize? How do we ‘use’ qualitative research in knowledge production?

Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 12; Wilson, Chapter 5

Friday Conversations: Who should read our research? Who do we ignore when we present our findings?

Research Project due March 17, TUESDAY @ 6PM via CourseSpaces

23 March - 29 March

24, 25, 27 March - Week 12

Producing good qualitative work You might want to read this bit before writing your papers... no pressure though; I believe in you! Readings: Ritchie and Lewis, Chapter 13; Mitchell, K. M., & Clark, A. M. (2018). **Five Steps to Writing** More Engaging Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918757613>

Friday Work: Reflexivity and Criticism: Giving and taking advice, criticism, and feedback

30 March - 5 April

31, 1, 3 March/April – Week 13

Course conclusions

No readings. Instead, we'll use Tuesday to discuss our research projects and close out the semester.

Final Exam: To be determined by UVic

No class on Wednesday

Course Experience Survey (CES)

Your feedback on this course is valued. Towards the end of the term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback regarding the course and the instructor's teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. When it is time for you to complete the survey, you will receive an e-mail inviting you to do so. If you do not receive an e-mail invitation, you can go directly to <http://ces.uvic.ca>. You will need to use your UVic Netlink ID to access the survey, which can be done on your laptop, tablet or mobile device. Please be thinking about this important activity, especially the following three questions, during the course.

1. What strengths did your instructor demonstrate that helped you learn in this course?
2. Please provide specific suggestions as to how the instructor could have helped you learn more effectively.
3. Please provide specific suggestions as to how this course could be improved.

Accessibility Statement

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) as soon as possible. CAL staffs are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Accommodations

The University of Victoria accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Centre for Accessible Learning. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. As per university policy, students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor before the drop date.

Departmental Equity Policy Statement

The Department of Sociology is committed to inclusiveness and to a welcoming, friendly learning and working environment where members of all genders, races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, and structurally disadvantaged groups are treated fairly. We will not tolerate sexism, racism, classism, ageism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and discrimination based on religious beliefs or any other form of prejudice which undermines people's rights to fairness.

Official Grading Standards

Undergraduate Records, University of Victoria, 2016

Passing Grades	Grade Point Value	Percentage*	Description
A+	9	90 – 100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	
B+	6	77 – 79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	
C+	3	65 – 69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60 – 64	
D	1	50 – 59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
COM	Excluded Grade	N/A	Complete (pass). Used only for 0-unit courses and those credit courses designated by the Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings.
CTN	Excluded Grade	N/A	Continuing. Denotes the first half of a full-year course.
Failing Grades	Grade Point Value	Percentage*	Description
E	0	0 – 49	Conditional supplemental. Supplemental examinations are not offered by all departments and the allowable percentage may vary by program (e.g. 35-49). Students will be advised whether supplemental will be offered and if the percentage range varies when assessment techniques are announced at the beginning of the course.
F	0	0 – 49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.
N	0	0 – 49	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.
N/X	Excluded Grade	N/A	Did not complete course requirements by the end of the term; no supplemental. Used only for Co-op work terms and for courses designated by Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings. The grade is EXCLUDED from the calculation of all grade point averages.

*The grading scale for the evaluation of course achievement at the University of Victoria is a percentage scale that translates to a 9 point GPA/letter grade system. The 9 point GPA system is the sole basis for the calculation of grade point averages and academic standing. Standardized percentage ranges have been established as the basis for the assignment of letter grades. The percentage grades are displayed on the official and administrative transcripts in order to provide fine grained course assessment which will be useful to students particularly in their application to graduate studies and for external scholarships and funding. Comparative grading information (average grade [mean] for the class), along with the number of students in the class, is displayed for each course section for which percentage grades are assigned.

University Course Policies

Examination and Assignment Policy

As per university policy, absence is only permitted in cases of illness, accident, family affliction, or religious obligations. Missing an exam for other reasons will result in an "F." Students are responsible for providing official documentation to justify their absence, e.g. a doctor's note. In cases of justified absences, the student has the right to request a make-up exam. Please note that exams will not be rescheduled to accommodate students' personal circumstances, including travelling plans. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Grading

In accordance with Senate Regulations, grading on the curve is not permitted. The grades students receive in this course reflect their performance in relation to specified academic expectations. Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments (in case of loss) and should retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standings. Students have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. All exams remain the property of the University of Victoria.

Attendance

As per university policy, attendance to all classes is mandatory. Students who are unavoidably absent because of illness, accident or family affliction should report to the instructor as soon as possible. Absences that cannot be justified in accordance with university policies will be subject to penalty at the discretion of the instructor. If you are absent for reasons other than those specified under university policies, then it is not the responsibility of the instructor or the TA to help you catch up with missed lecture material.

Academic Integrity

The Department of Sociology fully and rigorously enforces the Senate Policy on Academic integrity. It is of utmost importance that students who do their work honestly be protected from those who do not. Because this policy is in place to ensure that students carry out and benefit from the learning activities assigned in each course, it is expected that students will cooperate in its implementation. Students caught cheating in the course will be expelled and reported to the Chair of the Department of Sociology and the Dean of Social Sciences for disciplinary action.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Students must note the statement on "Plagiarism" in the UVic Calendar, and all regulations under the "Policy on Academic Integrity." Quotes and citations must be used for any material longer than 5 words in succession that is not the student's original work.

Harassment

The Department of Sociology supports the University's policies on harassment, and is committed to ensuring that all students, staff, and faculty are able to exercise fully their rights to participate in activities at the University without fear of harassment.

Classroom Etiquette

Distractions can easily hinder the difficult process of conveying knowledge. Please observe standard classroom etiquette. Entering the classroom after the instructor's presentation has started can be distracting both to the instructor as well as to other students. While occasional lateness may be unavoidable, your dedication to being on time is greatly appreciated. The use of electronic communication devices is also a distraction to both the instructor and classmates. This includes texting and surfing the internet. Please turn off your electronic communication devices before entering the classroom and refrain from using them during class. If there is a justifiable reason for using your device during class (e.g., expecting an urgent call related to health or illness), please notify the instructor ahead of time, keep the device on vibrate, and exit the room if you must receive a message.