

Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Sociology

SOC204H1F – LEC0101

Fall 2020; Mondays 10am-12pm EST

Instructor:	Professor Tahseen Shams
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 3-4pm EST (Online via BB Collaborate)
Email:	tahseen.shams@utoronto.ca
Lectures:	Online – Synchronous on BB Collaborate in Course Website
Tutorials:	Online – Synchronous on BB Collaborate in Course Website TUT0101: Tuesdays, 3-4pm EST TUT0201: Tuesdays, 4-5pm EST TUT5101: Tuesdays, 5-6pm EST
Teaching Assistant:	Jessica Stallone (Email: jessica.stallone@mail.utoronto.ca) TA Office Hours are online, by appointment only.

Course Description

Why do people do what they do? How do social structures shape people's behaviour, experiences, and sense of selves? And, how, as sociologists, can we attempt to demystify and explain these numerous social phenomena unfolding all around us? Qualitative research methods are the tools sociologists use to come to a richer understanding of the fundamental dialectic that drives people's behaviour and social processes: that between macro, structural forces and human agency at the micro, day-to-day life. This course will introduce students to the wide range of qualitative methods sociology has to offer. We will begin the course with epistemological questions (How do we know what we know?) and learn to ask good research questions ourselves. We will then walk through how these questions can be addressed systematically, ethically, and reflexively using qualitative tools. We will also try our hand at applying a few methods ourselves to unpack things that are taking place around us.

Course Objectives

The main goal of this course is to prepare students with foundational introductory knowledge on qualitative research methods in sociology. By learning how these methods can be used to connect the minutiae of everyday life to larger societal patterns, students will learn to observe the social world around them more critically, think and write more reflexively, and ask engaging, sociological questions. Students will also gain some hands-on experience on how to apply qualitative tools and techniques. Students can apply the knowledge gained from this course to study social phenomena from any disciplinary orientations or topic of interest.

Prerequisite

All students must have taken the prerequisite (SOC101Y1, or a combination of SOC102H1+SOC103H1, SOC102H1+SOC150H1, SOC103H1+SOC150H1, or SOC100H1+SOC150H1) prior to enrolling in this class. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

Required Textbook

(LB) Lune, Howard and Bruce L. Berg. 2017. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Ninth Edition. New York: Pearson.

E-book available here: <https://www.pearson.com/store/p/qualitative-research-methods-for-the-social-sciences-books-a-la-carte/P100002432612/9780134416199>

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Note: All course assignments and tests must be submitted online via Quercus.

All Course Assignments	Points (100 in total)
Midterm Test	20
Final Test	25
Final Project Paper	30
Stepping-stone Submissions for Final Project	25

- 1) Midterm and Final Tests (45% of final grade): The online midterm and final tests will cover the readings, lectures, and other forms of media (like movies, images, music) discussed in class. The tests are non-cumulative, meaning that the final test will not include materials tested in the midterm.
- 2) Final Project Paper (30% of final grade): You are at a very promising and intellectually exciting time of your lives. You are students at the University of Toronto, Canada's leading university and one of the world's top public-research institutions. All of you are poised to be competitive in your choice of profession and have the potential to make positive contributions to your field. Some of you may choose academia to be your vocation, some of you may choose paths that take you outside the ivory tower. Whichever path you choose, critical thinking, asking the right questions in a strategic way, collecting necessary information and then analyzing it to find an answer are important skillsets to learn, practice, develop. This project is designed to help you collect data and learn more about what you want to do after you graduate from U of T by having you apply interviewing techniques. That way, a goal of this course is to show you how qualitative methods can be useful for your life even beyond the realm of research.

For the final paper of the course, each student will conduct virtual face-to-face interviews of 3 adults situated in careers that the student wants to pursue after graduation to write a 5-8-page (double-spaced) research paper. The interview questions will ask the respondents about their professional trajectory, motivations, obstacles and successes. Students will first formulate a research question on a topic related to one of these four options: gender, race/ethnicity, religion, and class. For example, a question for someone aspiring to be an academic could be: how does gender shape university professors' teaching experiences differently in classroom settings? Based on their overarching research question, students will then develop a set of 10-15 interview questions. Next, students will recruit and interview 3 professionals who are in the career of the student's interest. Students will use the list of questions they prepared, but these can be modified

based on the dynamics of the interview. Students will need to ask for consent from your interviewees verbally. Students must not write down or share the actual names or any identifiable information of the participants but assign random pseudonyms. If given consent, students will record the interviews. If consent is not given to record, students will jot down the responses in order to take extensive notes immediately after completing the interview. Each interview should be roughly 30-40 minutes long.

In the context of the ongoing pandemic, students will conduct their interviews online. These interviewees cannot be your family members, but people with whom you want to make a professional connection. Moreover, these interviews cannot be over chat or messages but must be conducted over video. This is because students will have to write down the nuanced details visible and audible during the interview. For example, what was the interviewee wearing? What was their expression? Where and in what kind of setting was the respondent located during the interview? What can be derived about the interviewee from these details?

Once each interview is over, students will “transcribe” these interviews and note down all the visible and audible details they observed about their respondent. These notes from all 3 interview will form the “dataset.” Students will then analyze and “code” their dataset to identify patterns and variations pertaining to their research question. Based on their analyzed data, students will write the final paper where they will provide the answers to their research question. The paper must directly draw examples from their fieldnotes as “evidence” to back-up their analyses.

To help students learn how to improve based on constructive feedback, the final paper submission is broken into two parts, each with a different deadline. By the first deadline, students are to submit the first draft of their paper. However, turning in the first draft is optional. This first draft submission is not graded. Students who turn in this optional first draft will receive meaningful, constructive feedback from myself and the TAs during open office hours. Based on the comments they have received, students will revise their first draft and write the final version of the paper, which they will turn in as their final submission. The students who choose not to take advantage of submitting the first draft and receiving feedback will turn in their final draft, which will be graded, on the day the final assignment is due.

Final Project Submissions	Points	Due Date
First draft of paper	No points; optional	December 4, Friday before 12am
Final paper	30	December 11, Friday before 12am

- 3) Stepping-stone Submissions (25% of final grade): The stepping-stone assignments are designed to help you with the research and writing components for the final paper in one small step at a time. The stepping-stone deadlines are strict and must be followed in order to make continued progress on the research paper throughout the course. **Please be advised: the final paper for this course is not the kind of paper that can be constructed in a few days right before the submission deadline.** The tutorials will help you accomplish the stepping-stone assignments, which are as follows.

Stepping-stone Submissions	Points	Due Date
Research question and set of interview questions	5	September 25, Friday before 12am
Transcribed Interview# 1	5	October 23, Friday before 12am
Transcribed Interview# 2	5	November 6, Friday before 12am
Transcribed Interview# 3	5	November 20, Friday before 12am
Coding and analysis of interview transcripts and observation notes of online interviews	5	November 27, Friday before 12am

Grades

Out of a total of 100 points, students will have to overall score the following to get the corresponding final grades.

90-100 = A+ 77-79 = B+ 67-69 = C+ 57-59 = D+
85-89 = A 73-76 = B 63-66 = C 53-56 = D 49 or below = F
80-84 = A- 70-72 = B- 60-62 = C- 50-52 = D-

Course Policies

1. Lectures: **The lectures will all be delivered online live/synchronously at the regular course time (10am-12pm, every Monday; see schedule below).** On your course website, click on “BB Collaborate” from the menu to your left. Now, click on the course. You will see the list of lectures. Click on the appropriate lecture (such as, Lecture Week 1). I highly recommend you log on 10-15 minutes ahead of the scheduled lecture time in case there is any technical difficulties that need to be sorted out.
2. Tests: **Both the midterm and final tests will be online. The test questions will be posted on “Announcements” in the course website at 10am the day before the answers are due. The answers must be submitted online via the course website by the end of the regular scheduled class.** For example, if the test answers are due on Monday, October 6th, by 12pm, I will post the questions on Sunday, October 5th, at 10am. The questions will be typically short essays.
3. How to Submit Course Assignments: Students are to **submit assignments online** via the course website **before midnight, 12am** on the days the assignments are due as per the class schedule below. **For each day the paper is late, 2 points will be deducted from the final score on the assignment. I will not accept late submissions without penalty** unless for extraordinary circumstances and without documentation as outlined above. **Grades will not be reweighed** to earlier or later assignments.

Please note: the assignments of this course are scaffolded so that you **must** turn in one assignment to even have the materials to turn in the next assignment. **The key to do well in this course is to keep up the pace - turn in whatever you can, on time.** I will help you to achieve that, feel free to contact me if you have trouble applying the methods to turn in the assignment. **I will try my best to help you make the deadlines.**

4. Course Website: The course website on Quercus is available at <https://q.utoronto.ca/>. The site will contain the course syllabus, all handouts, links of interest and course announcements. Students are responsible for the content of all course materials.
5. Office Hours: I will hold office hours online via BB Collaborate every Tuesday from 3-4pm. Click on BB Collaborate on the menu bar to your left on the course website. Click on the course name. You will then see the option "Weekly Office Hours." Click on it and drop by if you have any questions.
6. Lecture Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Students unable to attend are responsible for obtaining notes on all material covered, including lecture material and course announcements. I will, however, record the live lectures and post them after each class.
7. Tutorials: Students are required to participate in one of the mandatory tutorials with this course: TUT0101, TUT0201, TUT5101. Tutorials will help you practice methodological skills and prepare you for the course project. To log on to the weekly tutorial sessions, go on BB Collaborate and click on this course (SOC204H1F). Then, click on your tutorial session to attend. See the tutorial schedule below.
8. Make-Up Tests: Please read carefully! Students cannot make-up tests unless they missed the original date for reasons beyond their control (such as, illness, accidents, funerals). **If a student miss tests or submit assignments later for medical reasons, the student must contact me (not the TA) within 2 days of the missed test and declare their absence on the system (ACORN).** For other reasons, such as family emergencies or personal reasons, they must have the college registrar email me. Students who have been approved by me to take make-up tests will do so by making an appointment with the TA. **The make-up test MUST be taken within that week, before the next lecture.** However, the questions for the make-up test may be different from those on the original date. **There will be no make-up for make-up tests.**
9. Make-Up Assignments: Please read carefully! Students cannot make-up for assignments or submit late papers unless they missed the original date for reasons beyond their control (such as, illness, accidents, funerals). **If a student miss tests or submit assignments later for medical reasons, the student must contact me (not the TA) within 2 days of the missed test and declare their absence on the system (ACORN).** For other reasons, such as family emergencies or personal reasons, they must have the college registrar email me. **Students who have been approved by me to submit a late paper must do so within 2 days after receiving my permission.** Please note: I will not consider requests for extensions unless the situation is sudden, an emergency, or extraordinarily beyond control. There will be no make-up for make-up assignments.
10. Remarking: If you feel that your assignments or tests were not properly evaluated, you may request a remark. But, all requests for re-grading the course assignments should be made to your TA within **one week** of the date when the assignments are returned to the class. A short essay that clearly states specific reasons to justify the request and backs up these reasons with evidence from your assignment must be submitted to your TA.

No re-grading requests will be considered if the request is submitted more than one week after the assignments are returned to the class. **Note: compared to the original mark, a new grade can go up, be the same or go down.**

11. Communication: Please direct your emails and questions to the course TA. When emailing, please use your utoronto.ca address. The university tells faculty not to reply to emails that use Gmail, yahoo etc. or other web accounts. Please also include "SOC204" and a brief description in the subject line, so your email can be easily prioritized. Emails will typically be answered within 3 business days. Keep in mind that for simple questions, email is the preferred method of communication. However, for longer questions, students should attend office hours and/or schedule an appointment with the TA or the professor. Before emailing a routine question, please make sure the answer is not given in the syllabus. Please note that just as you would/should not email or greet your workplace boss as "Hey Boss" or "Hi There," beginning with "Hi Prof" is not a good idea. I would most likely not respond to those emails.
12. Making Appointments with the TA: TA office hours are by appointment only. If you would like to meet with your TA to discuss assignment feedback, course content or concerns, please contact them with 24-hour notice (via email). The TA will not hold office hours unless notified of a student's arrival.
13. Accessibility: If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.
14. Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves. Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rulebook for academic behavior at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:
In papers and assignments:
 - . Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
 - . Copying material word-for-word from a source (including lecture and study group notes) and not placing the words within quotation marks.
 - . Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
 - . Making up sources or facts.
 - . Including references to sources that you did not use.
 - . Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including:
 - Working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work
 - Having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing"
 - . Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as their own without your permission.Misrepresentation:

- . Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor's notes.
- . Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code*. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information available campus resources like the [U of T Writing Website](#). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please seek the advice of your college registrar.

15. Plagiarism: Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the "Code of Behavior on Academic Matters" in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Class Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Tutorials	Assignment Due
1	September 14	<i>Course overview</i>			
2	September 21	Epistemology & Asking Good Research Questions	LB Ch. 1	Yes	Research & interview questions Due Friday, September 25th before 12am
3	September 28	Research Design & Ethics	LB Ch. 2 and 3	Yes	
4	October 5	Interviewing	LB Ch. 4	Yes	
5	October 12	<i>Thanksgiving; No Class</i>			
6	October 19	Ethnography	LB Ch. 6	Yes	Transcribed interview # 1 Due Friday, October 23rd before 12am
7	October 26	<i>No Class; Submit Midterm Test Answers by 12pm (end of lecture time)</i>			
8	November 2	Coding	LB Ch. 11	Yes	Transcribed interview # 2 Due Friday, November 6th before 12am
9	November 9	<i>Reading Week; No Class</i>			
10	November 16	Writing Research	LB Ch. 12	Yes	Transcribed interview # 3 Due Friday, November 20th before 12am
11	November 23	Focus Groups	LB Ch. 5	Yes	Coding and analysis of interviews Due Friday, November 27th before 12am
12	November 30	Historical Research	LB Ch. 9	Yes	First draft of paper (<i>optional</i>) Due Friday, December 4th before 12am
13	December 7	<i>No Class; Submit Final Test Answers by 12pm (end of lecture time)</i>			Final Paper Due Friday, December 11th before 12am

