

**ADVANCED QUALITATIVE METHODS**  
**SOC498H1F**  
**Fall 2020**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**University of Toronto**

**Instructor:** Jaime Nikolaou  
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**Seminar:** Wednesdays, 2-5pm  
**Location:** Bb Collaborate

“COVID-19 is not just a medical pandemic; it is a social event that is disrupting our social order.”  
(Teti, Schatz and Liebenberg 2020: 2)

“I don’t know what the COVID-19 pandemic will bring, what it has brought. I don’t know the extent of suffering that individuals and families are experiencing. I don’t know the burden health care workers are carrying or the intense threat being felt by communities who are most vulnerable. I don’t know what or who to believe when I consume media ... I don’t know what power relations will become entrenched or undone. ... ‘Not knowing’ is something I’ve been trying to embrace. I understand it as a mode of relating to the world, one that COVID-19 has forced upon us but also one that represents a productive positionality for scholars to adopt and deliberate.”  
(Grimwood 2020: 1)

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The main goal of this course is to give fourth year students with a vested interest in qualitative methods more hands-on research experience. To this end, you will apply your sociological imagination to COVID-19 and craft an exploratory research project on the pandemic in ways that qualitatively compel you. Your research will develop over the whole term, guided by weekly workshops and recently published studies that showcase how qualitative scholars are studying COVID-19 and innovating data collection techniques in response to lockdown measures.

**EVALUATION**

This semester, we will meet synchronously via Bb Collaborate. Since this is a small, seminar-based course, class will open with collaborative discussion of the assigned readings, which will deepen your understanding and appreciation of qualitative epistemology. From there, we will move to workshops, where you will apply these techniques to develop your ongoing research. Due to the collaborative nature of this course, your active and video-based participation is required each week.

**PROMPTS (10%)**

At the end of each class, I will ask a question about methods to structure your reading for the coming week. You will earn 0.5% for posting a 400-500 word response to Quercus by 11:59pm the following Tuesday, and an additional 0.5% for sharing your insights at the start of the next class.

## **RESEARCH PROJECT (90%)**

Your major work in this course will be engaging in exploratory qualitative research on COVID-19. This project will develop over twelve weeks, scaffolded by workshops and assignments that build upon each other and total 90% of your final mark. You may engage in this research on your own, in a pair or small group, or with the whole class. While all term work will be graded individually, if you work with others you will have more people to bounce your research experiences off, as well as more data to analyze. Brief descriptions of the major components of the Research Project are outlined below, with detailed instructions to follow in advance of deadlines.

### **WORKSHOPS (20%)**

Workshops in this course are meant to foster your sociological imagination about COVID-19, and sharpen your practical skills in qualitative research design, data collection, and analysis. Workshop submissions will vary in content and length; however, each is worth 2% and due by 11:59pm on Sundays. I will provide feedback on all submissions, which you can and should adapt for use in the In-Class Test and Preliminary Research Report. Though weighted low individually, workshops are central to this course and you will struggle to progress if you do not submit for them on a weekly basis.

### **IN-CLASS TEST (30%)**

On 4 November, we will not meet online. Instead, you will write an in-class “test” – a mock ethics application on a social aspect of COVID-19 that you plan to study qualitatively. Before you write the test, it is imperative that you craft a clear research question and know which qualitative techniques fit and compel you. You will have six weeks to arrive at these decisions, guided by in-class workshops and course readings that showcase qualitative innovation in response to social distancing measures. In advance of the test, we will also review ethics applications from doctoral students at UofT Sociology who utilize qualitative methods – a career path that undergraduate specialists in this course are likely considering. You will receive detailed feedback on your mock ethics application, which also functions as a research proposal for the remainder of your term work, by 8 November. Over Reading Week, please adapt your proposal based on feedback from me and your peers, and collect more data to answer your research question (pending my approval).

### **PRELIMINARY RESEARCH REPORT (40%)**

When we return from Reading Week, you will have crafted a qualitative research question about COVID-19 and collected some data to answer it. During the last third of the course, you will gather more data, engage in memo-writing and preliminary analysis, weave your emergent findings in relation to existing scholarship, and share your research process and insights with the class. You will then repackage all this hard work into 12-14 pages of sociological sensemaking in the Preliminary Research Report, which is due 18 December and worth 40% of your final mark.

## READING SCHEDULE

In this course, you will read qualitative methods articles and empirical studies that relate to COVID-19. All these readings are digital and posted on Quercus. While I will make every effort to follow the schedule below, please note that it is subject to change at my discretion.

### **WEEK 1 (16 September): Qualitative Inquiry and COVID-19**

Aspers, Patrick and Ugo Corte. 2019. "What is Qualitative in Qualitative Research". *Qualitative Sociology*, 42: 139-60.

Connell, Raewyn. 2020. "COVID-19/Sociology". *Journal of Sociology*: 1-7.

Teti, Michelle, Enid Schatz, and Linda Liebenberg. 2020. "Methods in the Time of COVID-19: The Vital Role of Qualitative Methods". *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19: 1-5.

### **WEEK 2 (23 September): Reflexivity**

Cherneski, J. 2020. "Evidence-Loving Rock Star Chief Medical Officers: Female Leadership amidst COVID-19 in Canada". *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(5): 900-13.

González-Calvo, Gustavo. 2020. "Narrative Reflections on Masculinity and Fatherhood during COVID-19 Confinement in Spain". *Societies*, 10(2): 1-14.

Peters, Michael A. et al. 2020. "China's Internationalized Higher Education During COVID-19: Collective Student Autoethnography". *Postdigital Science and Education*: 1-21.

Simmons, Amy L. 2020. "COVID-19 and Social Distancing: A Snippet View of the Autistic Social World". *Disability & Society*, 35(6): 1007-11.

### **WEEK 3 (30 September): Interviews**

Dodds, Sarah and Alexandra C. Hess. 2020. "Adapting Research Methodology During COVID-19: Lessons for Transformative Service Research". *Journal of Service Management*, 1-12.

Hyland, Kelly A. and Heather S.L. Jim. 2020. "Behaviour and Psychosocial Responses of People Receiving Treatment for Advanced Lung Cancer During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Analysis". *Clinical Correspondence*, 1-6.

Lobe, Bojana, David Morgan, and Kim A. Hoffman. 2020. "Qualitative Data Collection in an Era of Social Distancing". *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19: 1-8.

Pyrooz, David C. et al. 2020. "Views on COVID-19 from Inside Prison: Perspectives of High Security Prisoners". *Justice Evaluation Journal*: 1-13.

#### **WEEK 4 (7 October): Personal Elicitation**

Liegghio, Maria and L. Caragata. 2020. "COVID-19 and Youth Living in Poverty: The Ethical Considerations of Moving from In-Person Interviews to a PhotoVoice Using Remote Methods". *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 1-7.

Pink, Sarah. et al. 2017. "Empathic Technologies: Digital Materiality and Video Ethnography". *Visual Studies* 32(4): 371-81.

Schaefer, Mary Beth et al. 2020. "Making the Unusual Usual: Students' Perspectives and Experiences of Learning at Home during the COVID-19 Pandemic". *Middle Grades Review*, 6(2): 1-19.

#### **WEEK 5 (14 October): In/Direct Observation**

Alcadipani, Rafael et al. 2020. "Street-Level Bureaucrats under COVID-19: Police Officers' Responses in Constrained Settings". *Administrative Theory & Praxis*: 1-10.

Fine, Gary Alan and Corey M. Abramson. 2020. "Ethnography in the Time of COVID-19: Vectors and the Vulnerable". *Ethnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa (Special Issue)*: 1-8.

Katila, Julia, Yumei Gan, and Marjorie H. Goodwin. 2020. "Interaction Rituals and 'Social Distancing': New Haptic Trajectories and Touching from a Distance in the Time of COVID-19". *Discourse Studies*, 22(4): 418-40.

Raun, Tobias. 2015. "Archiving the Wonders of Testosterone via YouTube". *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 2(4): 701-9.

#### **WEEK 6 (21 October): Social, News, and Independent Media**

Bolsover, Gillian. 2020. "Black Lives Matter Discourse on US Social Media during COVID-19: Polarised Positions Enacted in a New Event". *Centre for Democratic Engagement*, 1-10.

MacDonald, Shana. 2020. "What Do You (Really) Meme? Pandemic Memes as Social Political Repositories". *Leisure Sciences*: 1-10.

Rufai, Sohaib R. and Catey Bunce. 2020. "World Leaders' Usage of Twitter in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Content Analysis". *Journal of Public Health*, 1-7.

Mukherjee, Utsa. 2020. "Rainbows, Teddy Bears and 'Others': The Cultural Politics of Children's Leisure amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic". *Leisure Sciences*: 1-8.

#### **WEEK 7 (28 October): In-Class Test**

## **WEEK 8 (4 November): Qualitative Research Design**

Freitas-Jesus, Juliana et al. 2020. "The Experience of Women Infected by COVID-19 during Pregnancy in Brazil: A Qualitative Study Protocol". *Reproductive Health*, 17: 1-8.

Vindrola-Padros et al. 2020. "Carrying Out Rapid Qualitative Research during a Pandemic: Emerging Lessons from COVID-19". *Qualitative Health Research*: 1-13.

## **NO CLASS (11 November): Reading Week**

## **WEEK 9 (18 November): Analyzing Qualitative Data**

Charmaz, Kathy. 2012. "The Power and Potential of Grounded Theory". *Medical Sociology Online*, 6(3): 1-15.

Saldana, Johnny. 2015. "An Introduction to Codes and Coding" (pp. 1-40) and "Writing Analytic Memos" (pp. 41-57) in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Sage.

Sandelowski, Margarete and Julie Barroso. 2002. "Finding the Findings in Qualitative Studies". *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 34(3): 213-9.

## **WEEK 10 (25 November): Engaging the Literature**

Dunne, Ciarán. 2011. "The Place of the Literature Review in Grounded Theory Research". *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 14(2): 111-24.

Hart, Chris. 2018. *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Research Imagination* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Sage.

## **WEEK 11 (2 December): Open Work Session**

Grimwood, Bryan S.R. 2020. "On Not Knowing: COVID-19 and Decolonizing Leisure Research". *Leisure Sciences*: 1-7.

Pratt, Michael G. 2009. "For the Lack of a Boilerplate: Tips on Writing Up Qualitative Research". *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(2): 856-82.

## **WEEK 12 (9 December): Qualitative Insights on COVID-19**

Collet, Jessica, Lisa Walker, and Alison Biachi. 2020 "Is it Really Okay to Feel Not Okay? Reflections from Three Scholars of Emotion". *ASA Footnotes (Special Issue): Sociologists and Sociology during COVID-19*, 48(3): 35.

Kleinman, Sherryl, Martha A. Copp, and Karla A. Henderson. 1997. "Qualitatively Different: Teaching Fieldwork to Graduate Students". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 25(4): 469-99.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **PREREQUISITES**

The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 SOC at the 300 level, plus SOC254H1. Please note that students without these requirements will be removed when discovered and without notice.

### **ONLINE COMMUNICATION & USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Please check the Announcements tab on Quercus regularly for important course information. Individual queries are best addressed with me during office hours or via email. Include SOC498 in the subject line when you email and expect a reply within a day (excluding weekends).

For privacy's sake, unauthorized recording of our seminar discussions is strictly prohibited.

### **ACCESSIBILITY & EQUITY**

UofT is committed to ensuring equity and accessibility, and students with diverse learning styles are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or medical condition that requires accommodation, please approach me and/or Accessibility Services early in the semester.

The ability to read critically, write clearly and authoritatively, and listen and speak collaboratively and constructively will serve you well in this course. While these skillsets will develop over your time in this course, they are not our exclusive focus here. They also take much practise, patience and time to hone. If you want to work on these academic skills, I encourage you to visit the UofT Writing Centre (<https://writing.utoronto.ca/>), which offers many online and in-person resources for domestic and international students.

### **REFERENCING & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

In this syllabus, I cite course material in ASA (American Sociological Association) style, which you should also use to format your SOC498 term work and which is summarized here: [https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick\\_Tips\\_for\\_AS\\_A\\_Style.pdf](https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_AS_A_Style.pdf). Please also install Mendeley – a free citation management program you can use to store and annotate course readings, as well as search for empirical work related to your research project.

Academic integrity is vital to well-being of the university and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. To understand how nuanced plagiarism can be and the severity of its consequences, please consult: <https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/how-not-to-plagiarize.pdf>.

### **LATE OR MISSED TERM WORK**

Late Prompt and Workshop submissions will not be accepted. If you submit the Preliminary Research Report late, 5% per day (including weekends) will be deducted. If you cannot submit the assignment on time or miss the In-Class Test due to a personal emergency, have your College Registrar email me. In the case of illness, please email me and declare your absence on ACORN.