



# Sociology UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

## **SOC6712H: Qualitative Methods**

Professor Jessica Fields

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*I respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the University of Toronto operates is the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, the land on which we meet, teach, and learn is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. Acknowledging them reminds us of our important connection to this land where we live, learn and study.*

### **Meeting Time and Place**

Tuesday/Thursday 2:10-4

Zoom Meeting ID: 390 553 8009 (Passcode: 444570)

Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/221530>

### **Teaching Assistant**

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Researchers use qualitative methods to study the everyday interactions, experiences, and meanings that contribute to, challenge, and sustain ideas, institutions, and inequalities. Qualitative researchers consider gender, race, class, and sexuality in public street behavior; play during children's recess; support groups for women with post-partum depression; drag king and queen competitions; and survival strategies among the homeless. In these studies, researchers interview people, watch their behavior, participate in groups' activities, look at the documents and other texts that people produce, and try to immerse themselves in people's everyday experiences and meanings. The aim is to explore the relationship between the day-to-day and broader social structures and ideologies.

This semester's seminar on qualitative methods will focus on (1) data gathered through archival research, interviewing, and participant observation, (2) emotion as a source insight in qualitative research, and (3) writing as a means to record information, develop analyses, and share ideas. Our seminar discussions, in-class writing workshops, readings, and assignments will engage Chicago School, community-engaged, critical race, feminist, intersectional, and queer qualitative research. Readings will come primarily from sociology, and many appear on the Department's Qualitative Methods comprehensive exam list. Like qualitative methods, we will reach across disciplines and fields. We will read work by Canadian, international, women, queer, racialized, Black, and Indigenous authors.

Our class will function largely as a workshop. We will discuss readings, freewrite, share work in progress, practice data collection and analysis, and apply ideas from the readings to our research projects and goals. We'll pay special attention to writing, thinking about how we can best use writing (1) to record the information we gather through observation or interviews, (2) to develop our analyses, and (3) to present our ideas to others. We'll also grapple with the challenges of relying on writing to generate and convey our analyses. Throughout the semester we will consider how field methods illuminate, challenge, and sometimes reinforce social conditions; we'll also think about the influence of social conditions, including inequalities, on people's experiences as researchers and as research subjects.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A SPRING COURSE

Our work together will be brief and intense. We will complete a twelve-week course in six weeks, and this means we will read, write, and meet deadlines at a brisk pace. I encourage us all to make this course a focus over the next six weeks: stay on top of the readings, don't fall behind on assignments, and attend each seminar meeting. Steady attention, consistent engagement, and deep breaths will keep us on track.

### . . . AND DURING COVID

We will do all of this work during an ongoing pandemic, in the midst of public health restrictions, and online. Our seminar will meet in a zoom space, and we will meet for one-on-one and group consultations in this same online space. We will communicate over email and through Quercus. These are not the usual learning conditions, and they bring some challenges. We have to take special care to get to know one another and to engage thoughtfully with one another's ideas. We need to respect that some of us work from home, without a reliably private or quiet workspace, and in the company of family members who require our attention and care. Many of us will feel the strain of long months of restrictions on our movement and time. Some of us may be in other time zones.

I hope we can also identify some opportunities as we meet online. We have a chance to think and learn together, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. We can support one another's progress as graduate students and researchers, and we can show up, as best we can, every Tuesday and Thursday to discuss deeply important methodological and sociological ideas with people who share our commitment to intellectual exploration. Finally, we can be gentle with ourselves and one another if some days prove difficult. This is my vision for this seminar. Please let me know if I can offer you any particular support as we strive to work with one another respectfully and creatively.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

**Reading briefs—15% (3 @ 5%):** Students will prepare 3 reading briefs in which you outline an article's or chapter's contributions to our understanding of qualitative methods—for example, study design, methodological questions raised, debates addressed, substantive knowledge gained, and/or populations addressed. During the first week of our term, I will share an online template for the briefs and we will decide who's responsible for each reading. Briefs will be due at three points in the term, as noted in the Course Schedule below. I will assign a late penalty of 5% per day to all late reading briefs, except in the case of legitimate reasons beyond the student's control.

**Data and writing workshops—21% (7 @ 3%):** In class, students will complete data collection exercises; freewrite in response to prompts on issues in qualitative research; and share work in progress. Students will be able to complete all workshops during class time and online; as public health restrictions allow, I will make additional workshops options available (data collection in public space, for example). Workshop topics will emerge from assigned readings and ongoing seminar discussions. Active participation in these workshops will constitute 21% of your final mark over the course of the term. You must be in class to complete the workshops; all students may miss one without penalty. Dates are noted in the schedule below.

**Reflections—30% (3 @ 10%):** On Mondays, students will submit 3- to 4-page reflections on assigned readings and seminar discussions. Reflections will build on prompts, writing, and feedback from in-class data and writing workshops. Papers should double-spaced, in twelve-point font, with one-inch margins, and include a list of references. Everyone will meet the first deadline, May 10; students will then choose two additional deadlines for a total of three reflections submitted over the term. Because students can choose which reflection deadlines to meet, I will not accept late reflections, except for legitimate reasons beyond a student's control. Please note: reflections are due Monday by 5PM, allowing me some time to review them before we meet Tuesday afternoon.

**Final project—34% (meeting with instructor @ 4%; project @ 30%):** Students will have the option of (1) preparing a funding proposal (SSHRC, CIHR, OGS, or Vanier, for example) for a qualitative study; (2) submitting a qualitative data portfolio (fieldnotes, interviews, and analytic memos contributing to research they will pursue as part of their graduate study) or (2) writing a 20-page “spew draft” (a la Howard Becker 2020) in which they explore methodological issues in a study they plan to conduct. We will discuss the project ideas further as the semester unfolds, and I will meet with each of you for 20 minutes to discuss your final project plans. This meeting is required and will occur in the hour after our seminar meeting, as indicated in the course schedule below. The late penalty for final projects is 5% per day, other than in the case of legitimate reasons beyond the student’s control.

### **SUGGESTED READINGS**

I expect some of you bring experience with qualitative methods—from previous courses, research assistantships, reading, or independent studies. No matter how much experience you bring, the following books are helpful as general guides to qualitative research.

- Esterberg, Kristin G., 2002. *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Luker, Kristen. 2009. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

I've listed the texts below in a suggested reading order. At times the order is chronological and points to a conversation among scholars over time. Other times, the order suggests an unfolding of ideas and their application that isn't tied to date of publication.

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### Week 1

04 May

*introductions*

- Behar, Ruth. 2020. "Read More, Write Less." Pp. 47-53 in *Writing Anthropology: Essays on Craft & Commitment*, edited by Carole McGranahan. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kleinman, Sherryl, Martha Copp, and Karla Henderson. 1997. "Qualitatively Different: Teaching Fieldwork to Graduate Students." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 25(4):469-99.
- Piper, Daniel, Jacob Jacobe, Rose Yazzie, and Dolores Calderon. 2019. "Indigenous Methodologies in Graduate School." Pp. 86-100 in *Applying Indigenous Research Methodologies: Storying with Peoples and Communities*, edited by Sweeney Windchief and Timothy San Pedro. Milton: Taylor & Francis.

06 May

*framing questions*

DATA/WRITING WORKSHOP

- Stevenson, Lisa, 2020. "Looking Away." *Cultural Anthropology* 35(1):6-13.
- Tuhiwai-Smith, Linda. 1999. "Introduction." Pp. 1-18 in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books: London.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Choose a Subject You Love." Pp. 9-22 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. University of Chicago Press.

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### Week 2

*DUE 10 May*

- *weekly reflection #1 due (all students must submit this first reflection)*

11 May

*ethics*

- Fine, Gary. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(3):267- 94.
- Islam, Naheed. 2000. "Research as an Act of Betrayal." Pp. 35-66 in *Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies*. New York University Press.
- Taylor, Judith, and Matthew Patterson. 2010. "Autonomy and Compliance: How Qualitative Sociologists Respond to Institutional Ethical Oversight." *Qualitative Sociology* 33(2):161-83.
- Kovach, Margaret, Jeannine Carriere, M. J. Barrett, Harpell Montgomery, and Carmen Gillies. 2013. "Stories of Diverse Identity Locations in Indigenous Research." *International Review of Qualitative Research* 6(4):487-509.

13 May

*emotion and self in the field*

DATA/WRITING WORKSHOP

- Hodge-Freeman, Elizabeth. 2018. "Bringing Your Whole Self to Research: The Power of the Researcher's Body, Emotions, and Identities in Ethnography." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 17(1):1-9.
- Moussawi, Ghassan. 2021. "Bad Feelings: On Trauma, Nonlinear Time, and Accidental Encounters in 'the Field.'" *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 10(1):78-96.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Put Yourself into the Data." Pp. 23-30 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. University of Chicago Press.

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### Week 3

*DUE 17 May*

- *weekly reflection (one of 4 optional due dates; students must meet two)*
- *reading briefs, round #1*

18 May

*interviewing*

DATA/WRITING WORKSHOP

- DeVault, Marjorie L. 1990. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis." *Social Problems* 37(1):96-116.
- Kovach, Margaret. 2010. "Conversation Method in Indigenous Research." *First Peoples Child & Family Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal Honouring the Voices, Perspectives, and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews* 5(1):40-48.
- Pugh, Allison. 2013. "What Good are Interviews for Thinking about Culture?" *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1):42-68.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Embrace Dialogue." Pp. 62-70 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. University of Chicago Press.

20 May

*crossing lines*

- González-López, Gloria. 2010. "Ethnographic Lessons: Researching Incest in Mexican Families." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39(5):569-81.
- Buford May, Reuben A. 2014. "When the Methodological Shoe is on the Other Foot: African American Interviewer and White Interviewees." *Qualitative Sociology* 37(1):117-36.
- Connell, Cati. 2018. "Thank You for Coming Out Today: The Queer Discomforts of In-Depth Interviewing." Pp. 126-39 in D'Lane R. Compton, Tey Meadow, and Kristin Schilt, eds., *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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## Week 4

*DUE 24 May*

- *weekly reflection (one of 4 optional due dates; students must meet two)*

25 May

*participant observation*

- Brown-Seracino, Japonica. 2014. "From Methodological Stumbles to Substantive Insights: Gaining Ethnographic Access in Queer Communities." *Qualitative Sociology* 37:43-68.
- Mayorga-Gallo, Sarah. and Hordge-Freeman, Elizabeth. 2017. "Between Marginality and Privilege: Gaining Access and Navigating the Field in Multiethnic Settings." *Qualitative Research* 17(4):377-94.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Incorporate Ethnographic Detail." Pp. 31-40 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. University of Chicago Press.

27 May

*taking notes*

DATA/WRITING WORKSHOP

- Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "'You Still Takin' Notes?' Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent." *Social Problems* 27(3):284-97.
- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 1995. "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research" and "In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes." Chapters 1 and 2 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.
- Tuck, Eve, and Marcia McKenzie. 2015. "Relational Validity and the 'Where' of Inquiry: Place and Land in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 21(7):633-38.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Describe Places and Events." Pp. 41-50 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. University of Chicago Press.

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## Week 5

*DUE 31 May*

- *weekly reflection (one of 4 optional due dates; students must meet two)*
- *reading briefs, round #2*

01 June

*archival research*

DATA/WRITING WORKSHOP

**AFTER CLASS:** Final Project meetings

- Stone, Amy L. 2018. "Queer Persistence in the Archive." Pp. 216-29 in *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*, edited by D'Lane R. Compton, Tey Meadow, and Kristin Schilt. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mukerji, Chandra. 2020. "The Archives Made Me Do It." *Qualitative Sociology* 43(3):305-16.
- Haberstock, Lauren. 2020. "Participatory Description: Decolonizing Descriptive Methodologies in Archives." *Archival Science* 20(2):125-38.
- Mayrl, Damon, and Nicholas Hoover Wilson. 2020. "The Archive as a Social World." *Qualitative Sociology* 43(3):407-26.

03 June

*analysis strategies*

DATA/WRITING WORKSHOP

**AFTER CLASS:** Final Project meetings

- Becker, Howard S. 2008. "Concepts." Pp. 109-45 in *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. University of Chicago Press.
- Charmaz, Kathy, and Linda Liska Belgrave. 2015. "Grounded Theory." In *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

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**Week 6**

*DUE 07 June*

- *weekly reflection (one of 4 optional due dates; students must meet two)*
- *reading briefs, round #2*

08 June

*analysis, continued*

DATA/WRITING WORKSHOP

**AFTER CLASS:** Final Project meetings

- Clarke, Adele. 2005. "Doing Situational Maps and Analysis." Pp. 83-144 in *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Integrate Your Theory." Pp. 51-61 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. University of Chicago Press.

10 June

*good enough*

DATA/WRITING WORKSHOP

**AFTER CLASS:** Final Project meetings

- Luttrell, Wendy. 2000. "'Good Enough' Methods for Ethnographic Research." *Harvard Educational Review* 70(4):499-523.
- Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. "Find Your Process." Pp. 117-26 in *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. University of Chicago Press.

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**DUE 17 June**

- *final projects*
- *reading briefs, final round*

## COURSE POLICIES

### Late assignments

As stated in the earlier discussion of Course Assignments, I will assign late penalties as follows.

- I will assign a late penalty of 5% per day to all late reading briefs, except in the case of legitimate reasons beyond the student's control.
- Because students can choose which reflection deadlines to meet, I will not accept late reflections, except for legitimate reasons beyond a student's control.
- The late penalty for final projects is 5% per day, other than in the case of legitimate reasons beyond the student's control.

Finally, you must be in class to complete the data and writing workshops; all students may miss one without penalty.

### Academic Integrity

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well: (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence *"to submit, 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 or program of study in the University or elsewhere."*

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) and *Code of Student Conduct* (<http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

### Accessibility Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities" at <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf>.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at [distressedstudent.utoronto.ca](http://distressedstudent.utoronto.ca); Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

### Equity and Diversity Statement

All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated; please alert me to any behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any person in this course or otherwise creates an intimidating or hostile environment.

You'll find additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto online at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca>.