

The University of Calgary
Department of Sociology

Sociology 615
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Winter 2010

INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Kevin Young
OFFICE / CONTACT:	SS 932 (403-220-6509, kyoung@ucalgary.ca)
OFFICE HOURS:	Tuesday, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., or by appointment
CLASS TIME:	Mondays 9-11.50 a.m.
CLASSROOM:	SS 921
LAB	No formal lab; use this time for your own work

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Qualitative methods are employed by sociologists concerned with how meaning is attributed to everyday life in social groups, and how group members articulate social experience over time through face-to-face interaction, images, and other practices. Of equal concern for qualitative researchers are the processes through which relations of power are embedded in and distributed between social groups, and how cultural discourses are interpreted across social figurations. Sociology 615 explores some of the philosophies and techniques that underpin qualitative research. Specifically, it offers a review of the three principal strands of qualitative inquiry (participant observation, interviewing, content analysis) that allow us to produce in-depth accounts of the lived human experience.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Sociology 615 is designed to:

- expand student knowledge of and expertise with a range of qualitative techniques.
- help students gain confidence in terms of planning research, generating and analyzing data, and “writing up” their work.
- help students instrumentally with the methodological dimensions of their graduate research (while the practical goals of this course are *not* geared toward the production of a research [i.e., MA, PhD] prospectus, students are strongly advised to focus on and work with their own research topic wherever possible in class assignments).
- encourage students to take their own professional socialization seriously. Students will have an opportunity to develop and improve in the following three ways: i) professional and academic writing; ii) delivering presentations to an audience of peers; iii) critical self-assessment and appraisal.

REQUIRED READING

The course is organized around two core books:

Silverman, D. & Marvasti, M. (2008). Doing Qualitative Research: A Comprehensive Guide. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Berg, B. (2009). Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon (7th Ed.).

As the 'shape' of the seminar becomes clearer and, as importantly at this level, student needs/interests unfold, additional readings will be provided for students on a regular basis by the instructor.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. A careful and punctual reading of the required material.
2. Regular attendance at lectures and participation in class discussions and questions. (The University of Calgary has no policy of mandatory attendance, but attendance is strongly recommended.)
3. Advance notice to the instructor or the Department of Sociology main office (403-220-6501) if unable to comply with the schedule of exams. Students who do not provide this advance notice may not be allowed to retake exams. Also see note on "Academic Accommodation" and "Policy for Students who Miss Exams" below.
4. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with University regulations regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Cheating is regarded as a serious academic offence. The University Calendar provides a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.
5. Students who are having difficulty with the course are advised to contact the instructor/TA immediately to discuss the situation.
6. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with changes (additions, deletions, shifts) to this outline made in class.
7. The University of Calgary provides a "Safe Walk" service to any location on campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 403-220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around campus.
8. Please note the following:
The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment, she/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

9. Ethics Research: Students are advised that any research with human subjects -- including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation -- must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any 'human subject' research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.
10. Keep this outline. It will be your course reference throughout the term. Most of the questions students ask are answered on it. **Once again, no hard copies will be provided.**

Academic Accommodation

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, 220 8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to instructors immediately once class begins.

SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed in the following three ways:

1. Three separate presentations, each related to and arranged at the end of lectures on the three main strands of qualitative research (see Seminar Format). Presentation length will be determined by enrolment and available class time, but will be approximately 10 minutes plus a 5 minute discussion period. Each presentation is worth 10% of the overall grade. These verbal presentations will be followed by a written summary (approximately 2-3 pages) to be handed in at the end of the presentation class. These will be worth 5% of the overall grade. The main goal of these verbal presentations and written summaries is to link each of the three main sections of the class with graduate thesis topics and thus to directly assist students in their research development.
2. Students will prepare a paper that represents a draft of their MA/PhD methods chapter. This draft will be approximately 15-20 pages in length (double spaced), worth 30% of the overall mark, and is due in class on Monday April 12. This is an unofficial draft and relates to Soci 615 only.
3. Throughout the entire course (on a weekly basis), students will be assigned short exercises that are designed to assist them in applying what they learn in Sociology 615 to their own research. Each "response" will be given space parameters and must be compiled in a research diary that should be titled *Soci 615 and My Research: Application, Experiences and Reflection* (see S&M Chapters 3 & 4, especially pp. 61-62, 301-304). The purpose of the research diary is to allow students to record and reflect upon their methodological approach as it evolves over the period of the class. Individual assignment responses will not be graded as they are prepared but the entire research diary will be. It is also due in class on Monday April 12, and is worth 25% of the overall grade.

More detailed information/guidelines on each of these forms of assessment will be provided in class.

Class participation will not be graded, but may be taken into account when determining overall final grades.

NB: Public speaking is often intimidating; few people enjoy it. This difficulty is acknowledged and built in to the allocation of the grade. However, this seminar places emphasis on the creation, by the professor and students alike, of an interactive and respectful classroom climate conducive to listening, learning, and critiquing. Students are required to attend and contribute to class discussion and debates. Registration will be kept, and student involvement noted.

POLICY FOR STUDENTS WHO MISS EXAMS

You must provide *advance* notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam or meet with a scheduled deadline. All requests for deferral of an examination due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student *has* the physical or emotional problem rather than *after* recovery. Deferred exams may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction, or religious conviction. If you have missed an exam for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original exam as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are *not* valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam. Deferred exams will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

GRADING SCALE

A+ (95>)	A (85-94)	A- (80-84)
B+ (77-79)	B (74-76)	B- (70-73)
C+ (67-69)	C (64-66)	C- (60-63)
D+ (55-59)	D (50-54)	
F (<49)		

SEMINAR FORMAT AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

The basic format of topics, readings and seminar discussions will be as follows. Once again, students should expect to be provided with regular additional readings.

DATE	SUBJECT	READING
Mon. Jan. 11	WINTER SESSION CLASSES BEGIN Introduction to the course: Objectives, topics, student roles	S&M Chap. 16
Mon. Jan. 18	General Overview of Qualitative Research	S&M Chaps. 1-3,7,8,26 Berg Chaps. 1,2
Mon. Jan. 25	Observation	S&M Chaps. 4,9,11,12,15-17 Berg Chaps. 5,6

Mon. Feb. 1	Observation (continued)	
Mon. Feb. 8	Observation: Class Presentations	
Mon. Feb. 15	READING WEEK -- NO CLASSES	
Mon. Feb. 22	Interviewing	S&M Chaps. 4,11-13 Berg Chaps. 4,5
Mon. Mar. 1	Interviewing (continued)	
Mon. Mar. 8	Interviewing: Class Presentations	
Mon. Mar. 15	Content Analysis	S&M Chaps. 4,11, Berg Chaps. 8-11
Mon. Mar. 22	Content Analysis	
Mon. Mar. 29	Content Analysis: Class Presentations	
Mon. Ap. 5	Ethical Parameters of doing Qualitative Research Guest Speaker	S&M Chaps. 3,17,18 Berg Chap. 3
Mon. Ap. 12	Writing Up Course review and implications for further study 30% Paper due 25% Research Diary due	S&M Chaps. 5,10,19-24 Berg Chap. 12
Fri. Ap. 16	WINTER SESSION CLASSES END	

At the completion of this course each student will be asked to complete a Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) form.