

The University of Calgary  
Department of Sociology

**Sociology 615**  
**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS**

**Winter 2012**

INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Kevin Young
OFFICE / CONTACT:	SS 932 (403-220-6509, kyoung@ucalgary.ca)
OFFICE HOURS:	Thursday, 3.30 p.m. - 4.30 p.m., or by appointment
CLASS TIME:	Tuesday 9.30 a.m.-12.20 p.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 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 following book represents mandatory reading for the course:

Berg, B. L. and H. Lune (2012). Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. New York: Pearson (8<sup>th</sup> Ed.).

A list of Additional Readings ("AR" in Seminar Format and Reading Assignments) will also be made available on the first day of classes. These readings will be referred to and used on a regular basis.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES** (posted by the instructor)

1. A careful and punctual reading of the required material.
2. Attendance at lectures and participation in class discussions and questions.
3. Advance notice to the instructor or the Department of Sociology main office (403-220-6502) if unable to comply with the schedule of assignments and participation.
4. Students who are having difficulty with the course are advised to contact the instructor immediately to discuss the situation.
5. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with changes (additions, deletions, shifts) to this outline made in class.
6. Keep this outline. It will be your course reference throughout the term. Most of the questions students ask are answered on it. **No hard copies will be provided.**

## **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 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. **Overall value: 45%.**
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 Tuesday April 10 (or before). This is an *unofficial* methods chapter 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: Research Diary*. 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 week-by-week, but the entire research diary will be graded at the conclusion of the course. It is also due in class on Tuesday April 10, and is **worth 25%** of the overall grade (**Section A: 15%, Section B: 5%, Section C: 5%**).

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 instructor 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.

### **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.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>READING</b>
Mon. Jan. 9	<b>WINTER SESSION CLASSES BEGIN</b>	
Tues. Jan. 10	<b>Introduction to the course: Objectives, topics, student roles</b>	
Tues. Jan. 17	General Overview of Qualitative Research	B&L Chaps. 1,2, AR
Tues. Jan. 24	Observation	B&L Chaps. 5,6, AR
Tues. Jan. 31	Observation (continued)	
Tues. Feb. 7	Observation: Class Presentations	
Tues. Feb. 14	Interviewing	B&L Chaps. 4,5, AR
Tues. Feb. 21	<b>READING WEEK -- NO CLASSES</b>	
Tues. Feb. 28	Interviewing (continued)	
Tues. Mar. 6	Interviewing: Class Presentations	
Tues. Mar. 13	TBA	
Tues. Mar. 20	Content Analysis	B&L Chaps. 8-11, AR
Tues. Mar. 27	Content Analysis: Class Presentations	
Tues. Ap. 3	Ethical Parameters of doing Qualitative Research Guest Speaker	B&L Chap. 3, AR
Tues. Ap. 10	Writing Up <b>Course review and implications for further study</b> 30% Paper due 25% Research Diary due	B&L Chap. 12, AR
Fri. Ap. 13	<b>WINTER SESSION CLASSES END</b>	

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

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## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES** (posted by the University)

**Emergency Evacuations:** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by *[check link to find assembly point for your building:*  
[http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/node/75\]](http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/node/75)

**Deferrals:** If possible, you must provide *advance* notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or submit an assignment or essay on time. All requests for deferral of a course component 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. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a “make up” test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a “make up” test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

Please note that requests to defer a final examination or to defer term work past the end of a term go through the Undergraduate Programs Office (UPO) and must be processed by the deadlines that are established in the U of C Calendar. You can find the forms you need online:

*Deferred Final Exam Application:*

[http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/APP%20FOR%20DF%20EXAM\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/APP%20FOR%20DF%20EXAM_0.pdf)

*Deferred Term Work Form:*

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

You must submit these deferral forms to the Faculty of Arts Associate Dean (Students) through the UPO office: Undergraduate Programs Office, 4th Floor, MacEwan Student Centre. Only the Associate Dean approves requests for deferrals which extend beyond the end of a term. Instructors are not involved in such decisions. To make an appointment with the Associate Dean, phone (403) 220-8155.

**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 subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

**Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct are regarded as serious academic offences. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

**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. Written 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 s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

**Safewalk:** 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 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

**Academic Accommodation:** Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, phone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

***Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades:***

1. When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant. Papers will not be accepted in the main Sociology Department office.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place (i.e. outside an instructor's office, the department office etc.) Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will be available for pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or at the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.

**Failing a test and failing the course:** In order to pass the course a student does **not** have to record a passing grade on all of the assignments.

**Student Union Ombudsman Office:** <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>