

**The University of Calgary
Faculty of Arts
Department of Sociology**

Sociology Department Home Page: <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

**Sociology 615
Winter, 2013**

GRADUATE SEMINAR IN QUALITATIVE METHODS

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Office hours: Tues. 1.30-2.30 p.m., Thurs. 12.30-1.30 p.m. or by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Qualitative approaches to research offer unique ways of thinking about and studying the social world. In this course we will examine the philosophical underpinnings of selected qualitative approaches, and explore how they work in practice. The course will involve intensive reading of a range of research studies, intended to expand your knowledge and make you more informed critics of qualitative research. It will also provide some hands-on, in-the-field training in three key areas of qualitative research: observation, interviewing, and analysis of textual and/or visual material. Through this combination of reading, critical evaluation and practice, you will be introduced to the whole trajectory of research, from planning, data generation, data analysis to the writing up of research findings. The course will offer you the opportunity to explore your own research interests in greater depth, and write a proposal which could be used as a first draft of a thesis research proposal.

Because this is a seminar, its success is contingent on the informed and thoughtful participation of all members. You are expected to do the assigned readings, and to come to the seminar prepared to discuss them. (A proportion of the course grade is allocated to participation.) The course will also require in-class presentations on research topics and exercises, and a more formal presentation of the research proposal that will be the major credit component of the course. Other course requirements are noted below.

TEXTS

Warren, Carol A.B. and Tracy Xavia Karner. (2010). *Discovering Qualitative Methods* (2nd edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

Mason, Jennifer. (2002). *Qualitative Researching* (2nd edition). London: Sage Publications.

Weekly compilation of readings

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Weekly research/reading tasks	10%
Observation exercise (<i>due Feb. 15</i>).	15%
Interview exercise (<i>due March 1</i>).	15%
Text analysis exercise (<i>due March 22</i>)	10%
Presentation of proposal (<i>in class April 12</i>).	10%
Participation	5%
Proposal (<i>due April 19</i>).	35%

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A+ = 95-100	B+ = 80-84	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 54-58
A = 90-94	B = 75-79	C = 63-66	D = 50-53
A- = 85-89	B- = 70-74	C- = 59-62	F = 49 or less

Please note that ALL grade components must be completed to obtain a passing grade in this course. A pass in this course also requires a pass in the participation component.

ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION

Weekly research and reading tasks are designed to expand your skills in reading and critically assessing qualitative research, and to prepare you to do your own research. For each class, there will be a reading and assignment guide, with instructions about the task for the following week. These weekly assignments will not be graded individually, but will be turned in and collected in a file which will be assessed at the end of the term.

The observation exercise will involve two one-hour sessions of observation in a public place, during which you will write field notes of what you are observing. You will then write a short paper (8-10 pages) containing your reflections on the methodological process, and a preliminary analysis of your findings.

The interview exercise will involve one interview with a person known to you or recruited through your personal network. You will complete a partial transcription of the interview, and write a short paper (8-10 pages) containing your reflections on the methodological process, and a preliminary analysis of your findings.

The text analysis exercise will involve working with a small amount of documentary or online material. You will write a short paper (6-8 pages) containing a preliminary analysis of the material.

The research proposal is the main focus of the course. More detail will be provided on the form this proposal will take. But in brief it will be a 15-20 page outline of the research you are proposing to complete as a thesis project. This proposal, which will also be formally presented to the class, is intended to be used as a draft for your thesis prospectus.

OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

Emergency evacuations:

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point in the Social Sciences food court.

Deferrals:

If at all possible you must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in 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. *Assignments submitted late without appropriate documentation will be penalized 5% per day.*

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.

Deferred Term Work Form:

Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf> Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is a tentative schedule of topics for discussion. Please note that the schedule may change if discussions and emerging interests during the term suggest that other topics may be more appropriate. (Readings will be provided with guides and assignments on a weekly basis.)

Week 1 (Jan. 11)	Introduction
Week 2 (Jan. 18)	Getting started: the logic(s) of qualitative inquiry
Week 3 (Jan. 25)	Observation (1)
Week 4 (Feb. 1)	Observation (2)
Week 5 (Feb. 8)	Interviewing (1)
Week 6 (Feb. 15)	Interviewing (2) (<i>Observation exercise due</i>)
Week 7 (Feb. 22)	READING WEEK
Week 8 (Mar. 1)	Visual methods and documents (1) (<i>Interview exercise due</i>)
Week 9 (Mar. 8)	Visual methods and documents (2)
Week 10 (Mar. 15)	Research on/with the internet
Week 11 (Mar. 22)	Making sense of qualitative data (1) (<i>Text analysis exercise due</i>)
Week 12 (Mar. 29)	Making sense of qualitative data (2)
Week 13 (Apr. 5)	New approaches in qualitative research, review of ethics issues
Week 14 (Apr. 12)	Presentation of proposals
	<i>(Final proposal due April 22)</i>