



Western
SocialScience

Network for Economic
and Social Trends (NEST)

MRPE 9400A: Qualitative Research Methods and Data Collection

Fall 2021-2022

Credits: .5

Instructor: Pamela Block, Ph.D.

Schedule: TBD

Location: SSC 6210

Office: SSC 3425

Office hours: TBD

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Although this academic year might be different, Western University is committed to a thriving campus. We encourage you to check out the [Digital Student Experience](#) website to manage your academics and well-being. Additionally, the following link provides available resources to support students on and off campus: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence or any other event that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online, as determined by the course instructor.

Course Description

The objective of this course is to introduce students to foundational topics and methods of qualitative research. Students will explore the principles and theoretical positions that underlie qualitative methodology and gain an appreciation of the basic elements of research ethics that guide qualitative data collection. Students will learn how to conceptualize, implement, and evaluate a variety of qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviewing, focus groups, naturalistic observation, and content analysis. They will gain a clear understanding of how to critically evaluate the appropriateness of different research methods to answer specific research questions. Students will also

learn different techniques for analyzing and interpreting qualitative data, and how to present such data effectively. Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on applied aspects of qualitative research. By the end of the course, students will be able to conduct, analyze, interpret, and communicate qualitative research findings for policy and program relevant goals.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate different research methods, and their usage, in the context of policy-related research.
- Formulate research questions and choose a qualitative research design to examine those questions.
- Understand and meet ethical standards for conducting research with human subjects in a policy context.
- Design and carry out qualitative data collection, including conducting in-depth interviews, ethnographic field observations, and content analysis.
- Analyze and interpret qualitative data.
- Prepare an effective research proposal for policy purposes.
- Prepare an effective oral presentation that presents key information in a narrow time frame.

Course Philosophy

This course is organized as a workshop and practicum and students are required to be active learners. Academic relevance will be achieved through student selection and implementation of a researchable policy question within the qualitative paradigm.

Teaching Methods and Learning Experiences

This course uses small and large group discussion; paired work; required readings; individual presentation, and creation of a pilot qualitative research project as strategies to engage the students in this material.

Course Materials

Texts will be available through library, bookstore or links below

Required Texts:

1. [Interviewing for Qualitative Inquiry: A Relational Approach](#). By Ruthellen Josselson. The Guilford Press. 2013
2. [Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes](#), Second Edition (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing) by Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, Linda L. Shaw. University of Chicago Press. 2011.

Recommended (relevant chapters will be available through the library on OWL):

3. Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach, 2nd Edition. By Jean J. Schensul and Margaret D. LeCompte, AltaMira Press. 2012.

These texts can be purchased through the [bookstore](#), as e-books from the publishers, second hand from Amazon and elsewhere.

Readings are also assigned from current literature. One copy of each assigned reading or a link to the reading will be included on the syllabus and/or posted on OWL.

Other requirements

1. A notebook for writing fieldnotes
2. An audio-recording device (a smart phone would work fine)

Access to class on-line OWL site

Course Evaluation

Students will be evaluated according to the following:

Weekly Reflections Journal	10%
Field Notes:	5%/15%
Interview Assignments:	5%/15%
Focus Group Assignment	20%
Final Paper:	20%
Final Presentation:	10%

Weekly Reflections: Students are required to write informal weekly reflections on the assigned readings and activities for the week. These need not be summaries and they should be a maximum of 250 words. State the main arguments and contributions of the text in your own words and explicate how the author arrives at them and supports them. These are NOT essays, but brief exercises in analytical thought. Do not write an introduction or a conclusion or try to make paper smooth. Jump straight in by beginning, for instance, with “The author’s main argument is...” Or, “One of the main contributions is a conceptualization of....”

These entries are NOT a place to write an evaluation of the text’s style or likability, such as in “I did not like the author’s jargon.” It is recommended that you also use these papers as an opportunity to apply what you have read to your research projects; see prompts for specific weeks.

Field Notes: As part of their journals, students are expected to write two sets of field notes. On two occasions, students are required to submit a field note to the class and we will all discuss. At this time, students will also be expected to share the process of creating the field note as well as reveal the process of jotting/taking quick notes/etc.

Interview Assignments: On two occasions, students are required to conduct interviews with one individual on a topic related to their course project. For this assignment, students are required to:

1. Create a list of interview questions before the interview
2. Conduct the interview
3. Transcribe the interview
4. Write up a “memo” about the interview and analyze findings

Submit the list of questions, the interview transcript, and the memo to the instructor on the due dates. Note that the second assignment is weighted more heavily than the first to give you an opportunity to improve.

Focus Groups: If students are unable to create a focus group as part of their research project, they will be given class time to run a focus group (and this is actually recommended) of their peers. Students are required to:

1. Choose a theme and creating a list of questions
2. Record/document the focus group session
3. Create a transcript of the session
4. Write a “memo” of the findings including analysis

Final Paper and Oral Presentation: As a way to bring together the various components of this class, your final project will be the development and presentation of a research proposal for a qualitative study unique to your own interests. This proposal and presentation should be 10-12 pages long, double spaced, and should consist of the following parts:

- (a) a statement of the problem you wish to address, with justification as to why qualitative methods are appropriate for addressing this issue;
- (b) a specific research question or questions that you will be pursuing in this project, and justification as to why these research questions are important (what is known, what are the gaps in knowledge);
- (c) a description of the qualitative method (or methods) you will be using to carry out the study, as well as your sampling strategy (please justify your choice of the method and sampling strategy);
- (d) the data collection protocol (or protocols) that you will be using (such as a semi-structured interview schedule, focus group guide, and/or observation guide);
- (e) a description of how you will protect human subjects in this study;
- (f) a description of your data analysis plan for this study.

You will be expected to provide a brief oral presentation of your final paper on the last day of class.

Outcome Objectives

Professional Behavior Expectations

Throughout the course, the student will:

1. Consistently behave in ways that demonstrate respect to all those involved in the learning process.
2. Explore alternative perspectives.
3. Engage in and encourage appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication consistent with collaborative learning.
4. Utilize a tactful, constructive approach when giving or receiving feedback and suggestions.
5. Assume responsibility for learning through active classroom participation and consistent attendance
6. Demonstrate ability to self-assess, self-correct and self-direct.
7. Adapt to unexpected situations in a mature, rational manner.
8. Demonstrate an investment in your own professional development.
9. Maintain academic honesty.
10. Work for the greater good of the program and your peers.

Behavioral Objectives

11. Differentiate between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms
12. Identify/develop questions within the academic or clinical arenas that are best explored through the use of qualitative data analysis
13. Explore qualitative research methods (sampling, data collection, data analysis) to answer researchable questions
14. Assess the components of a qualitative research study that ensure scientific rigor
15. Discuss mixed method research as an alternative to single paradigm research.
16. Develop resource networks for collaboration

Important Policies

Assignment Deadlines. Students must submit their assignments by the date and time stated in the course outline and on the OWL website. Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day they are late. Any assignment not received within 5 days of the due date will not be accepted, except in the event of a documented medical or family emergency. If a student anticipates an issue with an assignment, they are recommended to speak to the professor as early as possible to make alternative arrangements.

Plagiarism. Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar). All required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Standards of Professional Behaviour. It is the responsibility of all to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- Respect for others both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy).
- Active engagement in learning and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best). Take responsibility for your own learning by: relating course content and projects to your

own professional interests; monitoring your own understanding; seeking clarification and assistance when necessary.

- Personal integrity (following through on commitments; doing one's own work).

Students should also be aware of the UWO Student Code of Conduct found at:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

Copyright of Lectures and Other Course Materials. Any materials created by the instructor (e.g., videos, notes, handouts, summaries, slide decks, assignments, exams, etc.) are protected by copyright law and may not be copied or distributed in any form without the explicit permission of the instructor. Any non-authorized use of these materials constitutes an academic offence.

Scholastic Offences. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence (https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsgrad.pdf).

Accommodation. Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction. For more information, see <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>.

Completion of Course Requirements. Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall–December 31; Winter–April 30, Summer–August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the graduate program office.

Accessibility Options. Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2111, x82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html.

Mental Health. Students in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Health and Wellness. As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty

supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. The Wellness Education Centre (lower level UCC) assists students in finding mental health and other related resources best suited to their needs (<http://se.uwo.ca/wec.html>). Western's School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' Living Well website provides tips for thriving at grad school and other helpful information (http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/living_well/index.html). Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Also, we encourage you to check out the Faculty of Music web page (<http://www.music.uwo.ca/>), and our own McIntosh Gallery (<http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>).

Disputing a Grade. Students who wish to dispute an assignment, exam, or course grade must write a one-page explanation justifying why their work should be re-evaluated. Work will not be re-evaluated on the basis that students were sick or feeling stressed when completing the assignment. Please be advised that a student's mark may go up or down upon re-evaluation.

Extraordinary Circumstances. The content and/or evaluation of this course is subject to change in the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's or instructor's control.

Course Schedule

Please note: This schedule is subject to change over the course of the term in order to meet the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced through our OWL course website.