



## MRPE 9400A:

# Qualitative Research Methods and Data Collection

Fall 2022  
The University of Western Ontario

**Rebecca Ellis**  
Ph.D. Geography and Environment

Class: SSC 6210  
Office Hours: TBD  
Contact Details: [rellis25@uwo.ca](mailto:rellis25@uwo.ca)

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/>.

## Course Description

The objective of this course is to introduce students to foundational topics and methods of qualitative research. Students will explore the principles underlying qualitative inquiry, acquire a general understanding of the 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. Moreover, 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 Materials

Textbook, available at the Western bookstore or the provided link: [Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact, 2nd Edition by Sarah J. Tracey](#)

**Additional weekly mandatory readings and the reading schedule will be posted on the OWL site.**

## Course Evaluation

Assignment	Due date	Weight
Research Design Paper		<b>30%</b>
Proposal	September 26	5%
Final Paper	December 8	25%
Seminar participation	On-going, attendance and in-class activities	<b>15%</b>
Seminar presentation	TBA	<b>15%</b>
In-depth Interviewing assignment	October 17	<b>20%</b>
Participant observation assignment	November 7	<b>20%</b>

### Research Design paper – 30%

Students will design a qualitative research project that relates directly to policymaking. Students must describe and justify all aspects of their proposed study including: research question, theoretical approach, ethics, positionality, research participants, sampling, main methods (one method must be described in detail), data collection and a plan for analysis and dissemination. There are two graded components of this assignment, a 500-word proposal (5%), including the research question and a (min)15-page final paper (25%). Further information will be provided.

### Seminar Participation – 15%

Attendance is mandatory in all classes. Active participation is expected through class discussions and in-class activities (including occasional mini-assignments).

### Seminar Presentation – 15%

Student groups will give a 45-minute seminar presentation about the weekly topic. This will involve

presenting about assigned readings in a way that is engaging and participatory. Each student will submit a 500-word summary and reflection. Further information will be provided.

### **In-depth Interviewing assignment – 20%**

Students will conduct two in-depth interviews. This assignment will include an interview guide, data analysis, and reflection. 8-10 pages. Further information will be provided.

### **Participant observation (mini-ethnography) assignment – 20%**

Students will engage in participant observation in the same type of public space in two different neighbourhoods in London (i.e. farmers' market, park, community centre, bus, etc.). The assignment will include a description of the research, a comparative data analysis, and reflection. 8-10 pages. Further information will be provided.

## **How to Contact Me**

I can be reached by email [rellis25@uwo.ca](mailto:rellis25@uwo.ca). I strive to reply within 24 hours. In-person office room and hours TBA. Virtual office hours via zoom available on request.

## **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](http://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>

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**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 ([www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.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. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook: [http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate\\_handbook/course\\_information.html](http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html).

**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](http://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](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](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.*

Week	Date	Topic	Notes
1	Sept 12	What is Qualitative Research	<b>Group seminar presentation sign-up</b>
2	Sept 19	Research Project Design/Ethics & Power	
3	Sept 26	Theoretical Approaches/ Positionality	<b>Research design proposal due</b>
4	Oct. 3	In-depth Interviewing*	
5	NO CLASS	Holiday	
6	Oct 17	Focus Groups*	<b>In-depth interview assignment due</b>
7	Oct 24	Ethnography and Participant Observation*	
8	NO CLASS	Reading week	
9	Nov 7	Content analysis*	<b>Participant observation assignment due</b>
10	Nov 14	Creative, participatory methods*	
11	Nov 21	Data analysis	
12	Nov 28	Writing and presenting qualitative methods	
13	Dec 8	Policy-making and qualitative research	<b>Final Paper due</b>

\*These classes include student-led seminars