



MRPE 9400A: *Qualitative Research Methods and Data Collection*

This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.

Fall Term 2023
The University of Western Ontario

Dr. Lyn Hoang
Department of Sociology

When & Where: See Student Center For Details OR Course OWL site

How to Contact me: lhoang3@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Mondays – Before/After class or Zoom (by appointment)

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:

- 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
- Design and carry out a research project, including conducting in-depth interviews, ethnographic field observations, and content analysis for policy purposes
- Analyze and interpret qualitative data.
- Prepare an effective oral presentation that presents key information in a narrow time frame.

Course Materials:

- **Required Text(s):** “Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy. 2017. *The Practice of Qualitative Research: Engaging Students in the Research Process*. Third Edition. Sage Publishing.

- Digital versions are available through Campus Bookstore at Western or through Vital Source: <https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/the-practice-of-qualitative-research-engaging-sharlene-nagy-hesse-biber-v9781506333458>
- **Additional:** Weekly readings and video/audio materials will be posted on OWL in the corresponding “Lessons” tab

Note: Students are expected to do the weekly readings as these will be the basis for class discussions, assignments, and evaluations. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to engage with any additional/suggested material as these will help to contextualize class discussions and provide further examples.

Course Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course. The use of ChatGPT, OpenAI or any other AI software is NOT PERMITTED within this course. Assignments and/or exams with suspected use of AI software will result in an automatic failure.

Evaluation Breakdown

Description	Weight	Due Date
Seminar Participation	15%	Weekly
Seminar Presentation	10%	Selected Weeks
Research Proposal	15%	Oct 2
Secondary research project - select one of two:	25%	
A) Ethnography Assignment		Oct 23
B) Content Analysis/Netnography		Nov 13
Research Final Paper	25%	Dec 4
3M Presentation	10%	Dec 4
	<hr/> 100%	

Evaluation Details (More information for each evaluation form will be provided via OWL).

Seminar Participation (15% of total grade): Attendance and participation is expected. Students may miss one lecture without valid medical or other documentation. If you cannot attend a class due to illness or other reasons, please inform Dr. Hoang ahead of time. For any additional missed lectures, students will need to receive accommodation from academic counselling.

Students are expected to proactively participate in class discussions and in-class activities. Seminar participation will be measured through an assessment of the *quality* of your contribution in addition to your preparedness based on reading course material, raising interesting questions, applying key concepts, engaging with your peers. Class participation is NOT solely based on a quantitative measurement of your contributions (e.g., how much or often you talk).

Seminar Presentation (10% of total grade):

Presentations are core elements of seminars. Each week includes a presentation topic. In the first class, students will sign up for a topic. Working in teams - the presentation will focus on co-learning and presenters should give an overview of the assigned topic, assigned readings in a way that is engaging,

highlight its importance for our understanding or applying qualitative methods, and offer opportunities for discussions. If you wish, you can prepare discussion questions. The presentation itself including discussions should be no longer than one hour. Students may utilize PowerPoints/slides or other activities and/or materials. Presenting teams will be provided the same mark.

Course Research Project: 3 components - Students will produce their own qualitative interview project which will offer policy creation or recommendations for a topic/research question of their choice. This project will contain three parts.

Part 1: Research Proposal (10% of total grade): Students will begin this course project by determining their research question for their topic of choice. They will identify their positionality, research participants, sampling strategy, recruitment method, and interview guide. They will also produce the materials required for ethics – this proposal should be approximately 5 pages not including ethics documents.

Part 2: Research Final Paper (25% of total grade): Individually, students will conduct interviews (1 – 2 participants), transcribe recordings, code data, and analyze the data to answer the research questions, and offer policy recommendations. This paper will be approximately 12 - 15 pages including a one-page reflection on their experience conducting their study using this method.

Part 3: 3M presentation (10% of total grade): In the last class, all students will give a 3-Minute presentation using one slide to sum up their project, findings, and policy recommendations. This presentation is to aid students in developing the skills necessary to pitch their findings, ideas, or policies recommendations in a concise manner.

Secondary research project - Select one of two options: (15% of total grade) – Students will conduct another research using one of the two methods outlined below. These assignment due dates are listed above.

OPTION 1 - Content Analysis/Netnography Assignment – Students will conduct a content analysis or netnography on their OWN social media accounts or public social media accounts. Students will spend time collecting content to help them address a research question, code the content, and analyze the data to inform their research question and offer potential policy recommendation based on findings. This paper will be approximately 8-10 pages and will include a one-page reflection on the students' experience conducting research using this method.

OPTION 2 – Ethnography Assignment - Students will engage in participant observation in-person in two different public spaces in London (i.e. farmers' market, park, community centre, bus, Starbucks, etc.). The assignment will include a description of the research and research question, a comparative data analysis of the observation, and potential policy recommendation based on findings. This paper will be approximately 8-10 pages and will include a one-page reflection on the students' experience conducting research using this method.

How to Contact Me:

- The best way to reach me is through email: lhoang3@uwo.ca. Emails will be monitored daily; students will typically receive a response in 24 – 72 hours. Please note: Messages to me sent via OWL “messages” tool or discussion forum may not receive timely responses.
- **Before contacting me:** Students are **responsible** for checking the course OWL site on a regular basis for announcements pertaining to the course or other updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the course. Make sure to check announcements or syllabus before emailing me a question.

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 (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.

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.

Week	Topics	Readings and Resources	Notes:
1 – Sept 11	Introduction to Course and Qualitative Research	Textbook – Chapter 1 Required Articles – TBD	Presentation dates selected
2 – Sept 18	Qualitative Research Design and Ethics	Textbook – Chapters 2, 3, 4 Required Articles - TBD	
3 – Sept 25	In-Depth Interviewing and Focus Groups*	Textbook – Chapter 5 Required Articles - TBD	
4 – Oct 2	Ethnography and Participant Observation*	Textbook – Chapter 7 Required Articles - TBD	Research Proposals Due
5 – Oct 9	NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)		
6 – Oct 16	Approaches to Data Analysis (Coding and Interpretation)	Textbook – Chapter 11 Required Articles - TBD	(Complete Asynchronous ONLINE MODULE – no in-class seminar session)
7 – Oct 23 NOTE: (TIME CHANGE - THIS CLASS IS FROM 12:30pm – 3:30pm)	Policy Making in Qualitative Research + Software for Qualitative Analysis	Required Articles - TBD	OPTION A: Ethnography Assignment Due
8 – Oct 30	NO CLASS (READING WEEK)		
9 – Nov 6	Content Analysis + Semantic Analysis*	Textbook – Chapter 9 Required Articles - TBD	
10 – Nov 13	Social Media Research + Recruiting Participants Online*	Required Articles - TBD	OPTION B: Content Analysis Assignment Due
11 – Nov 20	Arts-Based Research +	Required Articles - TBD	

	Participatory Methods + Indigenous Research*		
12 – Nov 27	Writing Up and Presenting Qualitative Research	Textbook – Chapter 12 Required Articles - TBD	
13 – Dec 4	Course Wrap-Up 3M Presentations	None.	Research Final Paper Due 3M Presentations Due
END OF TERM			

* Denote topic available for student-led seminar presentation