



## Western University

### MRPE 9400A

### Qualitative Research Methods and Data Collection

Fall 2020/21

Tuesday, 9:30am-12:30pm, Online

Instructor: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann

Office Hours: by appointment

Department of Sociology, Office: SSC 5430

Email: [wlehmann@uwo.ca](mailto:wlehmann@uwo.ca)

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#### Technical Requirements



Stable internet connection.



Laptop or computer



Working microphone



Working webcam (preferred)



Tuesdays 9:30am to 12:30pm<sup>1</sup> via Zoom meeting. See OWL 'Zoom' tab for Zoom meeting links.

#### How Will the Course Be Taught?

Due to the disruptions caused by COVID-19, recognizing that some students will not be in London, and understanding that many of us may not feel comfortable meeting in-person in a seminar room, the course will be taught completely online. In order to make online teaching meaningful, a few key issues need to be in place:

- The seminar will be run as a “flipped classroom.” All lecture material and readings will be made available on OWL with the expectation that you complete the readings and review the materials PRIOR to class. Class time is used to discuss the material, and work with hands-on examples.
- All Western students have access to Western’s Zoom account. Please make sure to download the app and set up Zoom prior to the beginning of term.
- We will discuss Zoom etiquette in our first live meeting on Tuesday, September 15.

## **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.

## **Required Text(s)**

Aurini, J.D, Heath, M. and S. Howells. 2016. *The How To of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Online purchase option: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-how-toof-qualitative-research/book240301>

Additionally, weekly readings will be posted on OWL.

## **Contact Information**

***Instructor: Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann***

- By email: [wlehmann@uwo.ca](mailto:wlehmann@uwo.ca)
- Make sure to check the course OWL site regularly for course updates, cancellations, and other course-related postings.

## **Method of Evaluation**

Most evaluations will be based on hands-on research assignments, including actual data collection, analysis, the development of a proposal and a presentation.

### **Overarching topic to study: Western's COVID-19 policy**

#### **1) Data Collection Assignments (Total 50%): Detailed information provided in class**

1. ***Content analysis (15%):*** Carry out a small content analysis of Western's Covid-19 policy, news media, and social media: ***Due October 13, 2020; length: 5 pages, double spaced***
2. ***Ethnography (15%):*** Observe a "common" area on campus (e.g., hallway leading to a classrooms or dining areas). Observe how people move and behave and whether they comply with policies? ***Due October 27, 2020; length: 5 pages, double spaced (plus field notes)***
3. ***Interview (20%):*** Interview one students about the policy? What do they think? What works? What doesn't? Transcribe and carry out some preliminary coding. ***Due November 24, 2020; length: length depends on length of interview***

#### **2) Proposal 30%**

Prepare a proposal for Western; including a small summary of findings from your pilot studies that justify your strategy; discuss sampling, outcomes. ***Due: December 15, 2020 (one week after last class)***

#### **3) Proposal presentation 10%: December 8, 2020 (last class)**

#### **4) Weekly postings on discussion question (Total 10%)**

I will post a discussion question each week (starting for the week of September 22). You are expected to post a response and discuss with others in the seminar.

***IMPORTANT NOTE: If you are not physically in London, we can modify the assignment accordingly. We can discuss individual accommodations, but here are a few options:***

- 1) If you live in a university city, you can conduct your assignment on the COVID-19 policy there.
- 2) If you do not live in a university city, you can still complete the content analysis and the interview components. The content is available regardless of your location. Classmates who are in London can assist with locating interview participants who can be interviewed via Zoom or telephone. We can then arrange an alternate ethnography (e.g., you can observe how shoppers in a supermarket negotiate COVID-19 policies as the enter and exit and move through the store).
- 3) If all else fails, we can discuss a completely different alternative arrangement on a case-by-case basis. Please contact me with concerns as soon as possible.

## **Important Policies**

### **Standards of Professional Behaviour**

It is the responsibility of all of us in this class 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)
- **Personal integrity** (following through on commitments; doing own work)

### **Discrimination and Unconscious Bias**

- **Zero-tolerance** for discrimination. I encourage students to “call out” comments or content that may be marginalizing, oppressive, or discriminatory. If students are uncomfortable raising concerns in class, please speak to me immediately about any discriminatory conduct.
- **Unconscious/implicit bias.** We all have unconscious biases. Yes, everyone! Our brains unconsciously process huge amounts of information without us even being aware of it. This can include snap judgements about people we meet and situations we encounter. People have unconscious preferences for people who are similar to them and situations that are familiar. This unconscious bias can exclude, marginalize, and discriminate against minorities. As sociologists, it is our duty to use our sociological imaginations to combat unconscious bias.
  - **Here is some additional information and tips to combat unconscious bias:**
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP-cqFLS8Q4>
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKHSJHkPeLY>

Students should also be aware of the **UWO Student Code of Conduct** found at <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

### **What do you need?**

What do you need to work at your best? Please let me know how I can help you. Western provides a number of resources for students who need accommodation or who are having mental health challenges (see below) but I encourage students to speak to me if there is anything I can do to improve their learning experience.

### **Digital Student Experience**

Students should also consider checking out the Western University Digital Student Experience website for additional information about online learning <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>.

If you need assistance with OWL and/or online access, you can seek support on the [OWL Help page](#). Alternatively, you can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

**Course Attendance Requirements:**

In a graduate seminar, attendance and active participation is the only way we can learn together and from each other. Attendance at all seminars is therefore required. With the exception of legitimate medical/personal excuses (documentation required to be submitted) students are expected to attend at least 80% of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade in the course cannot be obtained without meeting this attendance requirement. If your internet connection is unstable and keeps you from attending and participating, please let me know as soon as possible.

**Policies for Assignment Deadlines:**

As you are taking classes in a professional program, it is always good practice to “simulate” expectations you would find in professional environments. I therefore urge you strongly to work in a way that allows you to meet all your assignment deadlines, as you would in job in which you have to produce deliverables on time. That said, we live in strange and uncertain times and stuff happens. So, if you have to miss the due date for an assignment due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, please notify me as soon as possible. We can then work out extensions as needed.

**A Note on 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). Due to the highly specific nature of the assignments in this class, I will not submit your assignments to a plagiarism checking software (such as Turnitin).

**Absence from Course Commitments**

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences](#)

In the interest of the health and safety of students and health care providers, you are no longer required to seek a medical note for absences this term. If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness you should use the [Illness Reporting Tool](#). This tool takes the place of the need to submit a medical note and the Self-Reported Absence System formally used by undergraduate students.

You are required to self-report every day that you are ill and unable to complete course commitments. Details about when you should submit missed work, the format of the missed work can be found in the Section 7. Evaluation above. Students should communicate promptly with their instructor and use this tool with integrity.

***Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness***

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation:

[http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.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 x 82147 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)

***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, at the following web site:

[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)

***Mental Health***

Students who are 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.

**Compassionate Grounds**

***Serious Illness of a Family Member:*** Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a medical certificate from the family member's physician to your home faculty's Academic Counseling office.

***In Case of a Death:*** Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a copy of the newspaper notice, death certificate or documentation provided by the funeral director to your home faculty's Academic Counseling office.

## **Course Schedule**

*(Note: readings subject to change)*

### **1. Introduction: September 15, 2020**

- Introduction to the course: content, assignments, expectations
- Discussing online teaching strategies
- Getting to know each other

Reading: None

### **2. Defining Qualitative Methods and Preparing for Research: September 22, 2020**

- What is qualitative methods. The difference between quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Understanding the context of your project: literature reviews

Reading 1: *Textbook Chapter 1&2*

Reading 2: *Krahn and Taylor*

Reading 3: *Taylor and Krahn*

### **3. Designing a Qualitative Research Project: September 29, 2020**

- Formulating Research Questions/Objectives
- Choosing the right methodology

Reading 1: *Textbook Chapter 3*

Reading 2: Agee: *Developing Qualitative Research Questions: A reflective process*

Reading 3: Beyenes et al: *The Craft of Doing Qualitative Research in Prisons*

### **4. Content Analysis: October 6, 2020**

- What is content analysis; how is it done?
- Hands-on work: Content analysis exercise

Reading 1: *Textbook Chapter 7*

Reading 2: Birnbaum: *The Fronts Students Use: Facebook and the Standardization of Self-Presentations*

Reading 3: Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes: *Picturing Protest: The Visual Framing of Collective Action by First Nations in Canada*

### **5. Ethics in Qualitative Research: October 13, 2020**

- Research ethics in academic and non-academic research
- Hands-on Exercise: ethics implications for your assignments (and research more generally)

Reading 1: Haggerty: *Ethics Creep: Governing Social Science Research in the Name of Ethics*

Reading 2: Duncan et al: *Is my mum going to hear this? Methodological and ethical challenges in qualitative health research with young people*

Reading 3: Gibson et al: *Talking about suicide: Confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative research*

**Content Analysis Assignment Due Today**

**6. Ethnography and Observational Field Work: October 20, 2020**

- Sampling and techniques of ethnographic research
- Ethics in ethnographic research
- Hands-on exercise; field notes

Reading 1: *Textbook Chapter 6*

Reading 2: Calarco: *"I Need Help!" Social Class and Children's Help-Seeking in Elementary School*

Reading 3: Manzo: *Social Control and the Management of "Personal" Space in Shopping Malls*

**7. In-Depth Interviewing: October 27, 2020**

- Developing interview guides & strategies and techniques for successful interviews
- Interview exercise in class

Reading 1: *Textbook Chapter 4*

Reading 2: Lehmann: *Extra-credential Experiences and Social Closure*

Reading 3: Nath: *Aesthetic and Emotional Labour through Stigma*

***Ethnography exercise essay due today***

**READING WEEK; November 2-8, 2020**

**8. Alternative forms of data collection: November 10, 2020**

- Focus groups; Art based and photo solicitation, Oral histories, Virtual methods

Reading 1: *Textbook Chapter 5*

Reading 2: Young et al: *Drinking Like a Guy: Frequent Binge Drinking among Undergraduate Women*

Reading 3: Raby, Lehman et al: *Reflections on Using Participant-Generated, Digital Photo-Elicitation in Research With Young Canadians About Their First Part-Time Jobs*

**9. Analysis and Coding of Qualitative Data: November 17, 2020**

- Transcribing, coding, organizing and interpreting data
- Hands-on work in class: Coding exercise

Reading 1: *Textbook Chapter 8*

Reading 2: Mullins & Preyde: *The lived experience of students with an invisible disability*

Reading 3: Lehmann: *'I'm still scrubbing the floors': experiencing youth apprenticeships in Canada and Germany*

**10. Writing up results: November 24, 2020**

- More on coding and analyzing
- Writing effective qualitative research papers and reports

Reading 1: *Textbook Chapter 9*

Reading 2: Lehmann et al: *Youth apprenticeships in Canada: on their inferior status despite skilled labour shortages* (Journal Article) compared to Reading 3: Taylor et al: *High School Apprentices: Experiences and Outcomes*

***Interview Assignment Due Today***



**11. Putting it all together: December 1, 2020**

- Preparing a research proposal (including all your pilot research)
- How to prepare effective proposal presentation

Reading 1: *Towards Race Equity in Education: The Schooling of Black Students in the GTA*

**12. Presentations: December 8, 2020**