

# **Bishop's University**

## **SOC 361 Qualitative Research Methods**

Fall 2016

Thursday 4-7pm JOH 103

Professor: Dr. Josh Curtis  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9-11  
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### **1. Calendar Description**

The emphasis is upon understanding and utilizing ethnographic methods in the examination of societal events and relationships, in terms of how these are perceived and socially organized. (3cr.)  
Prerequisites SOC 101, SOC 110 and SOC 111

### **2. Course Outline**

This course explores qualitative research methods used in Sociological research. Qualitative research methods provide essential tools to study the social world we live in. In this course we will learn how to design, conduct, and write up qualitative research, including issues such as entering the field, ethical issues in qualitative research, dilemmas of reflexivity and voice, approaches to the analysis of qualitative evidence, oral and written presentation of, and evaluation and dissemination of qualitative research. In short, this course will cover the basics of collecting, interpreting, and analyzing qualitative data. In addition to becoming familiar with the use of qualitative methods, you will also learn how to read and evaluate sociological research and to think critically about sociological questions related to politics and public policy, poverty, education, gender and racial inequality, crime, deviance, and others.

Throughout the term you will also conduct a qualitative research project. The project will require you to formulate a research question, review existing literature on the topic, design and conduct original qualitative research, and analyze the resulting data in order to provide an answer to your question. During this course we will be learning about each of these steps and reading several examples of qualitative research to help design your project.

### **3. Goals and Learning Objectives**

The goal of this course is that you learn how to conduct and critically evaluate qualitative sociological research. To achieve this, you will have to:

- Understand the major theoretical approaches to qualitative analysis.

- Understand the differences between various qualitative methods, their relative strengths and weaknesses, and how they should be deployed in research.
- Understand the ethical dilemmas of qualitative research.
- Learn how to develop research questions that can be answered through qualitative methodologies.
- Learn how to gather and analyze data by conducting in-class and out-of-class research exercises.
- Learn how to write a research report that uses original research to coherently and persuasively answer a research question.
- Develop a familiarity with academic literature and an ability to evaluate the major claims made in journal articles and book chapters

#### 4. Course Evaluation

The course will have **five** requirements that will contribute to your final course grade:

1. Weekly participation (20%)
2. Presentation (20%)
3. Mid-term Exam (20%)
4. Preliminary research analysis (10%)
5. Research project (30%)

#### *Evaluation Breakdown*

##### 4.1. Weekly Seminar Participation (20%)

This course will be most successful if everyone participates in class, and thus I will not go easy on participation grades—if you don't participate regularly, you will receive a poor grade. **While attendance is not mandatory, if you do not attend class and participate in class discussion, your grade will suffer.** Moreover, I will be looking for valuable contributions. Opinion alone is not good enough. I expect you to draw on evidence from the required readings to support your arguments. I will also be looking for students to “think outside of the box” and give good logical arguments based on personal experience and previous education. Finally, I will be expecting you to intelligently and critically challenge the seminar leaders. Again, these challenges should be based on solid arguments and empirical evidence when possible.

##### 4.2 In-class Presentations (20%)

Each week one student (or perhaps two depending on enrollment) will make an in-class presentation about that week's readings, raise critical questions, and set forth topics for discussion. Plan for roughly 30-45 minutes as the length for your presentation, and be ready to facilitate discussion after the presentation. Your presentation is worth twenty percent of your final mark. I will mark your presentation primarily on your ability to critically engage with the readings (and your classmates' reactions) and set the stage for a quality discussion.

### 4.3 Mid-term exam (20%)

A term test will be held during class time on October 6<sup>th</sup>. The test will examine your knowledge of the material presented in lecture and in the readings (lectures 1-4 and all associated readings). The mid-term will consist of 15 multiple choice, 15 true & false, and 2 short answer questions. The purpose of the mid-term is to ensure that everyone is staying on track with the course readings, to ensure greater success in the completion of your qualitative research analysis, due at the midway point of the course. More information on the specific types of questions will be made available later in the term.

### 4.4 Preliminary research analysis (10%)

The qualitative research component of your paper will be due in class on October 27<sup>th</sup>. It will be graded as a 'pass/fail' based on the level of rigor used in its preparation. I will not be lenient, so it is crucial that you spend considerable effort conducting and presenting your research (two interviews, transcribed, with *some* preliminary analysis). The purpose of this assignment is to **make sure** that you have collected and analyzed (at least, a preliminary attempt) your data well in advance of the research project deadline. More information will be made available throughout the term.

### 4.5 Research project (30%)

The research project will involve analyzing the social and economic experience of immigrants who have immigrated to Quebec. Quebec is one of Canada's highest immigrant receiving provinces and it is therefore important to understand the dynamics of immigrants' social and economic integration in our province. As part of your original research you will be required to interview *at least* two first generation Canadian immigrants. If possible, I encourage you to find one resident who lives in an Urban center (i.e., Montreal or Quebec City) and one resident who lives in a rural center (i.e., Lennoxville). For this project we will be interested in understanding the (1) social and labour market integration, and (2) (3) immigrants' attitudes toward the issue of immigration. We will pay particular attention to urban/rural differences. Although each student will submit their own data analysis and final research paper, our final goal will be to create a **publishable research paper that we will submit to an academic journal, co-authored by each student in the course**. We will also submit our research paper to the 2017 Canadian Sociological Meetings in Toronto, Ontario. This will provide you (if interested) with an opportunity to gain valuable research and professionalization experience which will help if you pursue graduate studies in sociology, but also will serve as valuable experience for various public or private sector occupations after graduation.

After completing your research and analyzing your data, you will hand in a record of your preliminary research analysis (pass/fail). Finally, the research paper (15 pages max) will be due at the end of the term. This paper will involve an introduction that lays out your research question and main findings, a literature review, a discussion of your methods, a summary of your data analysis, and a conclusion that relates your findings back to the literature. More information on these assignments will be made available throughout the term.

## 5. Lecture Format

The lectures will provide separate, but complementary information to the course readings. Most weeks your readings will be actual sociological papers. They will provide you with an example of the “end product” of qualitative research. The lectures, on the other hand, will offer a “how to” guide to qualitative research. Lectures will cover topics such as which methods are better for which types of questions, what steps are involved in conducting an ethnography, or how to analyze interview transcripts.

## 6. Required Readings and Course Schedule

A textbook for the course can be purchased at the **Bishop’s University Bookstore**. All weekly journal articles can be downloaded for free from the library website:

- Bruce L. Berg and Howard Lune. 2012. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Pearson.
- Students are responsible for downloading the required journal article readings.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

*(Schedule is tentative and dependent upon class progress)*

#### **September 8<sup>th</sup>: Course Introduction**

*Chapter 1: Introduction*

- Introduce the research project.
- Brainstorm the interview schedule in groups
- Select presentation dates

#### **September 15<sup>th</sup>:**

*Chapter 2: Designing Qualitative Research & Chapter 3: Ethics Issues*

##### ***Journal Articles:***

- Goffman, Alice. 2009. “On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto.” *American Sociological Review*, 74 (3): 339-357
- Lenza, Michael. 2004. “Controversies Surrounding Laud Humphreys’ Tearoom Trade: An Unsettling Example of Politics and Power in Methodological Critiques.” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 24(3,4,5): 20-31.

#### **September 22<sup>nd</sup>:**

*Chapter 4: Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing & Chapter 5: Focus Group Interviewing*

##### ***Journal Articles:***

- Calarco, Jessica. 2014. "Coached for the Classroom: Parents' Cultural Transmission and Children's Reproduction of Educational Inequalities." *American Sociological Review*, 79 (5): 1015-1037.
- Sykes, Jennifer, Katrin Križ, Kathryn Edin, and Sarah Halpern-Meehin. 2014. "Dignity and Dreams: What the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Means to Low-Income Families." *American Sociological Review*, 80 (2): 243-267.

### September 29<sup>th</sup>:

*Chapter 6: Ethnographic Field Strategies*

#### ***Journal Articles:***

- Stein, Arlene. 2010. "Sex, Truths, and Audiotape: Anonymity and the Ethics of Exposure in Public Ethnography." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39(5) 554–568.
- Berkowitz, Dana. 2006. "Consuming Eroticism: Gender Performances and Presentations in Pornographic Establishments." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35:583-606.

### October 6<sup>th</sup>:

*In-class workshop: Interviewing, recording data, interpreting, and interpreting your results.*

- **Video:** How to conduct qualitative interviews.
- **Research Workshop:** Practice interviews, record data, examine and interpret results. General discussion of social and economic integration of Quebec's immigrants.
- **MID TERM REVIEW**

### October 13<sup>th</sup>: Mid term test (20% of your grade)

*The test covers all material from readings and lectures since start of course.*

### October 20<sup>th</sup>:

*Chapter 7: Action Research & Chapter 8: Unobtrusive Measures in Research*

#### ***Journal Articles:***

- Andreas Diekmann, Andreas, Ben Jann, Wojtek Przepiorka, and Stefan Wehrli. 2014. Reputation Formation and the Evolution of Cooperation in Anonymous Online Markets. *American Sociological Review*, 79(1): 65-85.
- VanderStaay, S. L. 2005. One hundred dollars and a dead man: Ethical decision making in ethnographic fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 34, 371-409.

### October 27<sup>th</sup>:

*Chapter 9: Social Historical Research and Oral Traditions*

**\*\*\*\* INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS DUE TODAY \*\*\*\***

#### ***Journal Articles:***

- Grigoryeva, Angelina and Martin Ruef. 2015. The Historical Demography of Racial Segregation. *American Sociological Review*, 80(4): 814-842.
- Lee, Jooyoung. 2009. "Open Mic: Professionalizing the Rap Career." *Ethnography*, 10(4): 475-495.

**November 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

*Chapter 10: Case Studies*

***Journal Articles:***

- Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method" *Sociological Theory*, 16(1), pp. 4-33.
- Haney, Lynne. 1996. "Homeboys, babies, men in suits: The state and the reproduction of male dominance". *American Sociological Review*, 61(5), p. 759-778

**November 10<sup>th</sup>:**

*Chapter 11: An Introduction to Content Analysis*

***Journal Articles:***

- Salvatore J. Restifo, Salvatore J., Vincent J. Roscigno, and Zhenchao Qian. 2013. Segmented Assimilation, Split Labor Markets, and Racial/Ethnic Inequality: The Case of Early-Twentieth-Century New York. *American Sociological Review*, 78 (5): 897-924.
- Davenport, Christian, Sarah A. Soule, and David A. Armstrong II. 2011. Protesting While Black?: The Differential Policing of American Activism, 1960 to 1990. *American Sociological Review*, 76 (1): 152-178.

**November 17<sup>th</sup>:**

*Chapter 12: Writing Research Papers: Sorting the Noodles from the Soup*

***Workshop: Discussing our final papers***

**November 24<sup>th</sup>:**

*Concluding Remarks, Final Paper Workshop, Make-up Presentations (if needed).*

**\*\*\*\* FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE IN CLASS TODAY \*\*\*\***