

**Investigating the Social World: Qualitative Research**  
**Sociology 3307F, Section 530**  
**Fall 2017**

**Department of Sociology**  
**Brescia University College**

**Lectures:** Mondays: 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. in BR-UH26

**Instructor:** Dr. Steven Kleinknecht **Office:** BR-210 **Office Hours:** Mondays: 1:00 to 2:00  
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**Prerequisite:** Enrolment in a Sociology Honours Specialization with a minimum grade of 60% in Sociology 2205A/B and 2206A/B or the former 231. If not in an Honours Specialization, a minimum grade of 70% in Sociology 2205A/B and 2206A/B or the former 231. Or permission from the professor.

**Antirequisites:** Sociology 3310F/G, 3311F/G.

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The goal of qualitative research is to develop an in-depth, firsthand understanding of how people go about their everyday lives. As such, it is necessary to venture into people's life-worlds and acquire an intimate awareness of the meanings they attribute to the world around them. The main objective of this course is for you to learn about qualitative research by doing it yourself. Along with observation and interview assignments, you will develop your own qualitative content analysis research project and see it through to completion. As such, you will: pick a topic of sociological interest to you; design your project and develop a research proposal; collect and analyze qualitative data; and, write a paper based on your research. Each week you will have the opportunity to discuss your research experiences with the professor and your classmates. You will also take part in exercises designed to expand your knowledge of qualitative methods.

#### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. Participate knowledgeably in discussions about the ins and outs of qualitative research
2. Design a qualitative research project
3. Describe the various ethical issues encountered during qualitative research
4. Collect data on social life using a variety of qualitative research techniques
5. Code and analyze qualitative data
6. Write a research report using qualitative data
7. Explain many of the complex issues encountered when collecting qualitative data
8. Develop theory grounded in analyses of the social world

**Note:** Generally speaking, you might find this course to be more demanding than other half credit courses. The main reason for this is that you will be conducting original research, which is always time-consuming. At the same time, you will likely find the process of engaging in your own research project to be quite rewarding.

## **BRESCIA COMPETENCIES**

You will develop the Brescia competencies at an advanced level in this course. The Brescia competencies include:

### *Communication*

The ability to exchange information and meaning effectively across cultures, space and time through appropriate modes of communication. Includes oral, written, and interpersonal or group communicate, as well as the ability to use current or innovative media.

### *Critical Thinking*

The ability to engage in thinking characterized by the rational, informed, independent, and open-minded exploration of issues, ideas, and events before accepting or formulating a conclusion.

### *Inquiry and Analysis*

The ability to reach informed decisions by breaking down complex issues, exploring evidence, demonstrating information literacy, and describing relationships among persons, things, or events.

### *Problem Solving*

The ability to create and execute a strategy to answer a question or achieve a goal. Includes being able to anticipate the consequence of a potential solution, select a strategy among several alternatives, and decide when an acceptable outcome has been reached.

### *Self Awareness and Development*

The ability to draw meaning, knowledge and value from honest and fair reflection and self-evaluation. Students are able to recognize their values and their impact on others, and make a commitment to personal growth.

### *Social Awareness and Engagement*

The ability to respect and be open to diversity (e.g. cultural, religious, political). Students take personal responsibility to actively engage in and contribute to creating positive change in local, regional, national, or global communities and societies.

### *Valuing*

The ability to make decisions or choose actions based on the consistent application of moral principles and ethical codes. Students must also be able to understand the ideas informing one's beliefs and be accountable for their actions.

## **REQUIRED READING MATERIALS**

1. van den Hoonaard, Deborah K. (2015). *Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
2. Material on OWL Sakai site for this course.

It is essential that you keep up with the readings. Readings listed in the Class Schedule (see below) are to be completed *before* the classes for which they are assigned so that you can better follow along with the lectures and participate in discussions. You will be expected to incorporate this material into your projects, and discuss and work with the ideas from the readings in class.

## **E-MAIL**

I will not be answering questions regarding course material (e.g., definitions of concepts, differences between theoretical perspectives, etc.) via e-mail. I find that these types of questions are best answered by meeting in person. I suggest that you use e-mail for addressing administrative issues about the course and arranging to meet with me. I will do my best to respond to e-mail messages within 24 hours. Please use “Sociology 3307F” as the subject line. I also encourage people to use their UWO e-mail account for school business.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

Do not hesitate to come to see me during my office hours. I am here to help with any questions you might have. This time not only serves as a great way to clarify understandings of the course material, but I also enjoy talking with people about sociology in general, educational pursuits, and career aspirations. If you are unable to make it to my office hours I will usually be around after class, or you can make an appointment to meet with me. It is a good idea to try to meet with me one-on-one at least once during the course so that we can discuss your research.

## **CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

Please respect your classmates and your instructor. To help everyone stay focused keep cell phones turned off and put away, avoid whispering with your neighbours, and use computers only for class related activities. If there is a problem with classroom conduct you may be asked to leave for the duration of the class.

## ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

### **Participation and Applied Learning Exercises (10%)**

**Course Learning Outcomes:** 1, 3, and 7.

**Brescia Competencies:** All.

You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and your research (e.g., obstacles and triumphs), and provide feedback to your classmates about their research. In addition, you will be working both individually and in groups to carry-out brief in or out of class exercises designed to extend your knowledge of course material through the direct application of research techniques. You are permitted 1 missed class without penalty. Otherwise, you must seek accommodation through your Academic Advisor.

### **Observation Assignment (20%) - Due October 30.**

**Course Learning Outcomes:** 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8.

**Brescia Competencies:** All.

You will be observing and taking field notes on social life as it happens in a public setting of interest to you. You will reflect on your experience and note sociological themes arising out of your observation.

### **Interview Assignment (20%) - Due November 13.**

**Course Learning Outcomes:** 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8.

**Brescia Competencies:** All.

You will be interviewing a friend or family member about a sociological issue of interest to you. You will submit an interview transcript along with a reflection on your interview experience and sociological themes arising out of your interview.

### **Qualitative Content Analysis Research Project**

For this project, you will select a sociological topic of interest to you that can be researched by collecting and analyzing qualitative data from publicly accessible online sources. (Detailed instructions will be provided in class.)

### ***Statement of the Research Problem (20%) - Due October 16. Turnitin and hard copy.***

**Course Learning Outcomes:** 2, 3 and 7.

**Brescia Competencies:** All.

To help generate an initial research plan and communicate your ideas, you will be submitting a preliminary statement of your research problem.

### ***Final Paper (30%) - Due December 4. Turnitin and hard copy.***

**Course Learning Outcomes:** 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

**Brescia Competencies:** All.

Your final paper represents the culmination of your qualitative research experience. In it you will present the findings of your research project.

Late Penalty: Any assignment that is submitted late will incur a 5% penalty per day.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### September 11. **Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods**

- Ch. 1: *Introduction*

### September 18. **Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approaches**

- Ch. 2: *Asking Questions and Identifying Goals*

### September 25. **Selecting a Research Topic and Designing a Qualitative Project**

- Ch. 3: *Strategies for Designing Research*

### October 2. **Politics & Ethical Issues**

- Ch. 4: *Ethics on the Ground: A Moral Compass*

### October 9. **Fall Reading Week**

### October 16. **Field Research**

- Ch. 5: *Observing Social Life through Field Research*
- **STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM DUE (20%)**

### October 23. **In-depth Interviews**

- Ch. 6: *In-Depth Interviewing*

### October 30. **Unobtrusive Measures**

- Ch. 7: *Unobtrusive Research*
- **OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT DUE (20%)**

### November 6. **Innovations in Qualitative Research**

- Ch. 8: *New Directions in Qualitative Research*

### November 13. **Coding & Data Analysis**

- Ch. 9: *Trust the Process: Analyzing Qualitative Data*
- **INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT DUE (20%)**

### November 20. **Writing the Research Paper**

- Ch. 10: *Writing Up Qualitative Research*

### November 27. **Qualitative Research Case Studies**

- OWL: *Shining Stars, Blind Sides and “Real” Realities: Exit Rituals, Eulogy Work, and Allegories in Reality Television* (van den Scott, Forstie, and Balasubramanian)
- OWL: *Death at the Polls: Experiencing and Coping with Political Defeat* (Shaffir and Kleinknecht)

### December 4. **Project Findings and Course Discussion**

- **RESEARCH PAPER DUE (30%)**

## 2017-18 BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

### 1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation for illness will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Minor ailments typically treated by over-the-counter medications will not normally be accommodated. Documentation shall be submitted as soon as possible to the student's Academic Advisor indicating the period of illness and when the student should be able to resume academic responsibilities. Students must submit their documentation along with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are **not** grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded from:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf). The student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student "was seen for a medical reason" or "was ill" is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full policy on requesting accommodation due to illness can be viewed at:

<http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg117.html>

### 2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> or the list of official dates <http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg7.html> ). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory (<http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg130.html> )

### 3. ABSENCES

**Short Absences:** If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

**Extended Absences:** If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

#### **4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

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:

[http://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).

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

##### **Plagiarism:**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage 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 academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the 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 (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

##### **Computer-marked Tests/exams:**

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

#### **5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS**

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Student Academic Appeals under Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar (<http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg112.html>).

Note that final course marks are not official until the Academic Dean has reviewed and signed the final grade report for the course. If course marks deviate from acceptable and appropriate standards, the Academic Dean may require grades to be adjusted to align them with accepted grading practices

([http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/evaluation\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf) and [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/finalgrades.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/finalgrades.pdf)).

#### **6. PREREQUISITES**

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisite(s).

## **7. SUPPORT**

### **Support Services**

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/>. The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>.

### **Mental Health and Wellness**

Students may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to your learning, such as increased anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, feeling down or lost, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. Services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about mental health and wellness at Brescia at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/mental-health-wellness/>. Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental\_Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### **Sexual Violence**

All members of the Brescia University College community have a right to work and study in an environment that is free from any form of sexual violence. Brescia University College recognizes that the prevention of, and response to, Sexual Violence is of particular importance in the university environment. Sexual Violence is strictly prohibited and unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Brescia is committed to preventing Sexual Violence and creating a safe space for anyone in the Brescia community who has experienced Sexual Violence.

If you or someone you know has experienced any form of Sexual Violence, you may access resources at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/sexual-violence/>.

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Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.