

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
SOAN 3070 - Winter 2022
Qualitative and Observational Methods

Course Instructor: Dr. Jasmin Hristov

Course Time and Location: Tue & Thu 11:30am -12:50pm virtual via Zoom

Office Hours: Fri 1:30pm or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Qualitative research methods provide us with important tools to study social phenomena. In this course we explore various qualitative research approaches to data collection and analysis along with the strengths and practical limitations of each. The course prepares students to be able to independently and successfully carry out a research project in a diverse array of institutional settings such as academia, program design, or policy formation among others.

The structure of the course reflects three main priorities. The first is the importance of learning by doing. To this end, students have the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge acquired throughout the course by designing a research project and subsequently applying techniques for collecting, organizing, analyzing and writing about data. The second idea that the course places emphasis on is the often-neglected dialectical relationship between the realms of theory and methodology. Here we consider the 'why' behind any particular research method as well as the process of theory-building. The third priority of this course is a critical reflection on: (a) the place of research methodologies within the larger relationship between knowledge and power and (b) the role of knowledge creation in social change. As part of this reflection, we examine Freirean participatory action research, institutional ethnography, and indigenous and Black feminist research paradigms.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Describe key qualitative methods of data collection including observation, interviews, focus groups, ethnography, and historical research.
2. Identify the strengths and limitations of each data collection technique.
3. Explain at least three different approaches to qualitative data analysis and apply one of them.
4. Formulate appropriate research questions.
5. Define and explain key concepts in research ethics from the Canadian Panel on Research Ethics' Tutorial (CORE).
6. Develop research project proposal consisting of research design, ethics considerations, literature review, and interview and/or focus group guide.
7. Conduct, transcribe and analyze a practice-interview.
8. Carry out a non-participant / unobtrusive observation and produce a report.
9. Discuss key features of grounded theory and the process of induction.
10. Compare the priorities and objectives across critical, relational, social justice and action-oriented methodological frameworks.
11. Explain the importance of reflexivity and positionality in research.

COURSE FORMAT

This course will be delivered entirely online. Our Tuesday class will be synchronous via Zoom. During class time on Thursdays (asynchronous), students will work independently through the various stages of their individual qualitative research project. The course is organized in a way that enables its members to continuously engage in dialogue and reflexivity. Thus, consistent attendance and participation is required during our Tuesday meetings, where a high degree of interaction will take place in the form of small-group and class discussions. Students will be required to come to class with a completed written commentary on the assigned readings and be prepared to engage in discussion.

REQUIRED READINGS

- Lune, H. and Berg, B.L. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences 9th Ed.* New York: Pearson.
- Selection of academic articles, book chapters, and documentaries available electronically through the Guelph McLaughlin Library Ares Course Reserve System (ARES).

EVALUATION*

| | |
|--|-----|
| Design of Qualitative Research Project | 20% |
| Interview Component of Qualitative Research Project (interview guide, recording, transcription and analysis) | 25% |
| Unobtrusive / Non-participant Observation Assignment | 20% |
| Completion of Ethics Tutorial TCPS2 and Learning Reflection | 15% |
| Participation | 15% |
| Focus Groups Exercise | 5% |

*Tentative / subject to change