

SOCIOLOGY 3003E Qualitative Methods Syllabus

Fall 2016

Lectures: Thursdays 7 – 9 pm

Lecture Hall Location: KTH B132

Office Hours: Thursdays 11:30 – 12:30 & by appointment

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Course Description

This course introduces you to the basic tools and concepts of qualitative social research. We focus on two qualitative research methods used regularly by sociologists - textual analysis and naturalistic observation.

Students in this course will:

1. Learn about qualitative research methods by reading about them and seeing examples of how sociologists use them.
2. Gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of different types of qualitative methods, and the kinds of research methods appropriate to different research questions.
3. Develop their skills in textual analysis and naturalistic observation by using each method to investigate a topic or question of their choice.

In addition to completing the weekly readings and participating in class discussions, this class focuses on *how to do* qualitative research, including the *actual doing of* qualitative research. Two of the 3 major requirements for this course include creating and conducting 2 independent research initiatives: a textual analysis of a medium of your choice (e.g. comic books, a TV show, advertisements, etc.), and in-depth naturalistic observation of people interacting in everyday life. Your topic for this 2nd research initiative may be something as seemingly ‘straight-forward’ and mundane as the social organization and interactional dynamic of Sunday dinners at home with the family, or something more complex such as gendered interactions in fitness centres, or the culture of little league hockey. Your topic must be feasible – i.e. doable within an 8week period (we will discuss this in the first two weeks of class), ethical (this will also be discussed in class), and ***must be approved by me BEFORE you begin your study.***

Course Learning Objectives

This course addresses three University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (see, <http://ell.mcmaster.ca/COU/pdf/Undergraduate%20Degree%20Level%20Expectations.pdf>).

First, sociological theories of research methods are multiple and diverse in their conceptualizations and truth claims. Acquiring knowledge of these diverse theories will expand students’ depth and breadth of knowledge of this field of inquiry. Second, there is no single theory (including sociological theories) that has been accepted as the final or best approach to explaining the complexities of how to study human groups and lived experience. As such, this course requires that students consider and critically evaluate all competing theoretical approaches. In so doing, students will gain an awareness of the complexities and limits of knowledge regarding qualitative research methods. Finally, this course will encourage students to discuss theoretical and practical issues in class. Grading for this course will be based on 2

major research assignments, including a final examination. In each case, the student's communication skills will be challenged as well as enhanced.

Required Readings:

- (i) van den Hoonaard, D. 2015. Qualitative Research in Action. A Canadian Primer. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press: Don Mills.
- (ii) Articles of interest available on Avenue to Learn.

Evaluation:

1. Natural Observation Research Statement (5%). 2page statement of intended research topic and research locale.

Due Thursday October 6th, beginning of class.

IMPORTANT – it is *imperative* you submit this statement and have it accepted by me BEFORE you begin your Naturalist Observation study. Failure to do so will result in a mark of zero (0) for this assignment.

2. Textual Analysis Assignment (25%) 8 – 10page analysis/report.

Due Thursday October 27th, beginning of class.

3. Naturalistic Observation Field notes (5% each; 10% total). Copies of field notes are due at the beginning of each class.

1st set due November 3rd beginning of class

2nd set due November 17th beginning of class.

4. Natural Observation Report (30%) 10 – 12page written report (not including field notes & memos).

Due April 5th, beginning of class.

5. Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will be scheduled during the formal examination period by the Office of the Registrar.

A word of Advice about the Naturalistic Observation Assignment:

Unlike term papers you might write for other courses, this assignment cannot be completed at the last minute. Naturalistic Observation requires that you spend a significant amount of time identifying sources of information, gaining access to and spending time in research sites, making arrangements to observe in those sites, and gathering and managing your data **BEFORE** you start to write your paper. ***Scheduling dilemmas and unforeseen surprises are part of the research process and you need to plan and be prepared for them.*** If you are having difficulty with this assignment, please let me or Mollie know as soon as possible. **I will not have pity on your soul should you leave any issues or concerns regarding this assignment to the last minute.**

There is no tutorial for this course. For the first few weeks of class, tutorials will be used for you to meet with the TA (Mollie) to discuss your assignment topics. Starting at Week 8,

you are to use the scheduled tutorial sessions for your Naturalistic Observations. After Week 8 you can make arrangements to meet with me or Mollie to discuss any course related concerns.

Additional Information on Assignments

Assignments must be turned in during the beginning of class. All pages must be numbered and have 1" to 1.25" margins on all sides. All text should be double-spaced in an easy-to-read 12-point font. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will be reflected in the mark for the assignment.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained. In assignments, complete citations are required for all quotes and paraphrases. Consult the required writing style guide for information on how to properly cite the work of others.
2. Improper collaboration in group work. In this course, I encourage students to work together to understand concepts, discuss ideas, study for exams, etc. Improper collaboration would be defined as using the work of others to get out of doing your own work, claiming the work of others as your own, etc.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

4. Faking, or making up field notes. This is a serious breach of research ethics and will result in a failure in the course.

Review of Marks

Mollie and I will be diligent in marking all assignments fairly and accurately. Nonetheless, on occasion, students disagree with the marks they receive. When this occurs, we will be happy to review the mark of any assignment or exam, if the procedure outlined below is followed. ***Please note that when a mark is reviewed, the new mark may be lower than the original.***

To request a review of a mark, write a 1-page memo (on paper, not email) describing in detail the nature of the perceived marking error. Submit this memo, with the original marked assignment to either Mollie or myself (depending on who marked the assignment). You may submit requests for review no sooner than one week and no later than one month after assignments/exams are handed back to the class.

DEPARTMENTAL/UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

Late Assignments and Absences

The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf>) is a self-reporting tool for undergraduate students to report absences that last up to 3 days. This form allows students to request accommodation for any missed academic work. This tool cannot be used during any 3 final examination period. You may submit a maximum of one Academic Work Missed request per term. It is your responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a non-medical reason, you must visit the office of the Associate Dean of your Faculty. You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

Any disruption this causes to turning in assignments on time, completing exams, and so forth, must be addressed directly with me as soon as possible. For late assignments without approved excuses, you must make arrangements directly with me to submit the assignment. **Assignments will be marked down 5 percentage points for each day it is late, including weekend days and holidays, and I will NOT accept papers that are 3 or more days late.** If you think you will need an extension, you must contact me and not Mollie **prior to the assignment due date**. No extensions will be given after the due date.

Accommodations

We are committed to making appropriate accommodations for students' observance of religious holidays. Please contact your instructor as early in the term as possible to make individual arrangements. We are also committed to working with students with disabilities to make individualized accommodations according to your specific needs. All such arrangements must be made through the Student Accessibility Services department. Please drop by the instructor's office hours at the beginning of the term to make individual arrangements and to complete the necessary paperwork. All such arrangements will be kept confidential.

Email

Please consider email equivalent to any other form of written communication. Students who write to their professors and teaching assistants are expected to follow rules of spelling, grammar and punctuation. In addition, please include a proper greeting, such as "**Dear Dr. Shaw,**" and a closing that includes your full name, such as "**Sincerely, Anita Cocktail.**" Email failing to meet these standards may be returned unanswered. Email containing questions that can be answered by referring to this syllabus or to Avenue to Learn may not be answered. I do check the separate Avenue to Learn email, but only intermittently, so please do not try to contact me that way. **All email communication must come from your mcmaster.ca email account.**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in certain or extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email, AVE and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Sociology Department Policies

The Sociology staff will not date-stamp assignments or monitor the submission or return of papers. Students should check the web, the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin board outside the Sociology office (KTH - 627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (e.g., class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA job postings, etc.). Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial, or may be asked to leave the classroom.

Week No.	TOPICS & READINGS
Week 1 Sept 8 th	<p><i>Introduction – Overview of course</i> No readings assigned. The first class will be dedicated to organizational issues, explanation of assignments, etc.</p> <p>Important – begin thinking <u>NOW</u> about your topics for the 2 assignments. A list of suggested topics for both assignments is posted on AVE, in the CONTENT section.</p>
Week 2 Sept 15 th	<p>Qualitative Research Methods Readings: (i) Chapter 1 - Introduction – van den Hoonaard (ii) Chapter 2 – Asking Questions and Identifying Goals – van den Hoonaard (iii) Evaluation of qualitative research – Courseware</p> <p>DISCUSSION OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT - IMPORTANT</p>
Week 3 Sept 22 nd	<p>Theoretical Approaches in Qualitative Research Readings: (i) Symbolic Interaction - AVE (ii) Excerpts from Berger and Luckman – AVE pgs. 13 - 61 (iii) Feminist Theory - AVE</p>
Week 4 Sept 29 th	<p>Types of Qualitative Research Methods –Textual Analysis Readings: (i) What is Textual Analysis? - AVE (ii) Chapter 3 – Strategies for Designing Research – van den Hoonaard</p> <p>DISCUSSION OF NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT - IMPORTANT</p>
Week 5 Oct 6 th	<p>Types of Qualitative Research Methods – Unobtrusive Methods – Naturalistic Observation Readings: (i) Chapter 7 Unobtrusive Methods– van den Hoonaard (ii) Quality of everyday life in long stay institutions for the elderly. - AVE</p> <p>NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION RESEARCH STATEMENT DUE END OF CLASS</p>
Week 6 Oct 13 th	<p style="text-align: center;">READING WEEK- NO CLASSES</p>

Week 7 Oct 20 th	Types of Qualitative Research Methods – Participant Observation Readings: (i) Chapter 5 – Observing Social Life through Field Research (ii) PO (Participant Observation) – AVE (iii) Field research as social experience: Learning to do ethnography. - AVE
Week 8 Oct 27 th	Doing Naturalistic Observation Research Readings: (i) Chapter 9 - Trust the Process: Analyzing Qualitative Data – van den Hoonaard (ii) How to Write Up Field notes – AVE Documentary: Streets of Plenty TEXTUAL ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS
Week 9 Nov 3 rd	Discussion of Naturalistic Observation Projects Readings: (i) Chapter 10 – Writing Up Qualitative Research – van den Hoonaard (ii) The “gentlemen” in the club: A typology of strip club patrons. - AVE 1st SET OF FIELD NOTES DUE
Week 10 Nov 10 th	Ethics in Qualitative Research Guest Lecture: Dr. Karen Szala-Menoek PhD, Senior Ethics Advisor, McMaster, REB Readings: (i) Chapter 4: Ethics on the Ground: A Moral Compass – van den Hoonaard (ii) The Ethics of Social Research - AVE RETURN FIELDNOTES & DISCUSSION
Week 11 Nov 17 th	No Class – Fieldwork 2nd SET OF FIELDNOTES DUE IN MY MAILBOX in KTH 627 - BY 4PM
Week 12 Nov 24 th	Researching Special Communities – “Vulnerable” & “Deviant” Communities Readings: (i) Researching the “Vulnerable”- AVE (ii) Working with Marginalized, Vulnerable or Poor Groups - AVE
Week 13 Dec 1 ST LAST CLASS	Review for final exam & tie up “loose ends” No readings for this class NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION RESEARCH REPORT DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS