

SOCIOLOGY 3003 Qualitative Methods Syllabus

Fall 2020

Lectures: Mondays 3:30 – 5:20 pm

Lecture Hall Location: Online

Office Hours: by appointment via mail, phone or Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Rhona Shaw

Ext.

Office:

Email: shawrm@mcmaster.ca

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 qualitative 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, 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 an in-depth Naturalistic Observation of people interacting in everyday life. Your topic for the Naturalistic Observation initiative may be something as seemingly ‘obvious and straight-forward’ 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 spectator 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 observations.***

NB: A major theme that will inform your observations and data collection will be the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic provides us with a unique opportunity to observe the actions of others as they create, navigate and struggle with and against a “new normal” in the face of social disruption and uncertainty. Dare I say, this serious turn of events has a “silver lining” for sociologists and qualitative researchers; it affords us the opportunity to observe and make sense of new patterns of social behaviour and ways of doing as they emerge before our very eyes.

Course Learning Objectives

This course addresses three University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (see, <http://ccl.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:

All required readings will be made available via links on Avenue to Learn (AVE).

Course Policies

Evaluation:

1. **Natural Observation Research Statement (5%).** 2-3page statement of intended research topic and research locale. Download document from AVE. **Due Monday October 5th by 11:59 pm, Assignments fold on AVE.**

IMPORTANT – it is *imperative* you submit this statement and have your locale and research topic 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 Monday October 19th by 11:59pm.**

3. **Naturalistic Observation Field notes (5% each; 10% total).** Copies of field notes are due by 11:59pm. **1st set of notes are due Monday October 26th, the 2nd set is due Monday November 9th.**

4. **Natural Observation Report (30%)** 13 - 15page written report (not including field notes, memos and research statement). **The report is due Wednesday December 9th by 11:59pm.**

5. Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will be scheduled during the formal examination period by the Office of the Registrar. It will include multiple choice, true or false, short answer and essay questions.

A word of Advice about the Naturalistic Observation Assignment:

Unlike term papers you might write for other sociology 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 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. You are to use the scheduled tutorial sessions (Wednesdays 4:30 – 5:20) for your research for the Textual Analysis and Naturalistic Observations.

Additional Information on Assignments

Assignments must be uploaded to AVE by the assigned deadline on the course schedule. All pages must be numbered and have 1" margins on all sides. All text should be either single or double-spaced (depending on the assignment) in an easy-to-read 12-point font. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will be reflected in the mark for the assignment. More details to follow in lecture and in the assignment instructions.

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 5 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 5 classes, 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. 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. ***I will NOT accept late assignments that are 3 or more days late. You will be awarded a mark of 0 for assignments submitted after the 3rd day.***

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. **All lectures will be delivered using Echo 360, and can be accessed via Avenue to Learn.** Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour 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 types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a [RISO](#) accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

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 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 his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Review of Marks

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

Email – use shawrm@mcmaster.ca only

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 and ***the course you are taking***. Emails 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 contact me that way. ***All email communication must come from your mcmaster.ca email account.***

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-

MARK	GRADE
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Week No.	TOPICS & READINGS
Week 1 Wed Sept 9 th Zoom meeting - Details posted on Announcements on AVE	Introduction – Overview of course The first class will be dedicated to organizational issues, explanation of assignments, etc. Important – begin thinking NOW about your topics for the 2 assignments. A list of suggested topics for both assignments is posted on AVE, in the CONTENT section. DISCUSSION OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT
Week 2 Mon Sept 14 th	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
Week 3 Mon Sept 21 st Zoom meeting	Types of Qualitative Research Methods –Textual Analysis Readings: (i) What is Textual Analysis? https://www.google.ca/search?q=what+is+textual+analysis&oq=what+is+textual+analysis&aq=chrome..69i57j015.5607j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 (ii) Chapter 3 – Strategies for Designing Research – van den Hoonaard DISCUSSION OF NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT
Week 4 Mon Sept 28 th	Theoretical Approaches in Qualitative Research Readings: (i) Chapter 4 - Symbolic Interaction http://sk.sagepub.com/books/cartographies-of-knowledge (ii) Excerpts from Berger and Luckman pgs. 13 - 61 (iii) Feminist Theory
Week 5 Mon Oct 5 th NO Research Statement due by 11:59pm	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.
Week 6	READING WEEK – NO LECTURES

Mon Oct 12 th	
Week 7 Mon Oct 19 th	Types of Qualitative Research Methods – Narratives, Photovoice, Autoethnography Readings: (i) TBD TEXTUAL ANALYSIS REPORT DUE by 11:59pm.
Week 8 Mon Oct 26 th 1st set of field notes due by 11:59pm	Types of Qualitative Research Methods – Participant Observation Readings: (i) Chapter 5 – Observing Social Life through Field Research – van den Hoonaard (ii) PO (Participant Observation) http://methods.sagepub.com/book/collecting-qualitative-data/i409.xml (iii) Field research as social experience: Learning to do ethnography. http://www.worldcat.org/title/doing-everyday-life-ethnography-as-human-lived-experience/oclc/30360217
Week 9 Mon Nov 2 nd Zoom meeting - discussion of field notes	Doing Naturalistic Observation Research Readings: (i) Chapter 9 - Trust the Process: Analyzing Qualitative Data – van den Hoonaard (ii) How to Write Up Field notes (iii) Chapter 5 Writing Field notes Documentary: Streets of Plenty – WARNING – sensitive material
Week 10 Mon Nov 9 th 2nd set of field notes due by 11:59pm	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.
Week 11 Mon Nov 16 th	No Class Use this time to do fieldwork, organize your data into themes, etc.
Week 12 Mon Nov 23 rd	Ethics in Qualitative Research Readings: (i) Chapter 4: Ethics on the Ground: A Moral Compass – van den Hoonaard (ii) Ethics of Aboriginal research (iii) The Ethics of Social Research https://hull.rl.talis.com/items/88424121-FCBF-8C73-4B24-D87369FB56DB.html
Week 13 Mon Nov 30 th	Researching Special Communities – “Vulnerable” & “Deviant” Communities Readings: (i) Working with Marginalized, Vulnerable or Poor Groups http://methods.sagepub.com/book/development-fieldwork/n9.xml
Week 14 Mon Dec 7 th Wed Dec 9 th	Review for final exam & tie up “loose ends” NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION RESEARCH REPORT DUE 11:59pm