

SOCI 307 – Qualitative Methods Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. Lynda Harling Stalker
Office: AX111B
Telephone: 867-3877
Email: lharling@stfx.ca
Office hours: Tuesdays – Thursday: 9-11am

Course description

This course sets out to familiarise students with the various ways in which sociologists use qualitative methods to do research. *Please note, this is a research and writing intensive course. This is a lot of work.*

Course objectives

Students will first learn the ways in which epistemology, ontology and theory are critical to research. Following this, students will understand five main approaches to qualitative research: narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case studies. In the final part of the course, students will gain knowledge of how data is analysed and evaluated. Throughout the course, students will be working on one project that speaks to all phases of the research process.

Textbooks



Introducing Qualitative Research, 2nd edition



A very short, fairly interesting, and reasonably cheap book about qualitative methods, 2nd edition

The textbooks are available as a bundle at the Campus Bookstore.

Evaluation

Reflexive piece (15%): This is to be a five-page essay in which students attempt to lay out their epistemology and ontology. As this is a reflexive piece assignment students are encouraged to use the first-person when necessary. Students need to cite academic sources as required. The opinions expressed need to be informed opinions. Within the conclusion of the paper, students should set out a research question that interests them. This is due **September 29**.

Research proposal (25%): This is to be an approximately 8 page proposal that sets out the qualitative research you are going to do for your final term essay. The research is to be designed by each student with a topic that relates to student life at St. FX. You will need to set up the proposal with one of the studied methods. If required, two copies (one for the instructor and one for the Department's Ethics Committee) of an ethics form must be attached. More details to follow. This is due **October 27**.

Term essay (40%): This is a culmination of students' work. In this 12-15 page paper, students are to provide a completed qualitative research project. This will include a theoretical / conceptual framework, the "puzzle" they looked at, what methods they used and why, why is this important research, the way analysis was conducted, the findings, and the contribution this makes to sociology. A more detailed outline for the assignment will be distributed later in the term. The due date for this will be determined with the class' input.

In-class exercises (4 x 5% = 20%): Five times throughout the term an in-class exercise will be announced. This means that you will be required to complete an exercise based on the assigned readings for that week. The four exercises with the highest marks will be counted toward the final grade.

N.B.: Be sure to retain a hard copy of all assignments that are handed in.

Time papers are due: All papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date.

Late penalties: For each day a paper is late (including weekends), **5%** will be deducted from the assignment's grade.

Extensions: Extensions will only be granted with proper documentation.

Plagiarism

Copying of direct quotes or ideas without acknowledging the original author is considered plagiarism. Handing in a paper that you did not write, or a paper that you handed in for another class without permission of the instructor is also considered an infraction. These are serious academic offences. Any such offence will result in a ZERO in this course and referred onto university officials. For more information on plagiarism see the University Calendar.

Special needs

If a student requires special accommodations, please see the instructor as soon as possible.

Electronics

This is a seminar-like course. While the use of laptops are not banned, you are asked not to text, email, FaceTime, Skype, surf, call, etc. on electronic devices during class time. To do so is disrespectful to the students and the professor. If you are seen doing any of these activities you will be called out for it. If you continue to use the devices in a manner not related to class, you will be asked to leave.

Class schedule

- 09/03 Introduction to course
- 09/08 What is qualitative research?
RB – Chapter 1
- 09/10 Qualitative research (con't)
DS – Chapter 1
- 09/15 Epistemology and Ontology
RB – Chapter 2
- 09/17 Reflexivity and the Seven Lamps of Research
- 09/22 Ethics
RB – Chapter 4
- 09/24 Ethics (con't)
- 09/29 Research design
RB – Chapter 3
REFLEXIVE PAPER DUE
- 10/01 Thinking about research and data collection
DS – Chapter 2
- 10/06 Interviews
RB – Chapter 5
- 10/08 Interviews (con't)
- 10/15 Focus Groups
RB – Chapter 6
- 10/20 Ethnography
RB – Chapter 7
- 10/22 Ethnography (con't)
- 10/27 Documents
RB – Chapter 8
RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND ETHICS DUE
- 10/29 Visual Methods

- 11/03 Mixed Methods and Action Research
RB – Chapter 9 and Chapter 10
- 11/07 Analysing
DS – Chapter 3
- 11/12 Analysing (con't)
RB – Chapter 11
- 11/17 Analysing (con't)
- 11/19 Theorising
RB – Chapter 12
- 11/24 Applying research
DS – Chapter 4
- 11/26 Writing-up research
RB – Chapter 13
- 12/01 “On Bullshit” and other reflections
DS – Chapter 5