



Course Outline - Family Studies 3230B: Qualitative Research in Family Studies

General Information

Course #: FSHD3230B
Section #: 001
Term: Winter 2025

Instructor Information

Name: Stephen Lin, PhD
Email: clin64@uwo.ca
Office hours: By appointment
Zoom: <https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/j/3825666064>

Course Description

In this course, students will learn to investigate the social world using a variety of qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation, or content analysis. In so doing, students will explore the principles underlying qualitative inquiry and acquire a general understanding of the numerous theoretical positions that underlie qualitative methodology. Through lectures, readings, group presentations, and hands-on research activities, students will explore different ways of investigating the social world in a scientific but non-statistical way that gives voice to the people we are studying. The ultimate goal is to let students experience the ways that qualitative researchers conduct research.

Antirequisite(s): [Sociology 3307F/G](#), [Sociology 3310F/G](#).

Prerequisite(s): [Family Studies and Human Development 2300F/G](#) or the former Family Studies 2300F/G or permission of the instructor.

Required Text(s)

Van den Hoonaard, D.K. & Van den Scott, L.J. (2021). *Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer*. (4th Edition). Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780190165970.

**Additional readings assigned in some weeks can be accessed from Brightspace
Brightspace

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Evaluate different research methods, and their usage.
2. Formulate research questions and choose a qualitative research design to examine those questions.
3. Understand and meet the ethical standards for conducting research with humans.
4. Design and carry out a research project, including conducting in-depth interviews, ethnographic field observations, and content analysis.
5. Analyze and interpret qualitative data.
6. Write an effective research report.
7. Prepare an effective oral presentation that presents key information in a time frame.

Teaching Methodology and Expectations of Students

This course requires class engagement with the assigned readings and completion of assignments.

Use of Generative AI

AI is allowed for assessments. You may choose to use generative AI tools as you work through the assignments in this course; this use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how they were incorporated into the submitted work. You are ultimately accountable for the work you submit. My own experience with marking generative AI-assisted assignments has been unsatisfactory: the assignments tend to be vague and contain false/limited references, so I don't recommend using AI. Copyright and Intellectual Property Lecture slides and notes, lists of readings, in-class activities, assignment guidelines, and other components of the course materials are typically the intellectual property of the instructor. Unauthorized reproduction through audio-recording, video-recording, photographing, sharing on social media, or posting on course-sharing websites is an infringement of copyright and is prohibited. Such action may be considered a Code of Conduct violation and lead to sanctions.

Method of Evaluation

Content Analysis (February 14)	20%
Ethnography Assignment (March 28)	30%
Group Presentation (Starting from February 13)	20%
Critical Reflection (April 11)	10%
Research Showcase and Discussion	20%

Evaluation Breakdown

Content Analysis Exercise (20%) – Friday, February 14 by 5:00pm

- You will be asked to choose one advertisement from selected themes.
- Analyze the content of the chosen advertisement according to a set of questions.
- See the instruction sheet on Brightspace.

Important Notes:

1. Essay due: Friday, February 14 by 5:00pm via the Assignment Tab on Brightspace
2. Length: 4 pages double-spaced, 12 font-size
3. Late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless accommodation has been given.

Ethnography Assignment (30%) – Friday, March 28 by 5:00pm

- Spend some time observing a specific site; collect field notes.
- Write a report describing your observations, and your challenges as an observer
- See details in the assignment instruction sheet (available on Brightspace)

Important Notes:

1. Essay due on Friday, March 28 by 5:00pm via the Assignment Tab on Brightspace
2. 8 pages max., double spaced, 12 font-size
3. Late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless you have my permission for late submission.

Group Presentation (20%)

In this semester, you will be paired up with another student and prepare a maximum of **40-minute** presentation on a designated date. The presentation will start from Week 6 (February 11-13). Your group's main task is to explain how the content of the assigned week applies to a scenario. Specifically, your group will:

- Explain what you have learned from the assigned week
- Find an example from the media, such as cover stories from the news or internet advertisement, or featured stories from Youtube.
- Provide a personal reflection based on this learning experience.

Important Notes:

1. Your group will be assessed based on organization, idea cohesion, comprehension, creativity and critical thinking.

Critical Reflection (10%) – Friday, April 11 by 5:00pm

At the end of this semester, you will write up to a **one-page (single-spaced)** to reflect upon what you have learned from this course. Your main task is to discuss overarching ideas regarding qualitative methods, such as the rationale or purpose for conducting qualitative research and benefits/advantages of qualitative methods. You will be assessed based on your comprehension, creativity and critical thinking.

Important Notes:

1. Paper due on Friday, April 11 by 5:00pm via the Assignment Tab on Brightspace
2. Late assignments will be docked 5% per day, unless accommodation has been given.

Research Showcase and Class Participation (20%)

Starting from Tuesday, January 14, there will be a weekly individual 15-minute presentation based on a qualitative study in any area of family studies. In your brief presentation, you will summarize the main focus of the peer-reviewed research article. Next, you will tell the audience how qualitative research methods contribute to knowledge production with regards to the focal family issue highlighted in the article. Finally, you will offer your personal reflection on your learning process. After the presentation, there will be a question and answer session. To receive a decent mark, you shall ask the presenter questions or offer your feedback to the presenter. The presentation is worth 10% of your total grade and your class participation in the form of inquiry, feedback sharing and idea contribution throughout the term is worth 10% of your total grade. I will provide more details in class.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week	Date	Topic/Assignment	Assigned Readings
1	Jan 7,9	Introduction to the course Forming a Group (2 students)	Van Den Hoonaard & Van Den Scott, Ch 1
2	Jan 14, 16	Designing a Qualitative Study	Van Den Hoonaard & Van Den Scott Ch 2 & 3
3	Jan 21, 23	Content Analysis	Van Den Hoonaard & Van Den Scott Ch 8 Alexander (2003)
4	Jan 28, 30	Discourse Analysis Critical Discourse Analysis	Van Dijk (1993) Phillips & Jorgensen (2002)
5	Feb 4, 6	Observational/ Ethnographic Research	Van Den Hoonaard & Van Den Scott Ch 5 Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995)

6	Feb 11, 13	In-Depth Interviewing Content Analysis due (Feb 14)	Van Den Hoonaard & Van Den Scott Ch. 6 Hesse-Biber (2014)
7	Feb 18, 20	Spring Break	No reading
8	Feb 25, 27	Focus Groups	Van Den Hoonaard, Van Den Scott Ch. 7 Madriz (2000)
9	March 4, 6	Qualitative Research in a Digital Age	G & T Ch. 9 Wilkerson et al. (2014)
10	March 11, 13	Sampling in Qualitative Research	Luborsky & Rubinstein (1995) Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson (2011)
11	March 18, 20	Experiential Learning & Sharing (Ethnography work in progress)	No Reading
12	March 25, 27	Grounded Theory Ethnography Due (March 28)	Charmaz (2014) Dastjerdi, Olson & Ogilvie (2012)
13	April 1, 3	Analyzing Qualitative Data	Van Den Hoonaard, Van Den Scott Ch 9 LeCompte (2000)
14	April 8, 10	Ethics in Qualitative Research Critical Reflection Due (April 11)	Van Den Hoonaard & Van Den Scott Ch 4 Laud (1970)

The table below outlines University-wide grade descriptors.

Letter grade	Number grade	Description
A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

Academic Policies and Statements

Support Services

There are various support services around campus and these include, but are not limited to:

1. Academic Support and Engagement - <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca>
2. Wellness and Well-being - <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>
3. Registrar's Office -- <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/>
4. Ombuds Office -- <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/>

The websites for Registrarial Services (<http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>), and the same for affiliated university colleges when appropriate, and any appropriate Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC listed here: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>) and the Student Development Services, should be provided for easy access.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

Student Code of Conduct

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For more information, visit <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

Absence from Course Commitments

Students must familiarize themselves with the Policy on [Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate, or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term **without** supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g., December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests (typically scheduled during the last week of the term). Students should also note that the instructor may **designate** one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Academic consideration requests may be denied when flexibility in assessment has already been included. Examples of flexibility in assessment include when there are assessments not required for calculation of the final grade (e.g. 8 out of 10 quizzes), when there is flexibility in the submission timeframe (e.g. 72 hour no late penalty period), or when timed assessments (e.g., quizzes) are available over an extended period of time (e.g., when you are given a 72 hour time period to start – and finish – the assessment).

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course syllabus. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examination dates. The Faculty of Health Sciences has set School-specific dates for these Special Examinations. Please speak with your instructor about the date on which the Special Examination for this course will be held.

Academic Offences

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 website:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Student work is expected to be original. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and could lead to a zero on the assignment in question, a zero in this course, or your expulsion from the university. You are plagiarizing if you insert a phrase, sentence or paragraph taken directly from another author without acknowledging that the work belongs to him/her. Similarly, you are plagiarizing if you paraphrase or summarize another author's ideas without acknowledging that the ideas belong to someone else. All 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 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 Western University and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Use of Artificial Intelligence for the Completion of Course Work

Within this course, you may only use artificial intelligence tools (e.g., "ChatGPT") in ways that are specifically authorized by the course instructor. All submitted work must reflect your own thoughts and independent written work.

Re-submission of Previously Graded Material

Without the explicit written permission of the instructor, you may not submit any academic work for which credit has been obtained previously, or for which credit is being sought, in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.

Use of Statistical Pattern Recognition on Multiple Choice 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.

Accessibility Statement

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education (AE) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation or review [The policy on Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

Correspondence Statement

The centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner. Students are further expected to attend to announcements presented through Brightspace, and to read emails generated in this way.

Use of Electronic Devices

During Exams

Unless you have medical accommodations that require you to do so, or explicit permission from the instructor of the course, you may not use any electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, tablets, cameras, smart glass, smart watches, or iPods) during ANY tests, quizzes, midterms, examinations, or other in-class evaluations. **These devices MUST either be left at home or with your belongings at the front of the room. They MUST NOT be at your test/exam desk or in your pocket. Any student found with a prohibited device will receive an automatic grade of zero on the test or exam.**

During Lectures and Tutorials

Although you are welcome to use a computer during lecture and tutorial periods, you are expected to use the computer for scholastic purposes only, and refrain from engaging in any activities that may distract other students from learning. From time to time, your professor may ask the class to turn off all computers, to facilitate learning or discussion of the material presented in a particular class.

Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement

Course material produced by faculty is copyrighted and to reproduce this material for any purposes other than your own educational use contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. Unless explicitly noted otherwise, you may not make audio or video recordings of lectures – nor may you edit, re-use, distribute, or re-broadcast any of the material posted to the course website.

Contingency Plan for an In-Person Class Pivoting to 100% Online Learning

In the event of a situation that requires this course to pivot to online content delivery, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on Brightspace for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

Online Proctoring

Tests and examinations in this course may be conducted using a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide **personal information** (including some biometric data) and the session will be **recorded**. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at: <https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

Appealing a Grade Within this Course

You have the right to appeal any grade within this course. The grounds for a grade appeal may be one or more of: medical or compassionate circumstances, extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control, bias, inaccuracy, or unfairness. All grounds advanced in a request for relief must be supported by a clear and detailed explanation of the reasons for the request together with all supporting documentation.

Appeals generally proceed in this order:

1. Course instructor (informal consultation)
2. Department Chair (submission of written request)
3. The Dean of the Faculty (submission of written request)

In the case of perceived procedural unfairness, steps 2 and 3 are carried out within the Department and Faculty offering the course. In the case of extenuating medical or compassionate circumstances that impact on a grade, steps 2 and 3 are carried out within a student's Home Department and Faculty.

A request for relief against a mark or grade must be initiated with the instructor as soon as possible after the mark is issued. In the event that the instructor is not available to the student, or fails to act, or if the matter is not resolved satisfactorily with the instructor, a written request for relief must be submitted to the Chair of the Department within three weeks of the date that the mark was issued. In the case of a final grade in a course, the written request for relief must be submitted to the Chair of the department by January 31st (for first-term half courses) or June 30th (for second-term half courses or full-year courses).