

**Introduction to Qualitative Health Research: HS 3811G  
Winter 2023**

**DRAFT OUTLINE & SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

**Instructor:** Dr. Lesley Gittings (she/her)

**Office:** 216 Labbatt Health Sciences Building

**Email:** lesley.gittings@uwo.ca

**Date/Time:** Thursday 2:30-5:30.

**Location:** Fims and Nursing Building (FNB), Room 2240

**Teaching Assistant:** Bansari Patel (bpate29@uwo.ca)

**Office Hours:** Thursday 12:30-2 p.m.



**Land Acknowledgement:** The HS3811G teaching team acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples endure in Canada and stand in solidarity with those who live with ongoing trauma, adversity and oppression from cultural genocide, residential schools, the Indian Act and environmental racism. We acknowledge the detrimental impact that colonisation has had on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and land. This course includes a purposeful focus on strengths-based and culturally grounded approaches to qualitative research, acknowledging the strengths and value of Indigenous knowledge. We are committed to learning, unlearning, revealing misinformation and renewing respectful relationships.

### **Course Description**

In this course, students will learn the core principles and practices of qualitative research in health—through actively engaging in the different phases of the research process, whilst reflecting on their learning. While engaging with important academic sources, students will be experimenting with different methods of data collection and analysis, in an atmosphere of collaboration with their fellow peers and instructors. This ‘hands- on’ approach to qualitative research methods will enable students to develop more confidently their own research projects, both in academic and non-academic contexts. Qualitative research methods are central to understanding, contextualizing and responding to health experiences, practices and outcomes across diverse populations. For this reason, this course is especially important for students who aim to pursue graduate training, or health research, policy and/or practice. A committed engagement with the proposed academic readings and tasks is expected and essential for success.

*Prerequisites:* Health Sciences 2801A/B or equivalent

*Antirequisites:* Psychology 3860F/G, Sociology 3307F/G

### *Prerequisite Checking*

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites

### **Readings and course materials:**

Green, J., & Thorogood, N. (2018). *Qualitative methods for health research*. London: Sage.

This title is not available in the library. Western bookstore has informed me that this title will be available for you in physical copies and digital copies. Please see:

[https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2022B&courses%5B0%5D=001\\_UW/HTH3811G](https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2022B&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/HTH3811G)

This will be the only purchase necessary for the course.

Additional materials may be assigned at any time. Additional materials will be available, at no cost, through Western’s Library System, online and/or through our OWL site. Additional materials may be assigned at any time, and will be posted on the course website. Students are responsible for the content covered in all assigned course materials. Required readings and resources will be posted on OWL on a weekly basis.

### **Course Objectives:**

To develop an introductory understanding of qualitative methodologies in health research and to be able to apply that understanding in the development of a small-scale research project. Qualitative research methods are central to understanding, contextualizing and responding to health experiences, practices and outcomes across diverse populations.

**Learning Outcomes:**

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

1. Identify and describe the core characteristics and principles of qualitative research;
2. Explain key concepts related to ontology, epistemology and research traditions in qualitative research;
3. Describe, plan and apply diverse methods of collecting qualitative data;
4. Describe and apply methods of qualitative data analysis;
5. Identify ethical concerns in all phases of qualitative research;
6. Appraise your learning journey, identifying strengths and weaknesses to delineate actions for improvement.

**Tentative Course Schedule**

<b>Week #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>
<i>Part I. Qualitative Ways of Knowing and Doing</i>		
1	January 12 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction to the course & each other Introduction to qualitative research
<i>Part 2. Mapping the field &amp; situating ourselves</i>		
2	January 19 <sup>th</sup>	Finding out past answers to my question. What do others have to say? Undertaking a literature search Mapping the field: the importance of a good literature review. Developing qualitative research proposals: research questions, study design, sampling
3	January 26 <sup>th</sup>	Positionality & reflexivity Methods and ethics of research with 'Hard to reach' groups: Research with children and in low-and-middle-income contexts
<i>Part 3. Methods: Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis</i>		
4	February 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Going to primary sources. What can others say to help me answer my question? Designing, Preparing, Conducting and Recording Individual Interviews & Focus Group Discussions
5	February 9 <sup>th</sup>	How do I go from what others say to answer my question? Answering my question by making sense of the data. Techniques of data analysis. Qualitative data analysis software.
6	February 16 <sup>th</sup>	What does the world around tell me that helps me answer my question? Ethnographic research Designing, preparing conducting and recording observations.
<b>Feb 18 -26 Reading Week</b>		
7	March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Is not all about words.

		Visual and art-based research methods. *Asynchronous lecture
8	March 9 <sup>th</sup>	Writing up and presenting my research
9	March 16 <sup>th</sup>	Engaging Power: Participatory & community-based approaches,
10	March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Final report workshopping & peer review week
11	March 30 <sup>th</sup>	Place, space and qualitative health research: land/water- and place-based approaches; remote & digital methods
12	April 6 <sup>th</sup>	Communicating my journey to others... Student research symposium. Course plenary.

### Assessment

Below you find a general description of each method of assessment. Detailed guides for each assignment will be delivered in a timely fashion throughout the course.

Assessment Method	Date	Weight (%)
Research questions and interview guide	February 14 <sup>th</sup>	15%
In-depth interview transcript & reflective report	March 3 <sup>rd</sup>	30%
Codebook	March 14 <sup>th</sup>	15%
Final research reflective report	March 31 <sup>st</sup>	40%

All assignments are to be submitted as a Word file through the assignment tool in OWL, by the end of the submission date.

During the course, you will develop a small research project, undertaking specific tasks throughout the semester. Ample time will be provided in class to practice, work with peers and to engage with the instructor on your assigned tasks. Alongside this work, you will also reflect upon your own learning journey, documenting difficulties and doubts, milestones, new understandings and insights. *This project includes four main steps, which are outlined below.* Further details will be provided in the first weeks of class.

1) *Research questions and interview guide (15%, due February 14<sup>th</sup>)*

In a group of 5 students, you will together: (1) determine a research question and (2) design an interview guide for an in-depth, semi-structured interview on a health-related topic of your choice.

2) *In-depth interview transcript & reflective report (30%, due March 3<sup>rd</sup>)*

You will conduct and transcribe one in-depth semi-structured interview. Your interviewee will be a fellow group member, and each class member will experience conducting an interview, and being interviewed themselves. You will submit the transcript, as well as a reflective report. The requirement length for the report is between 1000 and 1500 words. This is an individual assignment.

*3) Codebook (15%, due March 14<sup>th</sup>)*

As a group, you will create a codebook of inductive and deductive codes. Your dataset will include all interviews by your group members.

*4) Final report (40%, due March 31<sup>st</sup>)*

Expanding your earlier submissions – and taking into account the feedback provided by the instructors and peers – you will submit a full research paper that includes: (i) your research question; (ii) a brief description of your research and analysis method; (iii) your research tool; (iv) a reflection section; (v) a presentation of findings; and, (vi) a brief discussion section. The requirement length for this assignment is between 2500 and 3500 words. This is an individual assignment.

**Formatting:** The word count for all assignments excludes references, appendices and the title page. Documents should be double-spaced and formatted using a font size no smaller than 12 points. Referencing must follow the APA guidelines.

*Extensions and late assignments*

In order to be fair to your peers, the instructor and teaching assistant, assignments submitted after the deadline which did not receive a written, pre-arranged approval for extension by the instructor will be penalized by 5 percentage points per day (including Saturday and Sunday) and will only be accepted up to seven days after the due date/time. If you think you will be unable to hand in an assignment on time, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

**Note-Taking for Lecture Slides:**

A copy of my lecture slides for each unit will be provided for you, immediately prior to the lecture. They do not represent “all” of the content for which you are responsible. Additional comments are often made during lectures that extend beyond what is contained on each slide. It is your responsibility to take additional notes as suitable.

**Contingency plan for in-person pivoting to online learning:**

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, 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 OWL 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.

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, tests and examinations in this course

will 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>.

### **Personal Response Systems (“clickers”)**

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. For those classes in which we use this technology, it is your responsibility to ensure that the device is activated and functional. You must speak with the course instructor immediately, if you have any concerns about whether or not your clicker is malfunctioning.

You must use only your own clicker. For all components of this course in which clicker records are used to compute a portion of the grade:

- The use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence;
- The possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offense

### **Academic consideration**

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by extenuating circumstances, including short-term illness or injury. Reasonable academic consideration is a cooperative process between the University, the student, and academic staff. All participants in the process must act in good faith, and fulfil their respective obligations, if it is to succeed. Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) sufficiently significant as to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements, may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

- (i) For medical absences, submitting a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner, in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration; or
- (ii) For non-medical absences, submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to academic advising office in their Faculty of registration, in order to be eligible for academic consideration.

Students seeking academic consideration:

- Are advised to consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying handing in work;
- Are encouraged to make appropriate decisions, based on their specific circumstances, recognizing that minor ailments (e.g., upset stomach) or upsets (e.g., argument with a friend) are not normally an appropriate basis for an SMC

- *Must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by SMC, or immediately upon their return following a documented absence;*
- *Are advised that all necessary documentation, forms, etc. are to be submitted to academic advising office within two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities*

### **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 during ANY tests, quizzes, midterms, examinations, or other in-class evaluations.

*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. *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.*

### **Plagiarism and other scholastic 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 Web site:

[https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?PolicyCategoryID=1&Command=showCategory&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading\\_189](https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?PolicyCategoryID=1&Command=showCategory&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_189)

All required 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 for such checking 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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Support Services**

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

1. Student Development Centre -- <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>
2. Student Health -- <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>
3. Registrar's Office -- <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/>
4. Ombudsperson Office -- <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/>

### **Health and Wellness:**

The undergraduate experience is rewarding and challenging socially, emotionally, and

intellectually. Finding ways to balance scholarly life with our personal lives can be tough, but it's important to learn how to manage stress. Western provides several health and wellness-related services to students, which may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>. You can also check out the Campus Recreation Centre or the McIntosh Gallery (<http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>), for alternative spaces to reconnect with your bodies and restore your spirit. You may also want to access local resources that are closer to where you are living during the school year. Recalibrating ourselves emotionally begins with slowing down, reminding ourselves that we are ok, and taking a few deep, slow breaths. This remarkably effective strategy brings the body from stress mode into a more relaxed state.

If you are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western [Mental Health Support - Health & Wellness - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.mentalhealth.uwo.ca/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help or Thames Valley Family Services (<https://www.familyservicethamesvalley.com/>), a trusted provider within the community. To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here: [Health & Wellness - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.mentalhealth.uwo.ca/). It's also advisable to have a wellness safety plan if you don't want to reach out to formal services. Having the numbers of a few trusted individuals is another strategy.

### Grading

The university-wide descriptor of the meaning of letter grades, as approved by Senate:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work that 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

It is expected that the grades for this course will fall between 74-78%. In the event that the course average falls outside this range, a constant may be added (or subtracted) from each student's grade, by the instructor, to bring the class average in line with school policy.

### Common Concerns

The table below summarizes a list of common student concerns and how they are to be resolved.

Concern	How to address concern
Course administrative matters	Read through the course outline. If the question cannot be answered from information in the course outline, email your TA.
Course content questions	Refer to the OWL Resources. If you can not find the answer, email your TA.
Grade disputes and requests for appeals	A student requesting an appeal to a specific course with respect to a grade for an assignment or examination

	<p>much first contact their instructor to discuss such manners.</p> <p>Visit the following website for guide on submitting an appeal: <a href="https://uwo.ca/fhs//policies/appeals.html">https://uwo.ca/fhs//policies/appeals.html</a></p>
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### **Communication**

The Course Instructor will hold weekly office hours each Thursday from 12:30-2:00 on course weeks 2-6, and 8-12. If you are unable to attend office hours, please contact your course instructor over email to set up an appointment.

Outside of classes and office hours, you are welcome to e-mail questions and comments. Bansari Patel, your Teaching Assistant is your first point of e-mail contact for this course. If there are questions or comments that require the course instructor, the teaching assistant will jointly email the course instructor and student. We will respond to your emails in as timely a fashion as possible (although unlikely after 5pm or on weekends). Please note: you are expected to use your “UWO” e-mail address for this course).

E-mails, like any other form of communication with the course Instructor/Teaching Assistants, are appropriate when their content is respectful, when they are not anonymous, and when their sender does not ask for information delivered during a lecture to be repeated. If you have a question or do not understand a term or phrase, it is your responsibility to tell the Course Instructor/Teaching Assistants what you think the answer is, what you think would be an appropriate example, and/or what it is that you are having difficulty interpreting, as this is in service of your learning. Inappropriate e-mails will either receive no response or will receive a response in which you are directed to review this component of the course outline and then invite you to e-mail again. Any inappropriate emails will be forwarded to the appropriate administrative office to be placed on-file.

### **Mutual Expectations**

You can expect your instructor to prepare a course that will allow you to meet the course learning outcomes. Throughout all course components, I will strive to promote a collegial atmosphere of mutual respect conducive to the exchange of ideas and learning. I require the same from you. Any and all disruptive behaviours which may impede the ability of you or other students to learn are unacceptable behaviours. If we all abide by this code of civility and mutual respect, we set the stage for a healthy and stimulating intellectual forum.

### **Rounding of Grades (for example, bumping a 79 to 80%):**

This is a practice some students request. This practice will not occur here. The mark attained is the mark you achieved and the mark assigned; there is no rounding to the next grade level, or ‘giving away’ of marks. Please don’t ask me to do this for you; the response will be “please review the course outline where this topic is covered”. In the same vein, you will not be permitted to do extra work, an extra assignment etc in order to improve any part of, or your final grade.

HS 3811G: Introduction to Qualitative Health Research

Students should log into OWL on a regular basis (i.e., daily in case of announcements) using their UWO username and password for access to the HS 3811g course OWL site.