

**Sociology 413.01**  
**Intermediate Qualitative Research Methods**  
**WINTER 2013**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Bruce Arnold\*  
[drarnold@ucalgary.ca](mailto:drarnold@ucalgary.ca)  
**OFFICE:** SS 912  
**OFFICE HOURS:** 11:00-12:00 MWF  
**PHONE:** 220-6508.  
**CLASS:** CLASSROOM SH 262 MWF 10:00-10:50am

\* Please note the instructor does not use email for substantive or content related course issues because it is an inefficient means for communication and teaching. Instead, the instructor is available at various times weekly throughout the term to personally assist you. Please use the email above to report an absence from class or to set up an appointment during office hours. It is my pleasure to assist you with course issues and assignments.

\* For student study resources see  <http://soci.ucalgary.ca/18/jfstud.htm>

\* Some changes may be made to course deadlines, timing, format, and content by the instructor.

\* Concerns about evaluations and grades must be first put in writing, including the grounds and rationale for said concerns, and submitted to the instructor in advance of a meeting being scheduled.

**Course Goals and Organization:** This is a highly interactive, challenging, and rewarding course designed as an upper-level undergraduate “Inquiry-Based” **seminar** with a **lecture component**. Course goals and expectations for students are based on this design. All students in this course will have at least the Sociology 313 (Introduction to Research Methods) pre-requisite so it is expected that there already exists a basic understanding of research methods issues (e.g. research design, causality, sampling, operationalization-measurement, validity-reliability, some data collection techniques) and that students will contribute to the class through regular class discussions. Please read this syllabus carefully to make sure you understand what the student expectations and course goals are. One central goal is to learn methodological problem identification and solving to learn various aspects about qualitative research decision-making. We do this by working individually and in teams with an instructor provided visual data set. This seminar is therefore highly participatory: thinking and doing. I look forward to contributing to your reaching of these goals!

Your instructor is a resource you can access throughout the term during office hours, special appointments at mutually convenient times, or before and after class. It is my pleasure to assist you with the research issues, decision-making, and challenges in this course.

Specific Course Goals include:

1. Identify key differences between qualitative and quantitative paradigms in terms of paradigm assumptions.
2. Articulate the key characteristics of a qualitative research study.
3. Understand the place of theory and literature in a qualitative study.
4. Define and identify the key characteristics of five approaches of qualitative inquiry: autobiography, the interview, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology.
5. Discuss potential ethical issues that can occur when conducting qualitative research.
6. Understand the role of researcher in qualitative research.
7. Identify a researchable problem and develop research questions and a purpose statement for a qualitative research project.

8. Use appropriate qualitative data collection procedures including observations, interviews, document and visual material review.
9. Introduction to qualitative data analysis procedures and coding techniques with practical examples and applications of a selected sample of these techniques.
10. Identify and conduct verification procedures for the qualitative project.
11. Select appropriate narrative strategies and styles for reporting qualitative findings.
12. Extend qualitative research to include mixed-methodologies & multidisciplinary research
13. To be able to evaluate a qualitative research project (yours and others).
14. To learn to work effectively in research, knowledge building, and decision-making teams.
15. To develop systematic critical, analytical, and problem solving thinking skills.
16. To develop time management, positive motivational, and personal academic goal setting skills.
17. Acquire the basic skills to independently undertake independent study courses, an Honors Thesis and develop the foundations for post-graduate research.
18. To develop intellectual humility, ways of using doubt as a resource, and exploring intellectual curiosity and imagination.

Topics will include:

- Philosophical, Paradigm, and Interpretive Frameworks
- Qualitative Research Designs
- Selected Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry and Data Collection (e.g., narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic research)
- Data coding, analysis, and interpretation with a focus on visual methodologies.
- Extending Qualitative Research to Mixed-Methods and multidisciplinary research (e.g. qualitative-quantitative research, cognition, medicine, and other disciplines).
- Gaining qualitative research experience by conducting research projects with an instructor provided visual data set.

This course makes full use of students learning by doing (participating), engaging the course materials and issues, focusing on thinking skills, and student's existing knowledge and experiential basis. This is also known as **"inquiry-based learning"** (See Blackboard for more details) and a teaching priority at the U of C. Team based learning is emphasized in this course to develop individual and team decision-making and problem solving skills. Methodological techniques and analytical skills are introduced and practices so they may be applied to other university courses and work and volunteer activities outside the classroom. Students are also expected to develop academic and civil responsibilities as members of this class and research teams. Instructor's notes and PowerPoint slides are not posted on Blackboard. Taking systematic notes and sharing them among team member builds thinking skill essential for qualitative (and other) research undertakings.

The three major methodological approaches in qualitative research are: (1) post-positivist, (2) interpretive (e.g., subjective meanings, phenomenology, and symbolic interaction), and (3) critical - e.g., postmodernism, post-structuralism, feminism, social justice. While all approaches offer important contributions, this course will focus on only the first two of these approaches and examples of how they are used in mixed-methodologies and their links to multidisciplinary research..

Methodological **THINKING** is introduced in this course and is often one of the more transferable skills underlying methodologies. Also called "critical" thinking, it is a mode of thinking - about any subject, content, or problem - in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it. This type of **thinking** will include: (1) raising vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely; (2) gathering and assessing relevant information and using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively, or visa versa; (3) coming to

well reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards; (4) thinking with an open mind within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; (5) and, communicating effectively with others in figuring out solutions to progressively more complex problems.

This course requires students to actively engage the materials before and during each class – time management and personal motivation are therefore important. More details will be given during the course as time management can be a challenge for most of us.

Part I: The first part of this course will introduce some general issues as well as some data collection techniques during class. Ongoing small exercises will be used to individually and collectively learn how these can be used and to identify problems that arise during the research process.

Part II: The second part of this course will focus on “doing” research by applying data coding-analysis techniques and their applications. Research teams will undertake a “meta-cognition” research project using the instructor provided visual data/image data set, applying what we learn during the term, with the guidance of the instructor. All students will work with the same visual data set provided by the instructor and will be required to agree to strictly follow the confidentiality agreement.

### Required Readings:

1. Hesse-Biber, S. & Leavy P. (2011). **The Practice of Qualitative Research (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)**. Sage Publications
2. Ball & Smith. Analyzing Visual Data. Sage Publications.  
\* (1 & 2 are “bundled” to reduce student costs)
3. Elder & Paul. The Art of Asking Essential Questions.
4. **Required articles and other readings (references only, due to new U of C copyright regulations)** will be posted on Blackboard (PDF format) at the beginning and throughout the course. PDFs and copies of others’ works cannot be provided due to new U of C legal copyright restrictions.
5. Volk, Tyler. Meta-patterns across space, time, and mind. University of Columbia Press. 1995. The U of C copy of this text is placed in the Taylor library reserve. Dr. Arnold will endeavor to make additional personal copies available to be shared among research teams. If you wish to purchase your own copy (recommended), some used copies can be found online (cost is about \$10.00).

### EVALUATION

Course evaluation will be based upon:

- **Team Visual Methods Research & Presentations:** TBA – last few weeks of term (35%)
- **Team Text Chapter Presentation:** TBA (10%)
- **Participation** (5%)
- **Mid-term Exam:** Wed. Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> (40%)
- **Final Quiz:** Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> (10%)
- **All components of this course must be completed to pass this course.**

Research-Assignment Teams: Working in teams develops a wide variety of essential critical thinking skills, self-assessment skills, collaborative skills, innovation, and some challenges. Students will be assigned to research teams (about 2 students per team) and will undertake course work as individuals and team members, including a group “meta-cognition” visual methodology project which will be used as a teaching vehicle for this course - except for the exams which will be individually graded. All team membership changes must have the approval of Dr. Arnold.

Each student’s responsibility is to organize and equally contribute to all team projects. All members of a team are assigned a team grade except in situations where: (1) individual team members have not contributed equally to the research efforts; (2) individual has demonstrated they are unable to work in a team environment. In either case student working alone will then complete course assignments on their own and the instructor will evaluate the individual student’s work based on the same evaluation criteria as the rest of the class. It will be at the instructor’s discretion to attend to situations where some team members are not fully attending to their team responsibilities. When team conflict cannot be resolved, it may be necessary, in some instances, for students may be re-assigned to individual research projects. Team work (dynamics) requires various considerations so strategies will be discussed in class. If you have any team member concerns, please contact me as soon as possible so I can attend to this matter without discrimination and offer assistance equally to all parties.

**Two Exams:** These will include multiple choice, short-answer, fill in the blanks, or work-concept identification questions drawn from materials presented in class, readings, and class discussion, and presentations. They are not cumulative. Students are advised to take careful and timely notes throughout the class and collaborate with this undertaking with research team members. It is also advised to study in groups. We will work on developing a method for taking notes, studying strategies, and preparing for the exams as part of the course content.

(1) The mid-term exam will be on all course material, discussions, presentations, and assignments up to the date of the exam.

(2) The final in-class examination will include questions drawn from **all** class work, readings, discussion, assignments, since the mid-term exam (only), including team research presentations. More information will be given in class.

**Team Text Chapter Presentation:** Each research team will be assigned a chapter (a qualitative methodological issue) from one of the text books to summarize and present to the class. The team will then make a 15 minute power point presentation. This presentation will summarize and critically comment on the assigned reading, make clear links to other course readings and issues, and require a 2 page point-form summary outline be distributed to all class members prior to the presentation. Do not limit your presentation to reading off the slides or your handout. It is suggested you use no more than 10 slides to discuss your information. More details will be given in class. Do not violate any copyright material from any source, including the internet. If the source does not explicitly give permission to use it, don’t. There is new federal copyright legislation in place for the U of C and university faculty and students could be audited and held liable by non-university bodies for copyright violations.

**Team “Visual Methods” Research Presentation:** For the professional *research presentation* of 20 minutes, students are expected, in consultation with the instructor, to work in a team environment to present their mixed-methods research assignment focusing on meta-visual analysis of data provided by the instructor for use in this course (only). This project will give students “hands-on” experience with some of the decision-making challenges and rewards associated with “doing” qualitative research. More information will be given in class early in the term and posted on Blackboard. Dr Arnold will work with you to develop your ideas, methodological issues, and substantive content issues; in particular, coding and organizing the visual meta-patterns of (1) “objects” and (2) “shapes” in the data that constitute visual metaphors and psychosocial structures and issues. The multidisciplinary project will draw from sociology, psychology, mathematics, anthropology, mythology, and some of natural sciences. Do not violate any copyright material from any source, including the internet. If the source does not explicitly give permission to use it, don’t. There is new copyright legislation in place and university faculty and students could be audited by non-university bodies for copyright violations.

*Class Presentation Handout:* A 2 page (only) singled-spaced point-form outline of the presentation will be submitted to the instructor and all students at the beginning of the class presentation. Arrangements can be made for teaching aids to assist in presentations when necessary (e.g. Powerpoint). Do not simply read off your power point slides or handouts. More information will be given well in advance.

*Combined individual effort = team grade:* A team grade will be assigned to each team member. *All team members must provide an equal part of the in-class presentation to receive a grade. All team members must be present and participate in the presentations.* More details and a handout will be given in-class and the instructor will assist you with this assignment. Team members who are unable to keep up-to-date with other team members may be given an alternative assignment (i.e. complete the assignment independently) so they may reduce their stress and enjoy the course. Please find a method for working as an effective team. More information will be given in class regarding content, structure, and acceptable presentational style. Please use your instructor for team research issues and strategies.

**Participation:** Students are expected to be fully prepared to engage the class materials to contribute to all classes (please recall this is a SEMINAR based course). Speaking in class can be awkward so we will spend some time developing this mode of learning. We will all therefore be able to learn, make mistakes, and work together. We will use uncertainty as a learning tool!

(1) Students will be asked during the course to thoughtfully comment on specific assigned readings and or issues discussed in class. Again, this is for students to learn how to apply course material and issues and so all students are on “the same page” and are therefore better prepared to learn from the classes, labs, and be better equipped for exams and research projects.

(2) Students are expected to initiate and ask thoughtful questions and respond to questions throughout the course.

(3) Students and teams will be responsible for posting ethical and appropriate images on the Blackboard thread for course use (only). More information and detail will be given in class and students will be asked to provide informed consent regarding course ethical issues.

- Please post each of the shapes we cover in this course you notice during your day-to-day activities.
- Each team member can post 1 or 2 (only - for manageability) - think and observe carefully.
- Add a short description of the photo and your "interpretation" (see Volk text) - this will develop and evolve during the course.

- **IMPORTANT** These images will be used during class so keep confidentiality and other ethical issues in mind (e.g., do not post any images that identify any person, company, institution, copyright logo etc - see me if you have any doubts about this in advance!).
- Do not copy or distribute any of these images - they are for course use only. Destroy any of these images you have by April 15, 2013.
- We will use one parent "thread" for each of the metapatterns covered in this course.
- Please - see me ASAP in advance with any questions or doubts you have about your images and posts. If in doubt, don't post.

**Students' Responsibilities:** This course syllabus provides details of all course assignments, requirements, rules and regulations. Each student is responsible for knowing all of its contents and complying with all details herein. All questions regarding this course should be brought to the attention of the instructor as soon as possible to avoid any delay or inconvenience to all students. It's important we all work together so all students have the same opportunities. It is necessary to check Blackboard on a regular basis (e.g. a few times a week). When in doubt, ask your instructor for clarification, ask questions before, during, and after class or during office hours. Extensions for course work must be accompanied by formal documentation (e.g. medical note).

**Data provided for this class are to be treated as strictly confidential and cannot be copied or distributed in any way. Students will be required to sign a confidentiality document agreeing to keeping these data confidential and to destroy all copies before April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Students must complete the free NIH on-line ethics course at <http://phrp.nihtraining.com/index.php>**

**This course takes about 2 hours. Provide Dr. Arnold with a copy of your certificate of completion by January 30th 2013. You can add this professional certification to your resume.**

+++++

### ***Emergency evacuations:***

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by [*check link to find assembly point for your building*]:  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/node/75>

### ***Deferrals:***

If possible, you must provide *advance* notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in an assignment or essay on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a "make up" test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department.

Please note that requests to defer a final examination or to defer term work past the end of a term go through the Undergraduate Programs Office (UPO) and must be processed by the deadlines that are established in the U of C Calendar. You can find the forms you need online:

*Deferred Final Exam Application:*

[http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/APP%20FOR%20DF%20EXAM\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/APP%20FOR%20DF%20EXAM_0.pdf)

*Deferred Term Work Form:*

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

You must submit these deferral forms to the Faculty of Arts Associate Dean (Students) through the UPO office: Undergraduate Programs Office, 4th Floor, MacEwan Student Centre. Only the Associate Dean approves requests for deferrals which extend beyond the end of a term. Instructors are not involved in such decisions. To make an appointment with the Associate Dean, phone (403) 220-8155.

**Ethics Research:** Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required. The required research assignment for this course has been reviewed and approved by the Department of Sociology's Ethics Committee.

**Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct are regarded as serious academic offences. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

**The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)** legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. Written assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

**Safewalk:** The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

**Academic Accommodation:** Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, phone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

**Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades:**

1. When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant. Papers will not be accepted in the main Sociology Department office.

2. Final papers will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place (i.e. outside an instructor's office, the department office etc.) Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will be available for pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or at the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.