

The University of Calgary  
Department of Sociology

**Sociology 615**  
**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS**  
**Winter 2018**

INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Kevin Young
OFFICE / CONTACT:	SS 932 (403-220-6509, <a href="mailto:kyoung@ucalgary.ca">kyoung@ucalgary.ca</a> )
OFFICE HOURS:	By appointment
CLASS TIME:	Monday 9-11.45 a.m.
CLASSROOM:	SS 921
LAB	No formal lab; use this time for your own work

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Qualitative methods are employed by sociologists concerned with how meaning is attributed to everyday life in social groups, and how group members articulate social experience over time through face-to-face interaction, images, and other practices. Of equal concern for qualitative sociologists are the processes through which relations of power are embedded in and distributed between social groups, and how cultural discourses are interpreted across social configurations. Sociology 615 explores some of the key philosophies and techniques that underpin qualitative research. Although a wide range of qualitative strategies are discussed, it specifically considers three principal strands of qualitative inquiry (participant observation, interviewing, content analysis) that allow us to produce in-depth accounts of lived human experience.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Sociology 615 is designed to:

- Expand student knowledge of, and expertise with, a range of qualitative techniques.
- Help students gain confidence in terms of designing research, generating and analyzing data, and 'writing up' their work.
- Help students instrumentally with the methodological dimensions of their graduate research. While the practical goals of this course are *not* geared toward the production of a research (i.e., MA, PhD) prospectus, students are strongly advised to focus on, and work with, their own research topic wherever possible in class assignments.
- Encourage students to take their own professional socialization seriously. Students will have an opportunity to develop and improve in the following three ways: i) professional and academic writing; ii) delivering presentations to an audience of peers; iii) critical self-assessment and appraisal.

## **REQUIRED READING**

The following two books represent assigned reading for the course:

Berg, B. L. and H. Lune (2012). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. New York: Pearson (8<sup>th</sup> Ed.).

Young, K. and M. Atkinson (Eds.). 2012. *Qualitative Research on Sport and Physical Culture*. Bingley, UK: Emerald

A list of Additional Readings ("AR" in Seminar Format and Reading Assignments) will also be made available to students. These readings will be referred to and used on a regular basis.

## **SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT**

Students will be assessed in the following three ways:

1. Three separate presentations, each related to and arranged at the end of lectures on the three main strands of qualitative research (see 'Seminar Format'). Presentation length will be determined by enrolment and available class time. Presentation value is 10% of the overall grade. These verbal presentations will be followed by a written summary to be handed in at the end of the presentation class. These will be worth 5% of the overall grade. The main goal of these verbal presentations and written summaries is to link each of the three main sections of the class with graduate thesis topics and thus to directly assist students in their research development. **Overall value: 45%**.
2. Students will prepare a paper that represents a draft of their MA/PhD methods chapter, emphasizing in particular the qualitative dimensions of their work. This draft will be approximately 15-20 pages in length (double spaced), **worth 30%** of the overall mark, and is due in class on Monday April 9 (or before). This is an *unofficial* methods chapter and relates to Soci 615 only.
3. Throughout the entire course (on a weekly basis), students will be assigned short exercises that are designed to assist them in applying what they learn in Sociology 615 to their own research. Each 'response' will be given space parameters and must be compiled in a document that should be titled *Soci 615: Research Diary*. The purpose of the research diary is to allow students to record and reflect upon their methodological approach as it evolves over the period of the class. Individual assignment responses will not be graded as they are prepared week-by-week, but the entire research diary will be graded at the conclusion of the course. It is also due in class on Monday April 9, and is **worth 25%** of the overall grade.

More detailed information/guidelines on each of these forms of assessment will be provided in class.

### **Late Penalties**

*Papers handed in late without acceptable documentation or the Instructor's approval will be deducted 10% (out of 100%) for each day late. Electronic submissions attached to emails will not be accepted.*

## GRADING SCALE

A+ 95>  
 A 85-94  
 A- 80-84  
 B+ 77-79  
 B 74-76  
 B- 70-73  
 C+ 67-69  
 C 64-66  
 C- 60-63  
 D+ 55-59  
 D 50-54  
 F <49

## SEMINAR FORMAT AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

The basic format of topics, readings and seminar discussions will be as follows. Once again, students should expect to be provided with additional readings. NB: Berg & Lune is *required* reading; Young & Atkinson is *recommended* reading.

DATE	SUBJECT	READING
Mon. Jan. 8	<b>WINTER SESSION CLASSES BEGIN</b> <b>Introduction to the course:</b> <b>Objectives, topics, expectations</b>	
Mon. Jan. 15	General Overview of Qualitative Research (B&L Chaps. 1,2; Y&A Intro, Chaps. 10,11; AR)	
Mon. Jan. 22	Observation (B&L Chaps. 5,6; Y&A Chaps. 2,8,9; AR)	
Mon. Jan. 29	Observation (continued)	
Mon. Feb. 5	Observation: Class Presentations	
Mon. Feb. 12	Interviewing (B&L Chaps. 4,5; Y&A Chaps. 3,7,8; AR)	
Mon. Feb. 19	<b>READING WEEK -- NO CLASS</b>	
Mon. Feb. 26	Interviewing (continued)	
Mon. Mar. 5	<b>TBA</b>	
Mon. Mar. 12	Interviewing: Class Presentations	

Mon. Mar. 19	Content Analysis (B&L Chaps. 8-11; Y&A Chaps. 1,4,5,6,8; AR)
Mon. Mar. 26	Content Analysis: Class Presentations
Mon. April 2	Ethical Research (B&L Chap. 3; Y&A Chap. 11; AR) Writing Up (B&L Chap. 12; Y&A Chap. 11; AR)
Mon. April 9	<b>Course Review and Implications for Further Study</b> 30% Paper due 25% Research Diary due
Fri. April 13	<b>WINTER SESSION CLASSES END</b>

*At the completion of this course each student will be asked to complete a Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) form.*

---

#### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES** (posted by the Instructor)

1. A careful and punctual reading of the required material.
2. Regular attendance at lectures. (The University of Calgary has no policy of mandatory attendance, but attendance is strongly recommended.)
3. Advance notice to the instructor or the Department of Sociology main office (403-220-6502) if unable to comply with the schedule of exams. Students who do not provide this advance notice may not be allowed to retake exams. Also see note on 'Academic Accommodation' and 'Deferrals' below.
4. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with changes (e.g., additions and deletions) to this outline made in class.
5. Keep this outline. It will be your course reference throughout the term. Most of the questions students ask are answered on it. No hard copies will be provided.

***Grade Reappraisal:*** Within two weeks of the date of an assignment, students seeking reappraisal must submit a written request to the instructor explaining the basis for reappraisal. The instructor will consider the circumstances, check the scoring, and communicate his decision to the student. In all cases a re-assessed grade may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.

***Passing Grades:*** It is **not** required that students record a passing grade on any one assignment in order to pass the course overall.

***Use of Technology:*** Please note that the use of laptops, tablets, cell phones or other electronic devices are **only** permitted during lectures for class-related purposes. Where cell phones in particular are concerned, please be respectful and remember to mute your cell phone and refrain from using it during class.

***Email Etiquette:*** Feel free to contact me over email at any time. Indicate your course number in your email's subject line, and include a respectful salutation, your full name, student ID, and a proper closing in the body of your email. All emails violating customary email conventions will be ignored. All other emails

will be answered as quickly as possible. Questions that can be answered by consulting the course outline will not be responded to. Questions regarding course content and readings, concerns about grades, or any other personal issues are best dealt with during office hours.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES** (posted by the University)

***Emergency Evacuations:*** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the closest assembly point (Professional Faculties Food Court). Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

***Deferrals:*** If possible, you must provide *advance* notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or submit 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 Department of Sociology.

*Deferred Final Exam Application:*

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-forms>

*Deferred Term Work Form:*

[https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred\\_termwork15\\_0.pdf](https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf)

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

***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 Faculty 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.

***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. Please see:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

***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:** The student accommodation policy can be found at:  
[ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy](http://ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy).

Students needing an Accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy).

Students needing an accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

***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.

***Failing a Test but Passing the Course:*** In order to pass the course overall a student does not have to record a passing grade on all of the assignments.

***Student Representation:*** The 2017-18 Students' Union VP Academic is Tina Miller ([suvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca)). The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca), [arts2@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@ucalgary.ca), [arts3@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@ucalgary.ca), and [arts4@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@ucalgary.ca). You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/contact>