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Spring 2-1-2022

### **SOCI 561.01: Qualitative Methods**

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**Qualitative Methods  
Spring 2022  
University of Montana**

Course Number: 34062 – SOC 561 – 01  
Day: Wednesdays  
Time: 4:00pm – 6:50pm  
Class Location: SS 330/338

Professor: Daisy Rooks  
Email: [daisy.rooks@umontana.edu](mailto:daisy.rooks@umontana.edu)  
Office Phone: (406) 243-2852  
Office Location: Social Science 313  
Zoom meeting room: <https://umontana.zoom.us/j/2432852406>

Pronouns: She/her/hers  
Please call me: Daisy, Professor Rooks, or Doctor Rooks

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00 – 3:30 PM  
Thursdays 12:00 – 1:30 PM  
and other times when possible

All of my office hours will be by appointment this semester. To sign up for an appointment, click on [this](https://calendly.com/professor-rooks-office-hours-signup/office-hours-visit-with-prof-rooks) link: <https://calendly.com/professor-rooks-office-hours-signup/office-hours-visit-with-prof-rooks>

Given the current COVID-19 surge, I will start the semester holding office hours in my personal Zoom meeting room (see link above). When/if positivity rates go down, I will consider adding an in-person meeting option.

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## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

### **Course Description**

This course offers students an introduction to qualitative methods in the social sciences, with an emphasis on Sociology. After examining the unique logic of qualitative research, we will explore three qualitative data collection techniques in some detail; in-depth interviewing, focus groups, and ethnographic observation. We will then discuss Indigenous Ways of Knowing, and identify several ways that they could, and in some cases have, influence qualitative social science research. The course will conclude with a discussion of coding and analysis, data quality, and data management in qualitative research.

### **Course Objectives**

In this course, students will:

- Gain familiarity with the logic of qualitative methods in the social sciences;
- Understand ethical considerations unique to qualitative research;
- Practice in-depth interviewing, focus groups, and ethnographic observation;

- Develop an awareness of the potential benefits and drawbacks of each technique;
  - Explore research design considerations particular to qualitative research;
  - Identify the similarities and differences between Indigenous and Western/non-Indigenous approaches to qualitative research;
  - Practice making claims using qualitative data; and
  - Learn how to evaluate the claims that others make using qualitative data.
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## EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

### Preparation and Participation

Be prepared for class. Always read the assigned material before the class so that you can fully participate in lecture and discussions. Bring the week's reading material to class with you so that you can refer to it during lectures and group discussions.

Class sessions will include a mixture of lectures, discussion, and exercises. You are expected to participate actively in all three.

### Communication

You should feel free to contact me via email or make an office hours appointment with me to discuss your questions or concerns about the course. If your question or issue is too complicated for email, I will suggest that we meet during my office hours to discuss it in real time.

When emailing me, make sure to use your UM email account. Montana University System policy ([1303.3](#)) requires me to communicate with students only using official UM email. Always include "SOCI 561" or "Qualitative Methods" in the subject line of your email as well.

### Mask Policy

Mask use is required within all classrooms and laboratories at UM this semester. Students must have masks on and positioned correctly at all times (i.e. no exposed noses). Refusal to wear a mask in the classroom constitutes a violation of the student conduct code. If even one student refuses to adhere to this policy, I will exercise my right to end class on the spot.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please do not come to class; instead, contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330 to schedule a COVID-19 test. If your health care provider urges you to isolate or quarantine, I will do everything in my power to help you attend class remotely using an iPad robot.

UM recommends that all students get the COVID-19 vaccine. You can get a vaccine for free at Curry Health Center. Please direct your questions or concerns about the vaccine to Curry Health Center.

Thank you in advance for remaining vigilant inside and outside of the classroom this semester in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

### Academic Honesty

You must practice academic honesty in this course. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. Make sure that you are familiar with the

Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online (<http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/default.php>).

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## EXPECTATIONS OF THE PROFESSOR

### **Communication**

I will do my best to respond to student emails within 48 hours during the week. For the most part, I do not respond to work emails on the weekends. When I answer a question during class that a student emailed me, I consider the question answered.

I will email the class with updates about the class schedule, readings, and assignments as needed. Whenever possible, I will post these messages in the “announcements” block on Moodle in addition to emailing them. Make sure to check your university email account and/or the “announcements” block on Moodle regularly to ensure that you receive the information contained in these messages.

### **Accessibility**

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and the Office for Disability Equity (ODE). If you are already registered with ODE, please email me your accommodation letter ASAP and sign up for an office hours appointment to discuss your accommodations with me. I will work with you and ODE to provide an appropriate modification for this course. If you think that you may have a disability that adversely affects your academic performance, but you are not registered with ODE, please contact them in Lommasson Center 154 or (406) 243-2243.

### **Affirming Names and Pronouns**

I affirm people of all gender expressions and gender identities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name and gender pronoun that you prefer. If you go by a different name than the name on the class roster, please let me know early in the semester so that I can make appropriate changes to my records. For information about name changes at the University of Montana, please go here: <https://www.umt.edu/registrar/students/name-change/default.php>.

### **UM’s Cultural Leave Policy**

I support UM’s cultural and ceremonial leave policy, which allows excused absences for cultural, religious, and ceremonial purposes. According to this policy, to receive an authorized absence for a cultural, religious, or ceremonial event, students or their advisors must submit a formal written request to the instructor. The request must include a brief description (with inclusive dates) of the cultural event or ceremony, and a brief statement about the importance of the student’s attendance or participation. Authorization for the absence is subject to approval by the instructor, but students may appeal the instructor’s decision to the Department Chair, Dean, or Provost. The excused absence or leave may not exceed five academic calendar days (not including weekends or holidays). Students who take excused leaves are responsible for completion or make-up of assignments, at the instructor’s discretion. Students can find more information about the University of Montana’s cultural leave policy here: <https://catalog.umt.edu/academics/policies-procedures/>.

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## OTHER INFORMATION

### Basic Needs Statement

If you are struggling to secure food or housing, and believe that this is, or could, affect your performance in the course, please know that help is available. You can visit the [UM Food Pantry \(www.umt.edu/pantry\)](http://www.umt.edu/pantry) for free food, hygiene products, and SNAP application assistance. Hours and location information can be found on the pantry's website. For all other Basic Needs questions, please visit [ASUM's Bear Necessities office \(www.umt.edu/asum/agencies/bear-necessities\)](http://www.umt.edu/asum/agencies/bear-necessities).

If you are comfortable, please come see me and I will do my best to help connect you with resources.

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## COURSE MATERIALS

There are six required books for this class; they are six of the eight books that comprise the Sage Qualitative Research Kit.

- Flick, Uwe. 2007a. [Designing Qualitative Research](#). London: Sage Publications.
- Kvale, Steinar. 2007. [Doing Interviews](#). London: Sage Publications.
- Angrosino, Michael. 2007. [Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research](#). London: Sage Publications.
- Barbour, Rosaline. 2007. [Doing Focus Groups](#). London: Sage Publications.
- Gibbs, Graham. 2007. [Analyzing Qualitative Data](#). London: Sage Publications.
- Flick, Uwe. 2007b. [Managing Quality in Qualitative Research](#). London: Sage Publications.

You can purchase the first or second editions of these books at the bookstore, online, or as ebooks. All six books are also available on traditional reserve at the library. You can check out the reserve books for two hours at a time but cannot remove them from the library.

There are two supplemental articles required for this class. They are marked with \* on the syllabus and are available on the course Moodle page.

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## ASSIGNMENTS

There are 10 assignments in this class. Brief descriptions of the assignments appear below. I will provide additional verbal instructions during class sessions, as necessary. All assignments are due Friday at 5PM during the week that they appear on the course schedule. Students will submit each assignment on the course Moodle page; I will not accept hardcopies or emailed copies of assignments.

All assignments should be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions. If an assignment contains an unreasonable number of spelling, word choice, or grammar mistakes I will return it to you, unread, for further editing. If an assignment is more than one week late, and you have not asked for and received an extension from me, I reserve the right not to accept it.

### **Assignment 1 [no word limit]**

Complete one of the two human subjects protection courses available on UM's [Institutional Review Board website](http://www.umt.edu/research/compliance/IRB/hspcourse.php) (<http://www.umt.edu/research/compliance/IRB/hspcourse.php>). This should take you several hours. Once you pass the quiz at the end of the course, either download the certification document or take a screenshot of the certificate, and then upload your certificate to Moodle. If you previously completed a human subjects protection course and have a certificate of completion that has not expired, you are welcome to submit it on Moodle.

### **Assignment #2 [500 word maximum]**

Write a short paper describing a research topic that you are interested in exploring in this class using qualitative methods. This research topic can be related to your thesis or dissertation, but it does not have to be. When selecting a research topic, keep in mind that it should be:

- Amenable to qualitative research;
- Timely, relevant and/or important;
- Compelling enough to hold your interest for the duration of the semester; and
- Not something that has already been researched extensively.

In your paper, clearly state the question(s) about your topic that you would like to answer. Your does not need to contain a literature review. If you feel strongly about referencing the scholarly literature on your topic, you should do so very briefly. This part of your paper should not take up more than 10-15% of your assignment. If you do this, be sure to include in-text citations using an established scholarly citation style. It does not matter which style you use (APA, ASA, Chicago style, etc. You do not need to include a reference list.

Your paper should have a short introduction and conclusion, and be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions. Bring two copies of your assignment-in-progress to class in week 3. After class, revise your assignment and submit it on Moodle.

### **Assignment #3 [no word limit]**

Identify two friends, family members, or acquaintances that you would like to interview about the research project that you described in assignment 2. After securing both peoples' consent to be interviewed, write a short memo describing your two interviewees and your rationale for interviewing them. Then draft 5 or 6 interview questions that you would like to ask them in order to learn more about your research topic. Bring two copies of your assignment-in-progress to class in week 4. After class, revise your assignment and submit it on Moodle.

### **Assignment #4 [no word limit]**

Conduct two 15-20 minute interviews with the people described in assignment 3, and transcribe both interviews in their entirety. Bring hard copies of both transcripts to class in week 5. After class, edit both interview transcripts for grammar, spelling, and formatting, and then submit the best transcript on Moodle.

### **Assignment #5 [700 word maximum]**

Write a data analysis paper describing the interview data that you collected. Before beginning this assignment, review your two interview transcripts and identify themes that appear in both transcripts. Pick a theme/thesis/argument that is interesting to you, and write a short paper describing it. For each claim that

you make in your paper, you must provide at least one excerpt from your interviews as evidence for the claim. Your paper should have a short introduction and conclusion and be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions. Bring a hard copy of your assignment-in-progress to class in week 7. After class, revise your assignment and submit it on Moodle.

**Assignment #6 [no word limit]**

Conduct two ethnographic observations at the site that you identified during class. Your observations should last approximately 20 minutes each, and should happen at different times of day. Write fieldnotes documenting everything that you observed during the two observations. Your fieldnotes should be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions. Bring a hard copy of both fieldnotes to class in week 11. After class, edit both sets of fieldnotes for grammar, spelling, and formatting, and then submit the best set on Moodle.

**Assignment #7 [no word limit]**

Conduct two additional ethnographic observations at the same site. Your observations should last approximately 20 minutes each, and should happen at two different times of day than your first two observations. Write fieldnotes documenting everything that you observed during the two observations. Your fieldnotes should be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions. Bring a hard copy of both fieldnotes to class in week 12. After class, edit both sets of fieldnotes for grammar, spelling, and formatting, and then submit the best set on Moodle.

**Assignment #8 [700 word maximum]**

Write a data analysis paper describing the observational data that you collected. Before beginning this assignment, review the four sets of fieldnotes that you wrote, and identify themes that appear in at least two sets of notes. Pick a theme that is interesting to you and write a short paper describing this theme. For each claim that you make in your paper, you must provide at least one excerpt from your fieldnotes as evidence for the claim. Your paper should have a short introduction and conclusion and be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions. Bring a hard copy of your assignment-in-progress to class in week 14. After class, revise your assignment and submit it on Moodle.

**Assignment #9 [no word limit]**

Along with your group members, conduct a modest applied research project for your community/campus partner. Once you have been assigned a group and a partner, meet with your partner to identify a few questions that they want answered, or a few issues that they want explored. Then, in collaboration with your group, pick one that is interesting to you and amenable to qualitative research. Next, work with your group members to design a project that uses qualitative methodology to answer the questions or explore the issues that your partner identified. Run your project idea by me for feedback, and once I have approved the project, you and your group can begin data collection.

Once your group has collected and analyzed your data, you will prepare a final report for your partner. Your report must be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions. You will submit your final report on Moodle, revise the report in response to my feedback, and then submit it to your partner.

## Assignment #10 [select one of the following options]

### Option 1 [650 word maximum]

Revise and resubmit one of your data analysis papers (assignments 5 and 8). If you choose this option, you will select one of these papers and revise it in response to the feedback that you received from me. You will submit your revised paper on Moodle, along with a short memo [300 word maximum] describing your decision-making process while revising. If you rejected any of my feedback when revising, you should justify that decision in your memo. Your paper should have a short introduction and conclusion and be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions.

### Option 2 [1000 word maximum]

Write a more extensive and more complex ethnographic data analysis paper. First, collect fieldnotes from at least two other students in the class who observed at the same site that you did. After you have read all notes in your expanded dataset, identify themes that appear in at least three students' sets of notes, including your own. Pick a theme that is interesting to you and write a paper describing this theme. For each claim that you make in your paper, you must provide at least one excerpt from your expanded dataset as evidence for the claim. Your paper must include excerpts from at least three different students' fieldnotes, including your own. Your paper should have a short introduction and conclusion and be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions.

### Option 3 [500 word maximum]

Write a paper exploring how you could integrate Indigenous Ways of Knowing into the qualitative research project that you described in assignment 2. First, discuss several features of Indigenous Ways of Knowing that you learned about in this class. Then, explain how you could integrate one or two of these features into your own research, and identify the potential challenges of doing so. Conclude your paper with a discussion of how integrating Indigenous Ways of Knowing into your project could strengthen it. Your paper should have a short introduction and conclusion and be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions.

### Option 4 [no word limit]

Write a mock proposal for a grant to fund the qualitative research project that you described in assignment 2. Your proposal must follow all of the content, formatting, and length parameters established by the funding agency. When you submit your assignment, you should also submit a word document containing all relevant information about the grant competition, so that I can review it before reading your proposal. Here is an incomplete list of small grant competitions in the social sciences that you could write a mock proposal for:

- American Sociological Association Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline Grant
- American Sociological Association Community Action Research Initiative Grant
- ASUM Research and Creative Scholarship Fund Grant
- National Communication Association Advancing the Discipline Grant
- National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant
- Rural Sociological Society Master's Thesis or Dissertation Research Award
- Sociological Initiatives Foundation Concept Application
- UM University Small Grant Program Grant



This is an exercise; you do not have to submit your grant proposal, nor do you have to meet the eligibility criteria for the grant competition. Your grant proposal should be carefully edited with attention to grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions.

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## **GRADING AND ASSESSMENTS**

You can earn one of three grades in this class: A, B or C. There are no pluses or minuses for the final grades in this class.

During the semester I will not assign grades or scores to individual assignments; instead I will provide written feedback on each assignment that you turn in.<sup>1</sup> In my feedback, I will identify the strongest and weakest aspects of the assignment, point out information or concepts that were missing from your assignment, and/or suggest additional work (thinking, writing, reading, etc.) that you need to do in order to improve your understanding of the topic. Ideally this feedback will help you narrow your research topic, deepen your understanding of qualitative research design, expand your understanding of qualitative data collection, and/or improve your writing.

This class employs something called contract grading. One of the goals of contract grading is to reduce the anxiety about grades that students often experience. Another goal is to encourage students to develop their own motivations for excellence. A key aspect of contract grading is to emphasize qualitative evaluative feedback over quantitative assessments of students' written work.

In courses with contract grading, the instructor sets a clear and unambiguous bar for earning a B in the course. If students meet this bar, they are guaranteed a B in the course. Students must go above and beyond this bar in order to earn an A in the course, and they must fall below the bar in order to earn a C in the course.

### **Grading Contract**

You are guaranteed a final grade of B in this class if you:

1. Meet the stated criteria for all assignments;
2. Meet due dates for all assignments;
3. Attend class regularly, arrive on time and stay for the duration of the class;
4. Actively participate in all class discussions and exercises;
5. Give thoughtful feedback during peer exercises and workshops during class; and
6. Edit all assignments so that they conform to the conventions of academic English;

The grade of B does not derive from my judgment about the quality of your writing, the uniqueness of your ideas, or your enthusiasm for qualitative research methods. Instead, you will earn a B in this course entirely on the basis of what you do (not on how well you do it). If you meet the conditions above, you will earn a B in this class. However, your final grade will fall rapidly below a B if you do not meet these conditions. I will let you know via email or in person if you are in danger of falling below a B in the course.

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<sup>1</sup> I will provide narrative feedback on each assignment, except for assignments 6 and 7. I will provide narrative feedback to half of the class for assignment 6, and will provide narrative feedback to the other half of the class for assignment 7. I will provide group-level, or "batch" feedback, on students' fieldnotes during class in both weeks.

The grade of A in this course *does* rest on my judgment about the quality of your writing, the uniqueness of your ideas and the depth of your understanding of qualitative research methods. To earn an A in the course, you must do everything that you must do to earn a B as well as:

1. Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of qualitative research methods, including what they are, how they can and cannot be used, and how they differ from quantitative methods;
2. Produce creative, unique, thoughtful assignments;
3. Receive critiques during peer exercises and workshops in a professional and non-defensive manner;
4. Turn in papers that are concise, carefully edited and easy to read.

To earn an A, your performance in all aspects of this class must be exceptionally high quality. I will let you know via email or in person if you are in the running for an A in the course.

You are welcome to discuss this grading contract, your performance in the course, or your concerns about your final grade with me during my office hours. Grade questions and concerns are always best addressed earlier rather than later.

*The ideas and explanation in this section were borrowed liberally from Jake Hansen, former Associate Director of UM's Writing and Public Speaking Center. He borrowed heavily from: Elbow and Danielwicz "A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching." College Composition and Communication. 61.2. December 2009, and from Elbow "Taking Time Out From Grading and Evaluating While Working in a Conventional System." Assessing Writing. 4.1. 1997.*

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## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

See the next page for a detailed course schedule.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Reading – 1st edition (2nd edition)</b>	<b>Due Friday @ 5 PM</b>
1	Wed. Jan 19	Overview of the course Introduction to qualitative methods	Flick 2007a pp. 1-2, 10-15 (pp. 2-3, 12-18)	
2	Wed. Jan 26	The logic of qualitative research Designing qualitative projects Overview of interview methodology	* Patton pp. 33-35 Flick 2007a pp. 16-60 (pp. 20-70)	Assignment #1
3	Wed. Feb 2	Writing interview questions Conducting interviews	Flick 2007a pp. 61-76, 109-114 (pp. 74-94, 148-154) Kvale pp. 1-32 (Brinkman & Kvale pp. 2-25, 28-37)	Assignment #2
4	Wed. Feb 9	Conducting interviews cont'd Transcribing interviews	Kvale pp. 33-66 (Brinkman & Kvale pp. 40-72) Gibbs pp. 10-23 (pp. 18-35)	Assignment #3
5	Wed. Feb 16	Sampling and recruiting Making claims using interview data	Kvale pp. 67-100 (Brinkman & Kvale pp. 74-114) Gibbs pp. 56-72 (pp. 76-91, 99-100)	Assignment #4
6	Wed. Feb 23 <sup>2</sup>	Making claims cont'd Overview of focus group methodology	Barbour pp. 1-35, 40 (pp. 2-32, 40-41)	
7	Wed. March 2	Designing focus group projects Writing focus group questions	Barbour pp. 41-43, 48-91, 102-114 (pp. 44-45, 48-52, 58-103)	Assignment #5
8	Wed. March 9	Conducting focus groups Making claims using focus group data	Barbour pp. 91-101, 115-149, 152-3 (pp. 106-167)	

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<sup>2</sup> Class will be short this week. We will meet from 5:30 to 6:50 only.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Reading – 1st edition (2nd edition)</b>	<b>Due Friday @ 5 PM</b>
9	Wed. March 16	Indigenous Ways of Knowing Overview of ethnographic methodology	TBD	
10	Wed. March 23	Spring break – no class		
11	Wed. March 30	Designing ethnographic projects Writing ethnographic fieldnotes	Angrosino pp. 1-3, 14-41 (Coffey pp. 2-5, 11-41) Gibbs pp. 24-30 (pp. 38-44)	Assignment #6
12	Wed. April 6	Conducting ethnographic research Writing ethnographic fieldnotes cont'd	Angrosino pp. 53-76 (Coffey pp. 44-54, 57-75, 76-85, 88-91, 93-94)	Assignment #7
13	Wed. April 13	Writing ethnographic fieldnotes cont'd Making claims using ethnographic data	Angrosino pp. 77-81, 82-96 (Coffey pp. 95-104, 111-27) Gibbs pp. 1-9 (pp. 2-15)	
14	Wed. April 20	Coding & analyzing qualitative data	Gibbs pp. 30-55, 73-104, 124-146 (pp. 44-73, 102-119, 128-144, 166-184)	Assignment #8
15	Wed. April 27	Ensuring quality in qualitative research	Flick 2007b pp. 1-21, 37-53 * Anfara et al. pp. 28-38	Assignment 9
16	Wed. May 4	Qualitative data management Proposing qualitative research Course wrap-up & course evaluations	Flick 2007b pp. 54-74, 91-92, 96-121, 130-139	
Finals	Tues. May 10	Finals week – no class		Assignment 10