Business 9707: Qualitative Methods
Fall / Winter 2022/23
Location: Ivey 2120
Zoom (only on request): https://ivey-uwo.zoom.us/my/TimaBansal

COURSE OVERVIEW
Qualitative methods are becoming increasingly common in research in business schools, especially in management studies. They first appeared in the top journals in the 1980s, but it wasn’t until the 2000s that they started to take hold. Now, approximately 20% of submissions in the Academy of Management Journal are based on qualitative methods. Arguably, a PhD in business is only complete if you understand qualitative methods, even if you lean towards using quantitative methods. Not only are qualitative methods important to fully appreciate the discourse in business research, it is only through the lens of qualitative methods that you will understand the different ways of knowing (epistemologies).

Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative methods can represent a plurality of paradigms and approaches. Although there are some guidelines for high quality qualitative research, there is no single rule book or precedence on which researchers can rely. I liken a good qualitative scholar to a good violinist. There are some technical skills, but the magic comes in using your own creativity. These skills are not learned through precedence and explicit knowledge, but from the actual practice and coaching.

In this course, we will start from what many might perceive as an unusual place for a methods course. It will be to learn about the paradigms that ground knowledge in the social sciences. By recognizing that the methods are grounded in a methodology with ontological and epistemological assumptions, researchers can more carefully and deliberately make wise choices. After this fairly high-level starting place, we move quickly to the specifics of collecting, analyzing and writing the results of qualitative data.

This course will be delivered in more of a Socratic style than a lecture style. We will build understanding by answering questions, and listening to a wide range of perspectives. I felt it was especially important in this course to invite dialogue and foster deep listening – as those are critical skills in qualitative research. Hopefully, you will start to see that your orientation to knowledge is based on your own paradigmatic assumptions of ‘truth’, and that these ‘truths’ differ among people. Everyone, even you, holds latent biases. This course offers you an opportunity to not only learn about different approaches to knowledge, but also reveal to yourself some assumptions that you didn’t even know you held.

Even though the course is initiated into the theoretical discussions about ‘ways of knowing’, it moves quickly into ‘ways of doing’. Many of the readings describe how to do qualitative research, which I recognize doesn’t always provide the most engaging reading. But, in almost every week, you will be asked to reflect on the ideas presented in the readings or engage in an active exercise. As well, I will anchor some weeks on an article that illustrates the topic being covered during that week.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course has the following objectives:

- To understand the range of qualitative approaches to research
- To build some of the pragmatic skills in approaching qualitative research
- To reveal your own ontological and epistemological assumptions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS / EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Contributions</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Every week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Most weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative paper review</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Week 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>End of term</td>
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Classroom Contribution

The class contribution grade will be based on a 3-point grading scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th># of students typically receiving this grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Excellent contributions</td>
<td>1-2 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good contribution</td>
<td>Most students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attended class, but remained silent</td>
<td>Ideally no one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Did not attend class</td>
<td>Ideally no one</td>
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Excellent contributions are inquisitive, thoughtful, analytical, insightful and respectful. To make such comments, you will have to prepare well for class and listen carefully. You are encouraged to challenge ideas, not individuals. Classroom discussions should be fun, provocative and enlightening. You are being judged on the quality, not quantity of contributions; in fact, speaking too much means that other people have less opportunity to speak and may also be judged harshly. So, contribute when you have something substantial to say or you feel there is a lull in the conversation.

Only emergencies should keep you away from class. If you know you cannot make one of the class dates, then please let me know in advance. I start classes promptly on time, and will endeavour to finish on time.

Assignments

In most classes, there is an assignment. They are intended to foster learning, reflexivity, and prepare you for the final paper. Details of each assignment is noted within the week’s reading list.

The essays will only be graded as pass/fail – and most people are expected to pass. I will read all the essays prior to class, but will only send comments if there is something important to say. Once all the essays are submitted, I will make them available to everyone so that you can read each others’ essays. I am hoping that this type of sharing will foster community. I encourage you to post comments on Learn, ask your classmates questions, or bring up others’ good ideas in the class discussion.

The essay must be submitted to Learn by Saturday midnight, prior to class. In submitting the essay, please use the following format for the file name: <Your surname>_Week?_Essay. So, if I were
submitting in Week 2, it would be labelled “Bansal_Week2_Essay”. Ideally, you will submit the essays as a Word doc.

**Review of a Qualitative Paper**

You will be given 2 weeks to review a qualitative paper that had been submitted to a top journal. The purpose of this exercise is not only to hone your reviewing skills, but also appreciate the challenges of writing qualitative research.

Please submit the review with the following file name: <surname>_Review. The file should be a Word doc.

**Final Paper & Presentation**

The final paper requires you to write the front end of a qualitative paper. This means you will need to
1. Identify a motivating empirical phenomenon – a puzzle in the ‘real world’ that you find interesting and cannot explain. 
2. Present a research question that is grounded in theory, yet will address the empirical puzzle 
3. Review the literature (prior theory) that could potentially explain the phenomena, but does not 
4. Describe the methods (research context, data sources, data analysis) you will apply to address the phenomena

The paper should not exceed 10 pages of text, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, and one-inch margins. There are no limits placed on figures, tables, and references. The file name should be <surname>_Final Paper.

The presentation will be no longer than 10 minutes. The objective is to help you practice your presentation skills and to see the range of qualitative research being designed.

**ACADEMIC OFFENCES: PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

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:

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

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: HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you
achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western’s Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page http://www.music.uwo.ca, and our own McIntosh Gallery http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca.

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES
Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction. For more information, see http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd
# OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS

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<tr>
<th>Session #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods: What and why</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 16</td>
<td>Paradigms: Ontology, epistemology, and methodology</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>Building theory through qualitative data</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Variance and Process studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Collecting data: Interviews &amp; Archival sources (text, video, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>February 13</td>
<td>Collecting data: Observations and Ethnographies (in person and online)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>February 27</td>
<td>Analyzing data: coding and discourse analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>Analyzing data: mid-range data (fsQCA) &amp; big data</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>March 13</td>
<td>Engaged Scholarship, Action research, and Design. <em>This class will be outside of this classroom. Location TBD.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Writing, publishing and reviewing qualitative research</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>Ethical Concerns, Critiques of Qualitative Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Discussing the final research papers</td>
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Organizations Podcasts – for those times that you just can’t handle reading another article 🎧
https://www.talkingaboutorganizations.com/
https://www.ethnographyatelier.org/podcast
https://player.fm/series/thinking-allowed-1301224
DETAILS OF SESSIONS

WEEK 1: QUALITATIVE, QUANTITATIVE, AND MIXED METHODS

There are many readings this week, but they are generally short and light. We won’t discuss the specific readings in too much detail. Instead, we will focus this week’s discussion on:

- what is (good) qualitative research
- key differences between qualitative and quantitative research
- how qualitative and quantitative research can be combined

Assignment (due midnight Saturday)

For this assignment, you are asked to cover two unrelated topics:

1. Why are you taking this class and what do you hope to learn? (maximum 150 words)
2. Discuss the following: qualitative research is journalism. Why or why not? (max 400 words)

Readings

Required

- Rynes, S.L., & Bartunek, J.M., 2016. Qualitative research: It just keeps getting more interesting! Links to an external site. In Elsbach & Kramer (eds), Handbook of Qualitative Organizational Research, Routledge.


Optional

WEEK 2: PARADIGMS
This week’s readings are likely the densest in the course. You will likely need to reread them several times (as I will). Please be prepared to set aside considerable time to understand these concepts, especially if the concepts are new to you.

Assignment
Identify a puzzle or phenomena that you find interesting. Please frame this puzzle as a research question. How could you address the question – you do not need to provide detailed methods this week, but more the general approach? Think about the paradigm that you hold and ensure the methodology aligns with the paradigm. There is no right or wrong answer. (max 600 words)

Readings

Required


Optional

- Unreliable research: Trouble at the Lab Links to an external site.. The Economist (10/19/13).
• Given, L. 2017: *It’s a new year … So let’s stop the paradigm wars* [Links to an external site.]. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16: 1-2.


**WEEK 3: BUILDING THEORY**

**Assignment**

- Identify 1-2 base-line theories (i.e. existing literature) that can be informed by the phenomena you described in Week 2
- Indicate how you would choose a research site to ensure you will be able to build theory (max 600 words).

**Readings**

*Required*


*Optional*


**WEEK 4: VARIANCE AND PROCESS STUDIES**

**Assignment**

Describe the phenomena that you discussed in week 2 from a variance perspective and a process perspective. If one perspective doesn’t apply, explain why. (Max 450 words)

**Readings**
BUSINESS 9707 COURSE SYLLABUS

Required


Required Illustrative Paper


Optional


WEEK 5: COLLECTING DATA: INTERVIEWS & ARCHIVAL DATA (TEXT, VIDEO)

Assignment

1) Prepare an opening introduction to your research and a set of main questions that you would use to uncover insights. Be prepared to interview a classmate.

2) Identify archival data that you could have used to answer your research question, what they could tell you, and their limitations. Using bullets is fine. (max 300 words)

Readings

Required


Required Illustrative Paper

WEEK 6: COLLECTING DATA: ETHNOGRAPHIES AS AN OBSERVER AND PARTICIPANT

In this week’s discussion, we will primarily spend time on speaking to the challenges and opportunities of ethnographies. We will spend time with Pratt’s paper below and your own experiences in completing the assignment.

Assignment

In one of your other classes, write ethnographic participant observations for 30 minutes on the question: “how is the instructor fostering learning among students.” You are welcome to use pseudonyms.

Readings

Required

Required Illustrative Paper


Optional

- [https://www.ethnographyatelier.org/susan-silbey-podcast](https://www.ethnographyatelier.org/susan-silbey-podcast)

WEEK 7: ANALYZING DATA: CODING AND DISCOURSE

Assignment

You will be given some text to code by hand for this class. The aim is merely to get your hands dirty and experience the process of drawing patterns.

Readings

**Required**


**Required Illustrative Paper**

Optional


WEEK 8: ANALYZING DATA: MID-RANGE DATA (FSQCA) & BIG DATA

Assignment
No assignment

Readings

Required


Required Illustrative Papers


WEEK 9: ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP, ACTION RESEARCH, AND DESIGN

Assignment
No assignment

Readings

Required Readings


Required Illustrative Paper


WEEK 10: WRITING, PUBLISHING AND REVIEWING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Assignment

Two weeks prior to this class, you will be asked to review a qualitative paper. (max 750 words)

Readings

Required Readings


• Pratt, M., Kaplan, S. and Whittington, R. Forthcoming. The Tumult over Transparency: Decoupling Transparency from Replication in Establishing Trustworthy Qualitative Research Links to an external site.. Administrative Sciences Quarterly.

Optional


WEEK 11: ETHICAL CONCERNS, CRITIQUES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (still being developed)

Assignment

Please identify any ethical concerns that will be associated with your research topic and what you will do
Readings

Required Readings


Tri-Council Policy Statement Links to an external site: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (read in particular Chapter 10 on qualitative research Links to an external site, skim the rest) TCPS 2 2018


Optional


WEEK 12: PRESENTING AND DISCUSSING THE FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS