

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

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CRCJ3002A - Qualitative Methods in Criminology  
Syllabus – fall 2016

Professor Nicolas Carrier  
C567 Loeb  
e. nicolas.carrier@carleton.ca  
t. 520.2600 ext.1237  
Office hours: Mondays 10am-12pm

**CONTENT**

CRCJ3002 is an introductory course to epistemological and methodological debates and practices related to qualitative inquiries, and to theoretical perspectives in interpretive, constructivist, social sciences. Lectures and term assignments will notably address: qualitative research developments, varieties and impacts in social sciences; the great divide between mirroring nature and textualizing artefacts; the varieties, and relationships between, ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives and practices; the politics of truth; the research process; morality and subjectivity; aspects related to the construction, exploration and (re)textualization of fields; the analysis, condensation and interpretation of co-produced texts; discursive strategies in structuring research reports.

**OBJECTIVES**

The course will nurture the development of basic qualitative research skills by asking students, working in small research teams, to go through all major steps of knowledge constitution with qualitative tools. Getting their hands dirty and experiencing research-related dilemmas, problems, and joys will help students to more fully appreciate the epistemological and theoretical dimensions and debates that characterize any project involving interpreting the world we live in. Hopefully, it will arm them with strong critical reflexes towards mainstream criminology's research practices.

More specifically, at the end of this course, students will have developed basic skills and further developed their capacities in:

- Devising a socio-politically and theoretically relevant research problem;
- Assessing critically the epistemological and theoretical assumptions guiding criminologists' evidence-based 'truths';
- Co-producing and making sense of textualized realities through participant-observations and/or discourse analysis;
- Working in a team environment.

## MATERIAL

Students are expected to read the articles and book chapters detailed in the schedule (see below) before class.

All mandatory readings are available electronically on Ares.

*Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).*

## EVALUATION

1<sup>st</sup> Individual assignment 10% Due: September 26

*Critical summary of the chapter 'Dangerous knowledge' (see lecture I in the Schedule section). The assignment is 3-4 pages long (annexes, bibliography and cover page do not count as pages). It identifies and summarizes the main critiques addressed to mainstream criminology, and the methodological alternatives outlined in the chapter. In your conclusion, you critically engage the arguments and propositions of the authors: do you accept their critiques and methodological alternatives? (Of course, you justify your answer).*

2<sup>nd</sup> Individual assignment 20% Due: October 3

*Critical analysis of a qualitative research published in a peer-reviewed academic journal. The assignment is 4-5 pages long (annexes, bibliography and cover page do not count as pages). It proposes an analysis of the: research problem, epistemological posture, theoretical framework, methodological strategies, discursive strategies used to present the results, strengths and weaknesses of the research. Each student works on a different article. I strongly recommend you chose a research piece related to your team research project. I will need to approve your selection (this can be done through email – please use my regular email address). Make sure you provide me with the electronic version of the article no later than lecture III. A hard copy of the journal article should be annexed to your assignment. Articles based on multiple qualitative methods can be used. Articles based on mixed methods involving a quantitative part cannot be used.*

Team research project 25% Due: October 31

*Research topic and problematization, and methodological strategy. The assignment is 12-15 pages long (annexes, bibliography and cover page do not count as pages). It presents: a) your research problem through a critical overview of, and dialogue with, the related literature; b) the questions that guide your research project - including pragmatic considerations (how is this project realistic); c) the methodological strategy (focus on discourse and/or participant-observation), as well as the field/data to be studied. It includes a timetable of the research process, which details each students' contribution. The research project shall be conducted in groups of five students. Each team member is expected to conduct participant-observation and/or discourse analysis. Each team is responsible for devising a research project that can be conducted inside the limited time frame of the term.*

Final research report 45%

Due: December 9

*Research problematization (including literature review), methodological strategy (projected and realized), data presentation and analysis, conclusion, directions for future research. The assignment is 35-45 pages long (annexes, bibliography and cover page do not count as pages). It presents your research problem and the questions that guide your research project. It proposes a critical overview of, and dialogue with, the related literature. It presents and justifies the methodological strategy as well as the field/data studied. It accounts of the field experiences (in research using participant-observation), and thoroughly presents the interpreted material. A portion of the conclusion should reflect on the overall research process. An annex should indicate clearly the role of each student in the entire research process. 50% of the mark is team-based; 50% is individual.*

Some remarks:

- *Evaluation will be guided by the following criteria:*
  - *Quality (clarity, rigor, precision, justification, depth, exhaustiveness);*
  - *Originality;*
  - *Finesse (dodging common sense, considering alternative points of view, sharp but prudent and well supported affirmations);*
- *I really don't care which font you use but choose a reasonable size;*
- *Use the justify function in your word processor;*
- *Use 1.5 line spacing;*
- *Insert page numbers;*
- *Make a cover page;*
- *Secure your work with staples;*
- *Print with black ink (except for eventual pictures, figures and so on);*
- *Make sure all cited work appears in the bibliography (and by the way, I really suggest you don't try to rely on plagiarism...);*
- *I don't accept submission of assignments through emails;*
- *Any late assignment is penalized at -10% per business day (except on exceptional circumstances with supporting documentation);*
- *Any assignment which is not directly handed in to me in class has to be dropped in the Criminology drop box (C562 Loeb) on the due date or the above penalty is enforced;*
- *Life is terrible: you have to work with other human beings. The Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice is no kindergarten: I expect each team members to be mature enough to deal with eventual problems within your team. If this does not work, make sure to report to me.*

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## Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

## Plagiarism

Students are reminded of the University regulations concerning plagiarism and other instructional offenses as outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar. The policy can be found at [http://www.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic\\_integrity/docs/Academic\\_Integrity\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic_integrity/docs/Academic_Integrity_Policy.pdf)

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentionally or not, the idea, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgement in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

## SCHEDULE

### **Week 1. Introduction – September 12**

*Historical overview of qualitative methods contributions in social sciences; diversity of methods; overview of the research process; presentation of the course outline and term's assignments.*

*\*\*\*research team formation & brainstorming session\*\*\**

Ferrell, J., K. Hayward and J. Young (2008). Dangerous Knowledge, in Ferrell, J., K. Hayward and J. Young, *Cultural Criminology: An Invitation*, London: Sage, 158-193.

### **Week 2. The great divide: mirroring nature / textualizing artefacts – September 19**

*Ontological and epistemological postures; the problem of induction; the theory- and value-ladenness of 'facts'; usual forms of scientific hegemony and resistance to qualitative methods; the self-referentiality of observation.*

*\*\*\*time devoted to research proposal, focus on potential projects\*\*\**

Becker, H.S. (1967). Whose Side Are We On?, *Social Problems*, 14 (3), 239-247.

Denzin, N.K. and Y.S. Lincoln (2008). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research, in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, London: Sage, 1-43.

### **Week 3. The research process as 'bricolage' – September 26**

*The researcher as 'bricoleur/bricoleuse'; crafting a research problem; possible ways of producing/interpreting texts; the etic/emic distinction; competing approaches to interpretative practices/communities; the research process; using research databases.*

*\*\*\*time devoted to research proposal, focus on research questions\*\*\**

*!!!! 1<sup>st</sup> assignment due !!!!*

Holstein, J.A. and J.F. Gubrium (2008). Interpretive Practice and Social Action, in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, London: Sage, 214-248.

Hesse-Biber, S.N. and P. Leavy (2011). Designing Qualitative Approaches to Research, in Hesse-Biber, S.N. and P. Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 31-57.

### **Week 4. Action! Interactions in the field – I – participant-observation – October 3**

*Producing the field; gaining access; negotiating boundaries; the tension between participation and observation; covert/overt participant-observation strategies; researching common places; writing memos.*

*\*\*\*time devoted to research proposal, focus on problematic + design\*\*\**

*!!!! 2<sup>nd</sup> assignment due !!!!*

Kraska, P.B. and W.L. Neuman (2011). Crime and Justice Ethnographic Field Research, in Kraska, P.B. and W.L. Neuman, *Essential Criminal Justice and Criminology Research Methods*, Prentice Hall: New York, 218-247.

### **October 10 – no class**

### **Week 5. Action! Interactions in the field – II – formal interviewing – October 17**

*Developing an interview grid; structuring interviews; open-ended questions; the interview dialogical process; biographical accounts; interview transcription practices.*

*\*\*\*tutorial on interviewing + time devoted to research proposal, focus on sampling & material\*\*\**

Charmaz, K. (2003). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis, in Holstein, J.A. and J.F. Gubrium (eds.), *Inside interviewing. New lenses, New Concerns*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 311-330.

**October 24 – no class**

**Week 6. Analyzing textualized realities – October 31**

*Condensing details; developing coding categories; discourse analysis;  
presentation strategies in the mobilization of co-produced texts.*

*\*\*\*tutorial on coding & analysis\*\*\**

*!!!! Research proposal due !!!!*

Tonkiss, F. (2004). Analyzing Text and Speech: Content and Discourse Analysis, in Seale, C. (ed), *Researching Society and Culture*. London: Sage, 367-381.

Sasson, T. (1995). Appendix B, in Sasson, T., *Crime Talk. How Citizens Construct a Social Problem*, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 175-181.

**Week 7. Moral and legal issues in qualitative research on crime – November 7**

*Ethical, legal and self-censorship issues; fieldwork and moral relativism;  
completion (if needed) and review of the above topics; team work on the research project.*

*\*\*\* time devoted to modify the research program following evaluation \*\*\**

Van Maanen [2003(1982)]. The Moral Fix. On the Ethics of Fieldwork, reprinted in M.R. Pogrebin (ed.), *Qualitative Approaches to Criminal Justice. Perspectives from the Field*, London, Sage, 363-376.

Haggerty, K. (2004). Ethics Creep: Governing Social Science Research in the Name of Ethics, *Qualitative Sociology*, 27 (4), 391-414.

**Week 8. Supervision (optional) – November 14**

*Supervised or independent group workshops.*

**Week 9. Supervision (optional) – November 21**

*Supervised or independent group workshops.*

**Week 10. Supervision (optional) – November 28**

*Supervised or independent group workshops.*

**Week 11. Supervision (mandatory) – December 5**

*Supervised or independent group workshops.*

**Week 12. Supervision (optional) – December 9**

*Supervised or independent group workshops.*