



GEOG/ENST 2005 Introduction to  
Qualitative Methods  
Geography and Environmental Studies  
Fall Semester 2024

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**Office Hours:** Thursday 8:30 – 9:15 or by appointment  
Zoom meetings can be arranged as well

**Time:** Thursdays, 9:35 pm – 11:25 pm

**Room:** Room 304, Southam Hall

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### Course Description

We live in a dangerous world, a world increasingly framed by uncertainty and the popularization of ‘alternative facts.’ Today we are bombarded with information, ideas, and opinions constantly, most of which we take for granted or at least do not question. But, how can we differentiate well-grounded knowledge or facts from speculation at best and outright lies at worst? Who can we trust? What can we trust as being truth?

An important source of knowledge is research. Research is about learning and understanding. It is based upon set ways of examining questions and engaging with people. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the nature of qualitative research and the methods used in such research. This is a core methods course for undergraduate degrees in geography and environmental studies, and therefore, the focus of this course will be on methods. However, we will be looking at the methods not just as tools used in research but critically to examine the challenges and pitfalls – as well as the benefits – associated with these various research methods.

*As a mandatory course for all geography and environmental studies students, this course compliments GEOG/ENST 2006 Quantitative Methods, focusing on qualitative methods and analysis. It is also a pre-requisite, along with GEOG/ENST 2006, for the third-year field camp (GEOG 3000/ENST 3900 Honours Field Camp).*

## Course Calendar

<i>Week</i>	<i>Lecture</i>	<i>Laboratory</i>
Thursday, September 5	Course Introduction	No laboratories this week
<i>Section 1: The Nature of Qualitative Inquiry</i>		
Thursday, September 12	The Nature of Questions.	<i>Laboratory 1: Critical Thinking.</i>
Thursday, September 19	Selecting your approach. Connecting worldview, paradigms & methodologies.	
Thursday, September 26	Challenges and benefits of the Qualitative tradition.	
<i>Section 2: Listening to what People have to say</i>		
Thursday, October 3	Engaging People as Individuals.	<i>Laboratory 2: Engaging People and Analysis.</i>
Thursday, October 10	The Power of Stories: Discovery through Oral Histories.	
Thursday, October 17	Engaging Communities: Focus Groups.	
<i>Reading Week</i>		
Thursday October 31	Working with text. Content analysis. Discourse analysis.	
Thursday, November 7	Empowering the Other	<i>Laboratory 3: Mental Map Exercise.</i>
<i>Section 3: Beyond 'the Interview'</i>		
Thursday, November 14	Landscapes of Meaning: Arts and aesthetics.	
Thursday, November 21	Other Interactive Methods	
Thursday, November 28	From the Archives to Digital Landscapes: The Emerging Brave Frontier of Research.	
<i>Section 4: True Knowledge or Anecdotal Storytelling?</i>		
Thursday, December 5	Understanding and Significance	<i>Review for Exam: Where we have been and what we have done</i>

## Course Text

Hay, I. & M. Cope (eds.) (2021) *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography* (Fifth Edition). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada. For those of you who are geography and environmental studies students, you will be taking more advanced methods in your third and fourth years. Buy it! Use it in this and other courses! A copy can be found on reserve at the MacOdrum Library.

## Timetable

The course lecture is on Thursdays from 9:35 to 11:25. There are two laboratory groups to choose from:

Tuesday – *Laboratory A2*, 2:35 to 4:25 OR

Friday – *Laboratory A1*, 2:35 to 4:25

You are required to attend the laboratory group you sign up for. Attendance is mandatory.

## Assignments and Final Exam

In this course, you will complete four laboratories (45% of your final grade) and a final examination (30% of your final grade).

The *laboratories* emphasize real methods used by researchers in the real world. The four laboratories are:

1. *Laboratory 1: Designing Qualitative Research* – In this opening laboratory you will learn how to both pose a focused, manageable research question, and how to conduct an effective literature search on your question. This laboratory will be valuable not simply for this course but in all courses where you are expected to write a term paper. The approach you will learn in this laboratory remains the same for good term paper writing.
2. *Laboratory 2: Engaging with People* – In this laboratory, you will be introduced to our primary research subject: people. You will look at how we engage with individuals and groups.
3. *Laboratory 3: Mapping as a Tool* – In this final laboratory, you will use mapping as a means of obtaining qualitative information from individuals.

The *final exam* will draw from the lecture materials presented throughout the semester. There will be a short quiz following each week's lecture. These quizzes will provide you with examples of the types of questions that will be asked in the exam. The exam will be three hours in duration.

## Evaluation

You will be evaluated based upon your submitted laboratory work, the final examination and attendance/ participation. Grades are determined as follows:

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Engagement with Course Materials (1%/week) | 12% |
| 2. Laboratories – 3 Laboratories @ 15% each   | 45% |
| 3. Final Exam                                 | 30% |

4. Attendance/Participation (Laboratory Classes)	13%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Please note the following rules of engagement:

1. *Regarding engagement with Course Materials:* I have produced and uploaded videos in which I cover each week's class materials. You are required to have listened to the week's video before the Thursday class. I have also uploaded a transcript of the video so you can follow along and take notes. This engagement with the course materials is important as it will allow me to first summarise the key ideas you will be expected to know for the final exam and then secondly, to present different examples and case studies to illustrate the points raised in the materials and keep the course both interesting and relevant (hopefully). One percent per week is assigned to this.
2. *Regarding laboratories:* If you miss a laboratory class without appropriate documentation, you will lose 2 marks against the attendance/participation mark. All laboratory submissions are subject to a late penalty of 2% per day unless accompanied by *adequate* written documentation for a *legitimate* reason. Assignment extensions will be considered *only* for *documented* illnesses or *immediate* family emergencies. A laboratory will not be accepted on week (seven days) after the due date unless approved in advance by the instructor. Late penalties will be enforced to ensure fairness in grading.
3. *Regarding the final exam:* The date of the final exam will be set by the university. It is the responsibility of the student to attend the exam and, if unable to do so, to secure deferral from the Registrar's Office prior to the exam date.
4. *Completion of all assignments is mandatory:* To be eligible to pass this course you are required to complete all the laboratory assignments and the final exam.
5. *Grading approach:* Please refer to Appendix 2 for explanation of my general grading approach.
6. *And a final, general caveat:* Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

#### *Note on Submission of Written Assignments*

All assignments must be submitted through the Brightspace course site in Word format. If you use a Mac, please test your converted submission before submitting. If I cannot open your file, it will be considered late. (If you are uncertain and wish to cover your mark, send me a pdf version as well to my e-mail address.) Your submitted work should be clearly titled with your name in it as follows:

"GEOG/ENST 2005 Laboratory 1 John Smith.docx"

Note that it should never include your student number.

Written assignments must represent individual work completed on an independent basis. They must be typed using 11 or 12-point font, contain appropriate academic referencing and adhere to the instructions for written assignments distributed in class and posted on the Brightspace course site. Students are asked to retain a hard copy (with electronic backup) of submitted assignments in the event of loss. Plagiarism will be monitored and treated as an instructional offence in accordance with university policy (see below). Requests for a review of an assigned grade must take place in written form (e.g. by e-mail) *within 7 days* of the grade being posted on the Brightspace course site. Note that a review of a submitted work will consist of a complete re-grading. A word of warning here: marks do not automatically go up; they can go down.

If you feel you need assistance in improving your writing skills, you are encouraged to get in touch early in the term with the Writing Tutorial Service (Room 229, Patterson Hall, <http://www.carleton.ca/wts/>). I strongly encourage you to take advantage of this service as effective writing is an invaluable in the workplace.

#### *Retain Copies of Work Submitted*

Students are strongly advised to retain a hard copy (and electronic backup) of all assignments and term papers in the event of loss for whatever reason.

#### *Some Common and not-so-Common Courtesies*

1. *Communications:* Students should use their Carleton email account for all course-related correspondence, placing "GEOG/ENST 2005" in the subject heading. Please note that I may not respond to emails over the weekend. Email is an acceptable medium for responding to simple inquiries, but not complex questions (e.g. "I was ill for class. What did I miss?"). If your question cannot be answered in a sentence or two, please come to my office hours.
2. *Laptops:* The use of laptops in class for notetaking is welcomed. However, students should *not* use their laptops to check email, Facebook or to engage in other non-course related activities. This is a distraction to students sitting around you.
3. *Smartphones:* Students are asked to mute or turn their cell/smartphones off during the class and refrain from texting.
4. *Preparation:* Knowledge of the content of the syllabus and the Brightspace course site is the responsibility of each student.
5. *No Oscars Please:* Audio or video recording of lectures is *not* permitted.
6. *Be on time:* Students entering the room during the course of the class is highly disruptive. Err on the side of caution and take an earlier bus in order to be on time, especially on those stormy Thursday mornings.

#### *Requests for Academic Accommodations*

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 see the Student Guide.

### *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 see the Student Guide.

### *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). Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the exam.

### *Academic Standing and Conduct*

Students must familiarize themselves with the regulations concerning academic standing and conduct in the 2024-2025 Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar.

### *Drop/Withdrawal Date*

Please refer to the 2024-2025 Undergraduate Calendar for the final day that one is permitted to withdraw from a fall term course.

### *Student Life Services*

Student Life Services, located in Room 501 of the Unicentre, offers a wide range of programs and services to assist students in adjusting to academic life, in improving their learning skills, and in making academic and career decisions.

### *University Regulations Regarding Cheating and Plagiarism*

University regulations stipulate that any allegation of plagiarism, cheating or violations of examination conduct rules will be thoroughly reviewed. Each case must be reported to the Dean, who investigates each allegation. If there is no resolution following this investigation at the Dean's level, a tribunal will be appointed by the Senate to review the case and make a final decision.

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*” This includes 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. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations. This also includes any AI-generated work.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else,
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment,
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement,
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own,
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks, and
- submitting any work generated by an AI chatbot program (e.g., ChatGPT), unedited or modified/ edited by the student.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts 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.

In addition, students cannot submit work produced in any other course. The work submitted must be original and based on the materials presented in this course.

## Appendix 1: Laboratory Assignments

### *Laboratory 1: Doing Critical Thinking.*

Consider the question, “Has the carbon tax been effective in reducing Canada’s carbon emissions?”

You will work in groups of four or five.

- *Class 1: Understanding the question.* In this opening workshop you will examine the question – what is being asked – by breaking down the question into subject, verb, modifier, and complement. Then you will complete the table provided on critical thinking.
- *Class 2: Assembling the information/evidence.* Literature Search of your Draft Research Question. Effective Literature Searches and Reviews. What data do you need to answer your Research Question? What quantitative data do you need? What qualitative information do you need?
- *Class 3: Discuss the evidence assembled.* You will spend the first hour discussing the information/evidence your team has assembled. What arguments and evidence is being presented by whom? What is being written by academics? What are scientists saying? What are lay people saying online and in social media? What about podcasters? What about activists? Do these different groups change or modify the question? How do they approach the question? Can these sources be grouped in some manner? We will also go over how to write an A-level assignment.

### *Laboratory 2: Meaning, Understanding and Purpose.*

In this laboratory you will be conducting actual fieldwork both as a participant AND a researcher. Each of you will write a one-page account of your first year at Carleton as set out by the template provided on the course site. These are to be uploaded to an inbox prior to your laboratory class.

- *Class 1:* Compile these for your laboratory class and conduct a preliminary analysis as a group using the questions provided.
- *Class 2:* The preliminary assessments by each group in each laboratory section will be uploaded prior to this laboratory class. [oral histories] [discourse analysis]
- *Class 3:* Group Class on key shared ideas from oral histories submission. Analysing: Textual analysis; discourse analysis. Analysing group materials.
- *Class 4:* Drafting a research study of your findings.

### *Laboratory 3: Mental Map Exercise.*

In this laboratory you will be conducting actual fieldwork as a researcher only. As a laboratory group, you will draw a faculty from a hat. You will then find one student from that faculty and ask them to draw a map of the campus based upon where they spend their time and their general knowledge of the campus. Ask them to be as detailed as possible.

- *Class 1:* Bring your maps to class and tape them to the wall in faculty groupings. Conduct an initial assessment of the maps. How do they differ? What locations are shared between students in different faculties? Produce a draft analysis based on the questions provided and upload this onto the course drop box.



- *Class 2:* Expand your analysis to include the reports submitted by all the laboratory groups. Produce a composite map highlighting the spatial knowledge of the students in the different faculties.
- *Class 3:* A laboratory group discussion and final analysis will take place. From this you will then begin drafting your report.
- *Class 4:* In this final laboratory Class, we will spend time drafting the final report for this exercise.

## Appendix 2: Grading Rubric for University Assignments

Organization (10%)	Content (40%)	Grammar (20%)	Quality of Writing (20%)	Technical Presentation (10%)
<p><i>A — Excellent:</i> Well organized into sections; section and sub-section titles; content organized into paragraphs under appropriate section titles; work flows</p> <p><i>B — Average:</i> Organized into sections with section and sub-section titles; essence of materials properly organized under each section but choppy with some materials in wrong section</p> <p><i>C — Below Average:</i> Basic section titles but materials not properly organized in appropriate sections</p> <p><i>D — Poor:</i> Basic section titles present but no effort at organizing work under these sections; rambling; disorganized</p> <p><i>F — Fail:</i> No structure at all; no section titles; work rambles</p>	<p><i>A — Excellent:</i> Comprehensive; fully meets, or exceeds, expectations outlined in assignment; well researched with current references; arguments properly supported; proper introduction and conclusion</p> <p><i>B — Average:</i> Meets basic expectations of the assignment; reference materials basic (minimum, not all current, not all on topic); lack of elaboration or exploration of ideas/topic; weak introduction and/or conclusion</p> <p><i>C — Below Average:</i> Fails to meet all expectations of the assignment; poor selection and use of research materials in supporting arguments in work; superficial analysis/discussion expected for course level; incomplete introduction and/or conclusion</p> <p><i>D — Poor:</i> Serious deficiencies in work; fails to meet expectations of the assignment; absence of introduction and/or conclusion; suggests last-minute effort</p> <p><i>F — Fail:</i> Fails to meet even the minimum expectations of the assignment; while may suggest last-minute effort, this could also indicate a more fundamental lack of understanding of the course materials</p>	<p><i>A — Excellent:</i> Free or near-free of typographical, spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors; indicator of effective reviewing and proof-reading</p> <p><i>B — Average:</i> Presence of some typographical, spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors (usually a specific rule or spelling); indicator of poor or lack of attention when reviewing and proof-reading</p> <p><i>C — Below Average:</i> Presence of a broader range of typographical, spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors suggesting a lack of knowledge of grammatical rules; indicator of lack of review and proof-reading</p> <p><i>D — Poor:</i> A significant number of typographical, spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors; indicator of last minute writing and an absence of effective reviewing and proof-reading; student may require assistance in developing his/her writing skills</p> <p><i>F — Fail:</i> Work is littered with wide range of typographical, spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors; suggests fundamental lack of knowledge; student requires assistance in developing writing skills immediately</p>	<p><i>A — Excellent:</i> What everyone should strive for; flowing; sentences are well structured as are the sequence of paragraphs making for an easy reading; no awkward or run-on sentences generally the product of several drafts and careful proof reading</p> <p><i>B — Average:</i> The work is generally well written but with some inconsistencies (awkward, run-on or complex sentences, paragraphs containing more than one idea, etc.)</p> <p><i>C — Below Average:</i> The writing is choppy and/or inconsistent; there are awkward, run-on or incomplete sentences; disagreements between verbs and nouns; usually a reflection more of a lack of editing and proof reading than a lack of writing knowledge</p> <p><i>D — Poor:</i> Sloppy writing in general; again more a reflection of a lack of attention to editing and proof reading usually the outcome of a one-off submission although there may be knowledge issues</p> <p><i>F — Fail:</i> Writing is generally atrocious and lacking of any redeeming qualities; beyond simply an issue of editing and proof reading; the student should be directed to writing services</p>	<p>Your work should be well presented. It should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meet the page lay-out and font specifications outlined for the assignment;</li> <li>• have a proper cover page or assignment header;</li> <li>• have a proper table of contents if it is a major submission;</li> <li>• be properly paginated;</li> <li>• have a proper header or footer if appropriate;</li> <li>• have section headings that are consistent in font characteristics;</li> <li>• be consistent in its in-text references for citing materials used in your work (depending on the referencing approach required for your discipline);</li> <li>• ensure that all quotes be incorporated properly into your work;</li> <li>• all maps, tables, figures, and visuals be properly numbered, referenced and titled.</li> </ul> <p><i>A — Excellent:</i> All the above criteria are met.</p> <p><i>B — Average:</i> Majority of above criteria are met.</p> <p><i>C — Below Average:</i> Minority of above criteria met.</p> <p><i>D — Poor:</i> Only a few of the above criteria met.</p> <p><i>F — Fail:</i> A technical disaster.</p>