Welcome to Qualitative Research Methods! This course will introduce you to the theory and practice of qualitative sociological research. While we will be reading about and discussing qualitative research we will also be conducting a small research project through the 12 weeks of the course. This will allow you to experience posing and answering a research question in a rigorous and ethical framework as well as disseminating the findings to academic and public audiences.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be able:
- Distinguish between qualitative research findings and opinions
- Explain the historical development of qualitative research
- Briefly describe the major approaches to qualitative research
- Identify several key historical and contemporary research projects using qualitative methods
- Describe the major steps in a qualitative research project
- Design and conduct a small research project, from posing a research question to disseminating the findings
- Use reflection to improve your qualitative research skills

Required Readings

Our textbook will be:
COURSE ACTIVITIES AND EVALUATION

Overview
We will do both individual and team work to support you in your learning. Each team will work with a Teaching Assistant or the Instructor. The textbook will provide the theoretical framing for our work, while the classroom will be a laboratory for experiential approaches. Often, reading the relevant textbook chapter will prepare you for the classroom lectures and activities. Other times we will “just do it,” forging ahead with our class research project and reading the theoretical basis of our work after we have had the experience. Each class will include participatory activities that will either directly or indirectly contribute to your mark in the course, as well as building the elements of our research project. Your presence in each class will be necessary to your individual and team success.

The research question for our class project in this iteration of the course will be, “What is a healthy intimate relationship?” We will ask this question of other second-year undergraduate students at Carleton, reporting back to the Carleton community at the end of the term on our findings. During the term each of you will conduct and transcribe a 5 minute long interview. You will then work (in class) with a small group to select the themes that emerge. In week 7, we will identify and group the themes from all the interviews in class. A mid-term assignment will give you the opportunity to reflect on your findings in the context of the research methods that you have used. In the second half of the term we will write up and present our research findings to the Carleton community. Multiple presentation modes will be available (e.g. meeting with a student organization, doing a radio interview, creating an on-line presence, “tabling” in the university centre and speaking to students directly). Students will work in small teams to accomplish this. It is my intention that most, if not all, group work will be designed so that (depending on the choices of the group) the group aspects could be completed in class time. More detailed instructions on the assignments will be available on cuLearn.

A (short) final examination will encourage you to integrate the more theoretical aspects of the course learning outcomes as well as reflect on your experience of doing sociological research.