

## **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS<sup>1</sup>**

SOCI 3240-400 | Spring 2025

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Office Hours: 2-4pm Tuesdays (via Zoom only), and  
2-4pm Wednesdays (in-person at my office, or via Zoom)

### **Course Description and Objectives**

This course provides an introduction to qualitative research methods. While much sociological research relies on data collected by others, this course provides insights into the theories and practices that guide original qualitative data collection on our social world. Students will begin by learning the principles of qualitative methods and research design, and then become familiar with common qualitative research methods, including ethnography, in-depth interviewing, focus groups, and content analysis. Throughout the course, students will have the opportunity to collect and analyze their own original qualitative data with the goal of communicating complex findings and developing data literacy.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the purpose and value of qualitative methods
- Become familiar with different methods in qualitative research
- Collect and analyze original qualitative data
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze qualitative data
- Develop data literacy and understand the constraints of scientific claims-making

### **Course Structure & Format:**

This course takes place 100% online. Your interaction with me and with your fellow students will take place in Canvas. There are 16 weeks of content that you will move through. I will open up a new module each week.

### **Prerequisites:**

A basic understanding of sociology is required for this class. Students must have completed SOCI 1510 and hold advanced (junior or senior) standing to be eligible for this course. This course is required for Sociology majors, with a grade of C or better for graduation.

### **Required Materials**

The required book is available at the UNT Bookstore and online retailers:

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<sup>1</sup> Thank you to Dr. Katherine Sobering (University of North Texas) for the development of this course and syllabus.

Luker, Kristin. 2008. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Additional required readings will be available through the UNT Library website. On very rare occasion, I will post a reading directly to Canvas. Please note that by default, I will ask you to access readings directly through the library since posting full PDFs violates copyright laws. You will need to use your EUID and password to access them. Please reach out in advance if you are having any issues with access.

You will also be required to purchase a one-month subscription to Atlas.TI Web (<https://atlasti.com/atlas-ti-web>). A student subscription costs \$13.00/month. More details will be provided in class.

### Course Technology & Skills

Below is a list of the minimum technology requirements for students in this course:

- Functioning computer
- Reliable internet access
- Speakers
- Microphone
- Microsoft Office Suite
- Zoom

Below is a list of course-specific technical skills learners must have to succeed in the course:

- Familiarity with Canvas
- Familiarity with Zoom
- Regularly checking email

### Course Requirements & Grades

The final grade in the course evaluates student learning in multiple ways. First, it includes short weekly quizzes (15%) and two exams (30%). Your final grade also includes three data collection assignments (30%) and regular discussions to measure your engagement, reading, and participation (25%).

A quick look at the breakdown shows you what is most important in this class. Over half of your grade will be based on the quality of your assignments and participation in class discussions. These make up fifty-five percent (55%) of your final grade. Memorization and test-taking, measured through quizzes and exams, makes up the remaining part of your final grade (45%).

Type	Details	Points	%
Exams	2 x 150 points ea.	300	30
Quizzes	15 x 10 points ea.	150	15
Discussions	10 x 25 points ea.	250	25
Assignments	3 x 100 points ea.	300	30

<b>Total</b>		<b>1,000</b>	<b>100</b>
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The following scale is used to calculate final grades:

A = 89.5-100

B = 79.5-89.4

C = 69.5-79.4

D = 60-69.4

F = <60

### Exams

Two exams will cover both the readings and other materials presented in class. Each exam is worth 15% of your grade and comprises a total of 30% of your final grade. Please mark your calendars for the dates listed in Canvas. The dates of these exams will not change.

Exams will be a combination of multiple choice, matching, true/false, and short answer. Students can use their notes and the book. The exams are timed (90 minutes) so you will need to have already completed the readings, studied the material, and organized your notes before you start. I highly recommend you take the exam on a computer and not a smart phone. To account for technical difficulties, you will have two attempts to take the exam.

None of the exams are cumulative. There is no final exam in this class.

### Quizzes

Students will complete weekly comprehension quizzes to assess learning objectives, practice for the exams, and check in individually with the instructor. Quizzes will review both the readings and other materials presented in class. Each quiz is worth 10 points, and all quizzes in total constitute 15% of your grade. Your lowest quiz score will drop at the end of the semester.

Like the exams, quizzes will be a combination of multiple choice, matching, true/false, and short answer. The quizzes are open-book and open-note. Quizzes are untimed but students get just one attempt to complete them. You will be able to see the correct answers after you submit them.

### Assignments

There are three assignments in this course, which will allow you to collect and then analyze your own qualitative data. These are each worth 10% of your grade, for a total of 30% of your final grade. Each assignment is worth 100 points, and will be graded according to a rubric, which you can view in advance on Canvas.

- Assignment #1: Ethnographic Fieldnote
- Assignment #2: In-depth Interview
- Assignment #3: Qualitative Coding

We will hold three optional workshops via Zoom before the assignments are due to discuss the requirements and brainstorm sites, ideas, and people. In past semesters, students who have participated in these workshops (or attend office hours individually to discuss their assignments) do much better on their assignments than peers who do not plan or prepare for the work.

### Discussions

Each week, students will contribute to a discussion board, which is used to assess participation and engagement in the course. Discussions are assessed on both a post that addresses the prompt and two responses for peer feedback. More details on the requirements and evaluation can be found on Canvas.

### **Course Policies**

#### Communication Policy

The instructor will reply to emails within 48 hours and typically within the time frame of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please plan accordingly before exams and due dates. Before emailing, please 1) check the syllabus; 2) refer to your class notes; and/or 3) ask a classmate directly or via the General Q&A discussion board on Canvas. Students are expected to regularly check Canvas. Please set your communication preferences so that you are notified of announcements and grade submissions.

#### Student Behavior & Classroom Environment

I strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and civility in both in-person and virtual classrooms. I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. I encourage students to participate by expressing your opinions, asking questions, and presenting outside information to deepen your engagement with course material.

Please do your part to facilitate a stimulating and rewarding learning environment. This involves being respectful of one another, having an open mind, and being willing to have your ideas challenged. Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. This includes racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, or ableist language. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please let me know immediately.

Like UNT, I do not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation so we will work as a class to collaborate in ways that encourage inclusivity. I may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's Code of Student Conduct (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>) to learn more.

In the online environment, please take extra care, as your writing constitutes interaction with other people. Here are some guidelines for appropriate online interaction. Please make sure to review these Engagement Guidelines (<https://digitalstrategy.unt.edu/clear/online-communication-tips.html>) for more information.

- Treat your instructor, teaching assistant, and classmates with respect in any communication online or face-to-face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
- Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
- Speak from personal experiences. Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual’s experiences.
- Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
- Use standard, readable fonts, sizes, and colors and avoid using all caps. This may be interpreted as “YELLING!”
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
- All communication needs to be professional. Use correct spelling and grammar and always double-check your response before hitting send or reply. Do not use slang or “text-talk,” and limit the use of emoticons.
- Proofread your writing and fact-check your sources.
- Keep in mind that online posts are permanent, so think first before you type.

### Due Dates and Grading

All due dates, assignments, and rubrics will be announced in class and can also be found on Canvas.

All work you produce on assignments, papers, and exams must be your own. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in a previous class), you must cite your sources, otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. Any form of "unauthorized assistance" constitutes cheating, according to the Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003). If the use of artificial intelligence is not authorized for the assignment in question, the violation is "cheating." All written assignments will be evaluated with Turnitin (<https://www.turnitin.com>), which sends both the student and instructor an originality report.

You earn the grade you receive in this class. I do not curve or scale exams, assignments, or final grades. If you become concerned about your grades, meet with me immediately.

You have two opportunities to earn extra credit in this class. Both opportunities seek to incentivize your engagement in the class. The first can be earned individually: If you attend office hours at least once during the semester, you can earn +3 points on Exam 1. The second can be earned collectively: If over 80% of students complete the course evaluation at the end of the semester, all students will receive +3 points on Exam 2.

Except in extreme circumstances, I do not give incompletes. Students must request an incomplete in writing at least one week before final exam week. Please include documentation of the reason that the course cannot be completed before the end of the semester. Please note that I can only consider these requests if at least 50% of course exams and assignments have been completed with a passing grade.

### Late Work

Under ordinary circumstances, no makeup exams will be given and no late work will be accepted. If you need extensions, please reach out *in advance*. Assignments and exams may be rescheduled only under exceptional circumstances (instances of disability, illness, or emergency) and with *prior* instructor consent. Due dates may also be rescheduled based on university excused absences such as active military service, a religious holy day, or an official university function as stated in the [Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy \(PDF\)](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039_StudAttnandAuthAbsence.Pub2_.19.pdf), ([https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039\\_StudAttnandAuthAbsence.Pub2\\_.19.pdf](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.039_StudAttnandAuthAbsence.Pub2_.19.pdf)). Please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to reschedule an exam or change an assignment due date.

Students requiring accommodations for exams should speak with me after obtaining an accommodation form from the Office of Disability Access. This should be done within the first two weeks of class.

### Technical Assistance

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Please reach out to UNT Student Tech support (<https://techsupport.unt.edu/students>) to troubleshoot problems with the Canvas platform.

### Mental and Physical Health and Safety

Your safety and well-being are of utmost importance to me. Please self-monitor and do not come to campus or go out in public if you have any symptoms of COVID-19, or any contagious illness. If you are ill or have extenuating circumstances that impact your attendance, please reach out to me as soon as possible—ideally before missing a due date—and I will make appropriate accommodations. Please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or [askSHWC@unt.edu](mailto:askSHWC@unt.edu)) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Team at [COVID@unt.edu](mailto:COVID@unt.edu) for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

If you are struggling in other ways that impact your academic performance, please reach out to the UNT CARE team (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>), which connects students with resources and services. You can reach out individually or make a report for someone you are worried about at <https://report.unt.edu>.

### Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor and then the departmental chair. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident.

### **Accommodations**

#### Students with Disabilities

It is my goal to foster an inclusive learning environment in this class. UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website (<https://disability.unt.edu/>).

If you require accommodations, please notify me during the first week of classes, or as soon as possible, by presenting a letter from Office of Disability Access. If you need more information about accommodations, please review the UNT Policy 16.001 or contact Office of Disability Access (<http://disability.unt.edu>) at 940-565-4323.

#### Student Athletes

Athletes must provide me with a game schedule for the semester, signed by the coach, in the first week of class in order to be eligible for an excused absence.

#### Religious Holy Days

If you plan to miss class to observe a religious holiday, UNT policy states that you must notify the instructor with as much advanced notice as possible. If, with proper notice, you miss a class, assignment, or exam, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable timeframe. For more information, see the University-wide policy of religious observances (<https://edo.unt.edu/religious-observances>).

### **Academic Honesty**

All students are expected to abide by the UNT Code of Student Conduct: "The University has established the Code of Student Conduct to promote the well-being, honor and dignity of all who live, learn and work in our educational community. The Code of Student Conduct is intended to foster a safe environment conducive to learning and development, as well as to hold students accountable through an educational process that balances the interests of individual students with the interests of the University. Students and student groups are expected to conduct themselves in

a manner that demonstrates respect for the rights and property of others and upholds the integrity and values of the University community.” You are responsible for understanding the Code of Student Conduct in its entirety (<http://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>).

All work you produce on assignments, papers, and exams must be your own work. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. All written assignments will be evaluated with Turnitin (<https://www.turnitin.com>), which sends both the student and instructor an originality report.

The use of artificial intelligence for idea generation or to write short prompts or papers is a growing concern in academia. The department has already had several incidences of AI plagiarism. Do not use AI in this course. I assure you it will not promote your growth as a student or your understanding of qualitative research methods.

You are responsible for understanding what constitutes such violation, according to UNT Policy 6.003, available here: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>. If you are not familiar with a citation method, seek assistance from the instructor or the free University writing lab: <http://www.unt.edu/writinglab/>.

Please maintain a high standard of individual honor and integrity. Collaboration of any kind on exams will result in a failing grade for the exam. Cheating of any kind on assignments will also result in a failing grade. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on an exam or assignment, and submitting a written assignment from a previous course without prior permission of both instructors. Scholastic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate administrators in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

## Getting Help

### Technical Assistance

This class relies heavily on Canvas. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

**UIT Help Desk:** <http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>

**Email:** [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

**Phone:** 940-565-2324

**In Person:** Sage Hall, Room 130

**Walk-In Availability:** 8am-9pm

**Telephone Availability:**

- Sunday: noon-midnight
- Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
- Friday: 8am-8pm
- Saturday: 9am-5pm

**Laptop Checkout:** 8am-7pm



For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328)  
(<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328>)

### Student Support Services

- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- [Multicultural Center](https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center) (<https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [Student Affairs Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- [Pride Alliance](https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance) (<https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance>)

### Academic Support Services

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (<https://library.unt.edu/>)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)

### **Understanding Sexual Harassment**

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UNT community have a responsibility to uphold this mission of the university and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. For more information, see the policy: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/16-005>.

Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies make it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, please refer to the appropriate resources: <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/sexual-misconduct>

If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for

absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at [oeo@unt.edu](mailto:oeo@unt.edu) or at (940) 565 2759.

### **Emergency Notification & Procedures**

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency; for example, related to severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

### **Retention of Student Records**

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

### **Access to Information - Eagle Connect**

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: [my.unt.edu](http://my.unt.edu). All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail [Eagle Connect](https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect) (<https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect>).

### **Student Evaluation Administration Dates**

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during the final weeks of class to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" ([no-reply@iasystem.org](mailto:no-reply@iasystem.org)) with the survey link. Please look for the email in your UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the [SPOT website](http://spot.unt.edu/) (<http://spot.unt.edu/>) or email [spot@unt.edu](mailto:spot@unt.edu).

### **Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses**

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

## Course Overview:

### Module 1: What are qualitative methods?

- Week 1: Introduction
- Week 2: Theory and Methods
- Week 3: Topic selections

### Module 2: Research design, evaluation, and ethics

- Week 4: Research design and evaluation
- Week 5: Ethics and the IRB
- Week 6: Exam 1

### Module 3: Data collection: Ethnography

- Week 7: Ethnography
  - *Workshop 1 (Optional)*
- Week 8: Writing Ethnographic Field notes
  - Assignment 1 due

### Module 4: Data collection: Interviews

- Week 9: In-depth interviews
  - *Workshop 2 (Optional)*
- Week 10: Conducting an interview
  - Assignment 2 due
- Week 11: SPRING BREAK

### Module 5: Data analysis and coding

- Week 12: Qualitative Coding
  - *Workshop 3 (Optional)*
- Week 13: Qualitative data analysis
  - Assignment 3 due
- Week 14: Content Analysis
- Week 15: Exam 2
- Week 16: Discussion and Wrap-Up