# The Chinese University of Hong Kong
## Department of Sociology

### SOCI 3231 Qualitative Research (Abridged)
### Term 2, 2023 – 2024

## Course Overview：

This course aims to provide students with a foundation in the fundamental principles and procedures of empirical research in sociology. It will introduce various major types of qualitative research methods. Students will learn about various strategies for collecting (e.g. in-depth interview/focus group discussion, participant observation/ethnography, visual methods) and analyzing qualitative data (e.g. analyses of narrative, conversation and discourse, as well as grounded theory), They will also familiarize themselves with the ethical issues about conducting research in contemporary times.

## Learning outcomes:

Upon the completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:
(1)     understand the logic of scientific inquiry and the steps in social research
(2)     describe and explain the essential characteristics of major qualitative research methods
(3)     compare and evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of major qualitative research methods
(4)     design and implement qualitative research project to address research questions
(5)     evaluate quality of a qualitative research project
(6)     reflect on the ethical issues related to qualitative research

## Reading materials

There is no textbook designated for this course. The following are some of the major references on qualitative research methods.

<u>Useful references</u>

Babbie, E. R. (2021). *The Practice of Social Research* (15th ed.). Boston, Massachusetts: Cengage Learning.

Clark, T., Foster, L., Sloan, L., & Bryman, A. (2021). *Bryman's social research methods* (6th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Flick, U. (2022). *An introduction to qualitative research* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Hennink, M. M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2021). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

## Assessment Plan

1.      Method Exercise (50%)

There are four method exercises which aim to provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in empirical situation. Each exercise will be related to one of the methods covered in the course. For each exercise, students will write no more than 1,000 words in English, or 1,500 words in Chinese. Students will write on the processes of data collection and preliminary data analysis, as well as a reflection of what they have learned through application of the related method in the exercise. Further details will be announced in the first tutorial session.

2.      Tutorial Participation (30%)

In addition to lecture, this course comprises interactive tutorial, which are managed by the Teaching Assistants of the course. Tutorials are an integral part of the learning experience. Students are expected to actively participate in the tutorial class. The purpose of the tutorial is to help and guide the students to prepare and complete the method exercises. This provides a valuable opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback from fellow students and the teaching assistant to enrich the understanding of the various qualitative research methods. Further details will be announced during the first tutorial session.

3.      In-class Quiz (20%)

A closed-book quiz will be held in the last lecture. Students will be asked to demonstrate their critical understanding of the materials learned throughout the course. The date of the quiz is **15th April 2024**. Please be informed that alternative arrangement will only be considered on medical ground and/or very special circumstances with relevant supporting document and approval. The detailed format of the quiz will be announced to all students toward the end of the term.

## Guide to Grading System

**Grade Descriptors**

| | |
|---|---|
| A | A thorough understanding of the course materials and an outstanding performance on all learning outcomes. |
| A- | A solid understanding of the course materials and an outstanding performance on almost all learning outcomes. |
| B | An adequate understanding of the course materials and a substantial performance, on average, on all learning outcomes. |
| C | A basic understanding of the course materials and a satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses. |
| D | A partial understanding of the course materials and an inadequate performance on a number of learning outcomes. |
| F | A poor understanding of the course materials and an unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. |

## Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.

- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.

Assignments without the properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

The copyright of the teaching materials, including lecture notes, assignments and examination questions etc., produced by staff members/ teachers of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) belongs to CUHK. Students may download the teaching materials produced by the staff members/ teachers from the Learning Management Systems, e.g. Blackboard adopted by CUHK for their own educational use, but shall not distribute/ share/ copy the materials to a third-party without seeking prior permission from the staff members/ teachers concerned.

## Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessments

Collaborating with AI chatbots (like ChatGPT) on assignment(s) for this course is generally permitted with explicit acknowledgement. Students should refer to the following APA Citation Style for how to ChatGPT (https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt). However, students must exercise caution when using AI tools and be aware of their limitations. It is the responsibility of students, not the AI tools, to ensure the accuracy of the content submitted. Any errors or inaccuracies in the submitted work will be the sole responsibility of the students. According to the 'Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessments', use of AI tools in coursework without acknowledgement are treated as academic dishonesty case and will be handled by the disciplinary committee accordingly.

Two APA examples are given below:

When prompted with "Is the left brain right brain divide real or a metaphor?" the ChatGPT-generated text indicated that although the two brain hemispheres are somewhat specialized, "the notation that people can be characterized as 'left-brained' or 'right-brained' is considered to be an oversimplification and a popular myth" (OpenAI, 2023).

**Reference**
OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model].
https://chat.openai.com/chat

When given a follow-up prompt of "What is a more accurate representation?" the ChatGPT-generated text indicated that "different brain regions work together to support various cognitive processes" and "the functional specialization of different regions can change in response to experience and environmental factors" (OpenAI, 2023; see Appendix A for the full transcript).

**Reference**
OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model].
https://chat.openai.com/chat

| Schedule and Topics of Lectures | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Session | Topics and Descriptions | |
| Jan 08 | 01 | Introduction and overview | |
| Jan 15 | 02 | Theory and social research | |
| Jan 22 | 03 | Participant Observation / ethnography # | ME01 instruction |
| Jan 29 | 04 | Qualitative interviewing / Focus group discussion | |
| Feb 05 | 05 | Narrative analysis / Conversation analysis # | ME02 instruction |
| Feb 12 | | Lunar New Year Holiday | |
| Feb 19 | 06 | Content analysis / Discourse analysis # | ME03 instruction |
| Feb 26 | 07 | Participatory Action Research | |
| Mar 04 | | Reading Week | |
| Mar 11 | 08 | Visual methods # | ME04 instruction |
| Mar 18 | 09 | Qualitative data analysis | |
| Mar 25 | 10 | Ethical issues in qualitative research | |
| Apr 01 | | Easter Monday Holiday | |
| Apr 08 | 11 | Conclusion | |
| Apr 15 | 12 | In-class quiz | |

# denotes the tentative dates that further instruction of the Method Exercise (ME) will be released.

Note: If there are any further amendments due to changes in the circumstance, they will be announced to the students as soon as possible. Please pay attention to any future announcements from the university, the department, and the course instructor.

## Other recommended references:

Introductory reference

Becker, H. S. (1998). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). London: Sage.

Firebaugh, G. (2008). *Seven rules for social research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Flick, U. (2022). *An introduction to qualitative research* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Hennick, M. M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods* (2nd ed.)*.* Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2021). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological* (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C.: SAGE Publications.

Tracy, S. J. (2019). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact* (2nd ed.). Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.

Waller, V., Farquharson, K. & Dempsey, D. (2016). *Qualitative social research: Contemporary methods for the digital age*. London: SAGE Publications.

Intermediate reference

Anfara Jr., V. A., & Mertz, N. T. (2015). *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., Glardina, M. D., & Cannella, G. S. (2023). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (6th ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Flick, U. (Ed.) (2022). *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research design*. London: SAGE Publications.

Flick, U. (Ed.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection.* London: SAGE Publications.

Flick, U. (Ed.). (2014). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Grønmo, S. (2019). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Washington, D.C.: SAGE Publications.

Wa-Mbaleka, S., & Rosario, A. (2022). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in the Asian context*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Advanced reference

Abbott, A. D. (2004). *Methods of discovery: Heuristics for the social sciences*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Brady, H. E., & Collier, D. (2010). *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Morgan, S. L., & Winship, C. (2014). *Counterfactuals and causal inference: Methods and principles for social research* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Pearl, J. (2009). *Causality: Models, reasoning, and inference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ragin, C. C., & Amoroso, L. M. (2019). *Constructing social research: The unity and diversity of method* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Seale, C. (Ed.). (2004). *Social research methods: A reader*. London: Routledge.

Additional reference for specific methods

Pauwels, L., & Manny, D. (Eds.) (2019). *The SAGE Handbook of visual research methods* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Sloan, L., & Quan-Haase, A. (Eds.) (2017). *The SAGE handbook of social media research methods* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

**Recommended academic journals**

Journals in English
*Qualitative Inquiry*
*Qualitative Research*
*Qualitative Sociology*
*International Journal of Qualitative Methods*
*Sociological Methods and Research*
*Sociological Methodology*
*Social Indicators Research*