

PSYC*4790, Course Outline: Fall 2025

General Information

Some courses are offered virtually and some face to face. **This course is offered using the Face-to-Face format. The course has set day, time, and location of class.**

Course Title: Qualitative Methods

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to qualitative methods in psychology. Students will be guided through examination of theory and methods, as well as practice-based discussions and exercises. The main goals of the course are:

1. To introduce you to concepts and frameworks necessary to understand qualitative research methods in psychology
2. For you to gain the ability to critically read and gain knowledge from qualitative studies
3. To guide you to analyzing qualitative data and making empirical knowledge claims based on qualitative research principles

Credit Weight: 0.5

Academic Department (or campus): Psychology

Semester Offering: F25

Class Schedule and Location: Mondays and Wednesdays, 08:30AM - 09:50AM, MCKN, Room 232

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Kieran O'Doherty

Instructor Email: kieran.odoherty@uoguelph.ca

Office location and office hours: TBA

GTA Information

GTA Name: Riya Sharma

GTA Email: rsharm32@uoguelph.ca

GTA Name: Catherine Hall

GTA Email: chall12@uoguelph.ca

Course Content

Specific Learning Outcomes:

The successful student, upon completion of this course will be able to:

1. Distinguish between qualitative data sources and qualitative approaches to analysis
2. Articulate ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying both qualitative and quantitative approaches and how they differ from each other
3. Articulate the ways in which context is taken into account in qualitative research
4. Describe the of operation of reflexivity and its importance in conducting qualitative research
5. Recognise the role of subjectivity in both the research process and in the psychological phenomena being studied
6. Design a qualitative research study
7. Conduct systematic qualitative data coding
8. Write-up and communicate the results of a qualitative analysis

Lecture Content:

- What is qualitative research?
- Research as a search for meaning, not numbers
- Ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative research
- Planning and designing qualitative research
- Collecting qualitative data
- Analysing qualitative data
- Transcription
- Data coding
- Approaches to qualitative analysis
- Thematic analysis
- Discourse analysis
- Criteria for evaluating qualitative research

Labs: n/a

Seminars: n/a

Course Assignments and Tests:

Assignment or Test	Due Date	Contribution to Final Mark (%)	Learning Outcomes Assessed
In class participation	n/a	20	1-5
Data set selection and summary	19 Sep, 2025, 5pm	10	1
Literature review on topic	3 Oct, 2025, 5pm	10	3,6
Theoretical/methodological framework description	17 Oct, 2025, 5pm	10	1-5
Analysis outline	31 Oct, 2025, 5pm	10	6

Assignment or Test	Due Date	Contribution to Final Mark (%)	Learning Outcomes Assessed
Analysis paper final	Dec 1, 2025, 5pm	40	6-8
Bonus (submit paper early)	17 Nov, 2025, 5pm	See below	
Bonus (peer review of 3 other students' analyses)	24 Nov, 2025, 5pm	See below	

Additional Notes (if required):

Participation in discussions 20%

This will be based on engagement in class discussions. I will be looking for evidence that 1) you are attending regularly (you can only participate if you are attending class), and 2) you have read all the required readings ahead of class and are prepared to discuss content and ask questions.

I expect students to participate in every class, except in the case of emergencies, and to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. If you are not able to attend a class for legitimate reasons, you do not need to contact me. Every student gets automatic grace for up to 2 absences across the semester (1 per each half semester).

Data set selection & summary 10%

Choose a data set you want to analyse. Download it to your hard drive and ensure that you have everything you need to use it for your analysis. Write about 1 page on:

- The nature of the data set: where does it come from? What topic(s) does it deal with? What kind of data source is it (e.g., interviews, newspaper articles, social media posts, etc.)?
- Who collected the data? How did you access the data set? How have you stored the data set for your own use?
- Familiarise yourself with the data set and write a short summary of its contents. What are some of the main points that strike you as you engage with the data?

Literature review on topic 10%

Read up on literature on your topic. Search the peer-reviewed literature for research that has been conducted on the topic on which you will conduct your qualitative analysis (i.e., a topic that is related to the content of your data set). Your literature review should be based on 5-10 relevant peer reviewed articles or books (note: this means that you should read more than 5-10 articles so that you can choose the ones that are most relevant to your topic upon which to base your review). The literature review should set up a foundation for the analysis you will later conduct. Use the literature review to identify relevant **research questions** that you might be able to address given the nature of your qualitative data set. Your literature review does not

have to be based on qualitative studies; however, I recommend that you focus mainly on qualitative studies as this will help you to develop research questions that are appropriate to qualitative research. Your literature review should be about 1-2 pages, plus references.

Theoretical/methodological framework description **10%**

Decide on a theoretical/methodological framework for your analysis. **Describe the framework you chose and how it will guide your analysis.** Some possible options here are thematic analysis (note that there are different kinds of thematic analysis you can select from), discourse analysis (again, there are different versions here), interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), grounded theory, narrative analysis, etc. The most straightforward choice is probably a thematic analysis, but you are free to choose any of the other forms. In making your decision about which framework to use, you can use the Braun & Clarke textbook. However, you should also read and use additional sources to help you understand and describe the framework you want to use. The description of your framework should be about 1 page plus references.

Analysis/paper outline **10%**

Create an outline for your analysis paper. This should include key headings for your introduction from literature on your topic; methods in which you will describe where the data come from and main characteristics of the data set; analysis section in which you describe the key points that will structure your analysis; discussion section in which you discuss the main implications of your findings; make sure to include the research questions your analysis intends to address. The outline should be no more than 1-2 pages. Therefore, do not include the entire text for sections that you have previously written. For example, in your methods section, state what kind of data source you are using (e.g., “interviews with children who have a chronic illness”) and the kind of methodological/theoretical framework you will be using (e.g., “description of reflexive thematic analysis”). You will add the details for all of these sections when you write the complete analysis paper. The most important aspect of this assignment is the outline of the analysis. Make sure that you have engaged well with your data and identify key headings that will organize your reporting of your findings.

Choose a suitable title for your assignment that reflects the issues you are addressing and the nature of your analysis. Follow typical journal reporting guidelines in structuring your paper (e.g., use sections such as: introduction, methods, analysis, discussion, or as appropriate for your choice of analysis).

Complete Analysis paper **40%**

Your task will be to conduct a qualitative analysis of your choice. You already have many of the elements of your paper from previous assignments (paper outline, literature review, description of methodological/theoretical framework). Use these and improve upon them using feedback you received as well as new knowledge and deeper insights you have gained since writing those assignments. In writing your analysis, be guided by the following:

- Your paper should include a short review of relevant literature/studies. You have already written this, but you will likely need to update this based on the direction your analysis has taken.
- Use existing literature to clearly articulate your research question(s).
- Follow the guidelines from the textbook (or other authoritative source) to guide your approach to analysis, interpretation of data, and choice of excerpts to present in your analysis.
- Identify 3-4 key points for your analysis and communicate clearly to the reader what the main message of your analysis is.
- Take care in selecting excerpts from your data to illustrate your main points.
- Be guided in your overall approach by qualitative studies that have been published in peer-reviewed journals (you can use the ones we read in class or additional ones you have read).
- The assignment should be between 2000 and 3000 words in length

Bonus assignment

5% added to final grade

Participate in peer review of least 3 other students' analyses.

To participate in this assignment, you need to submit your complete paper by Nov 17. You will be placed in groups of approximately 4 students. You will be given access to analysis papers submitted by the other students in the group. You will provide feedback to them (by Nov 24) on their analysis. In providing this feedback follow these guidelines:

- Overall, try to be constructive and respectful.
- It is ok to point out problems. Try to do this in a gentle manner (e.g., "I noticed a number of spelling and grammar errors in your paper. Fixing these would make your paper easier to read and even more convincing." Or "I didn't understand this part of your analysis. Can you explain your point in a different way?")
- Try to think about what kind of feedback would be helpful to you in improving your own work.
- Write about ½ to 1 page (per paper you are assigned) summarising your feedback for your fellow student.
- Upload your feedback onto CourseLink.

To receive the bonus grades you need to:

- Submit your paper by Nov 17. This has to be a complete paper. Rough draft papers will not be accepted. If you submit a paper that is not sufficiently well developed, you will not be permitted to participate in this assignment.
- Provide feedback based on a careful and detailed reading of the paper. If it is evident from the feedback that you didn't read the paper properly, or if the feedback is sloppy, no bonus grades will be given.

- Submit feedback to fellow students by Nov 24.

The purpose of this bonus assignment is to benefit from reading other students' work, and to benefit from feedback on your own work. Ideally, this feedback will help to improve your own paper. However, please note that you do not have to incorporate the feedback from other students if you feel it is not appropriate or useful for your particular analysis.

Guidelines for ALL written assignments

- Please use 1.5 or double spacing and 12-point font
- Use page numbers, reasonable margins, and don't forget to include your name and student number
- Citations and references should follow the APA guidelines (note: different disciplines use different reference styles; make sure you use the right one)
- The assignment must be original – it must be your own work (and yours alone), and not have been submitted or used for any purpose other than this course
- AVOID PLAGIARISM – this means that all ideas you use in your paper that come from your readings need to be cited; where quotes are used, make sure you give page numbers; distinguish clearly between your own thinking and arguments, and what you have read somewhere else and are using for your paper; READ the university guidelines regarding academic integrity here: [Academic Integrity](#)
- Please submit an electronic version of the essay (on dropbox).
- For this course, it is **not permitted to use ChatGPT** or any similar AI text generator.

Penalties:

- Marks will be subtracted for assignments significantly outside of the word length margins (see above)
- Marks will be subtracted for late assignments at a rate of 10% per day to a maximum of 30%. Any assignment that is more than 3 days late automatically receives 0%.
- Extensions will generally not be granted.
- **Use of ChatGPT will be treated as academic misconduct.**

Final examination date and time: n/a

Final exam weighting: n/a

Course Resources

Required Texts: Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners. Sage

Cost of Texts: \$85.66 – paperback (you may also find an electronic copy that is less expensive)

Recommended Texts: n/a

Lab Manual: n/a

Other Resources:

Additional readings will be provided on CourseLink.

Field Trips: n/a

Additional Costs: n/a

Course Policies

Grading Policies

10% subtracted for each day late up to a maximum of 3 days (after that assignments receive an automatic zero).

The use of AI text generators (e.g., ChatGPT) is not permitted in this course.

[Undergraduate Grading Procedures](#)

Course Policy on Group Work: n/a

Course Policy regarding use of electronic devices and recording of lectures:

Electronic recording of classes is expressly forbidden without consent of the instructor. When recordings are permitted, they are solely for the use of the authorized student and may not be reproduced, or transmitted to others, without the express written consent of the instructor.

University Policies

Disclaimer:

Please note that a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules is occasionally required. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms and final examination schedules.

Academic Consideration

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for

Academic Consideration:

[Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions](#)

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community, faculty, staff, and students to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring.

University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

[Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

Accessibility

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible.

For more information, contact SAS at 519-824-4120 ext. 54335 or email accessibility@uoguelph.ca or the [Student Accessibility Services Website](#)

Student Feedback Questionnaire

These questionnaires (formerly course evaluations) will be available to students during the last 2 weeks of the semester. Students will receive an email directly from the Student Feedback Administration system which will include a direct link to the questionnaire for this course. During this time, when a student goes to login to Courselink, a reminder will pop-up when a task is available to complete.

[Student Feedback Questionnaire](#)

Drop date

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is Friday November 28, 2025. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the [Schedule of Dates in the Academic Calendar](#).

Instructors must provide [meaningful and constructive feedback, at minimum 20% of the final course grade, prior to the 40th class day](#). For courses which are of shorter duration, 20% of the final grade must be provided two-thirds of the way through the course.

[Current Undergraduate Calendar](#)

Additional Course Information

Course instructors are allowed to use software to help in detecting plagiarism or unauthorized copying of student assignments. Plagiarism is one of the most common types of academic misconduct on our campus. Plagiarism involves students using the work, ideas and/or the exact wording of other people or sources without giving proper credit to others for the work, ideas and/or words in their papers. Students can unintentionally commit misconduct because they do not know how to reference outside sources properly or because they don't check their work carefully enough before handing it in. Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

In this course, your instructor will be using Turnitin.com to detect possible plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration or copying as part of the ongoing efforts to prevent plagiarism in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences.

A major benefit of using Turnitin is that students will be able to educate and empower themselves in preventing misconduct. In this course, you may screen your own assignments through Turnitin as many times as you wish before the due date. You will be able to see and print reports that show you exactly where you have properly and improperly referenced the outside sources and materials in your assignment.