

Qualitative Methods SOC 577

ONLINE

Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Julia Meszaros, Associate Professor

Office Location: Ferguson Social Science Room 230

Office Hours: ONLINE BY APPOINTMENT

Office Fax: 903-886-5330

University Email Address: Julia.Meszaros@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: Email

Communication Response Time: 24-48 Hours; Monday to Friday 9-5

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook: *The How to of Qualitative Research* by Aurini, Heath and Howells. 2016.

Other Books (available for sale online and on the website for Waters Library)

1. Hoang, Kimberly Kay. 2022. *Spiderweb Capitalism: How Global Elites Exploit Frontier Markets*. Stanford University Press.
2. Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. 2022. *Unfree: Migrant Domestic Work in Arab States*. Stanford University Press.
3. Meszaros, Julia. 2025. *Economies of Gender: Masculinity, “Mail Order Brides” and Women’s Labor*. Rutgers University Press.

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the use of qualitative methods such as ethnographic research, focus groups, historical/comparative research, content analysis and grounded theory. In addition to addressing philosophical foundations, this course provides hands-on practice in the common strategies to access and collect data (e.g. observation, interviewing, archival data); methods of organizing and representing different forms/genres of data for analysis (e.g. transcripts, electronic texts, images, hand-written notes); and strategies to analyze and represent your analyses for academic audiences. Through cross-cultural study students will be able to view themselves as engaged citizens within an interconnected and diverse world

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

1. Students will be able to identify major theories regarding qualitative methods. This learning objective will be assessed in weekly assignments, the research project, and the analyses of other qualitative studies.

2. Students will be able to implement a variety of qualitative methods and strategies of analyzing data. This learning object will be assessed in weekly assignments, final presentation and the research proposal.
3. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interconnectedness of global dynamics. This learning objective will be assessed in the summaries of ethnographies and comparative paper.

Research Design & Proposal (400 points)

Write a proposal with research questions, methodology (interviews, focus groups, or content analysis), and ethical considerations.

1. Select a Research Topic

- Identify a **specific, unanswered question** in your discipline (e.g., environmental science, biology, conservation).
- Ensure it is:
 - **Novel:** Addresses a gap in existing literature.
 - **Feasible:** Can be completed within time/resource constraints.
 - **Relevant:** Aligns with faculty expertise or institutional priorities.
- *Example: "Assessing the Impact of Urban Noise Pollution on Songbird Communication in [Your Region]."*

2. Conduct a Literature Review

- Summarize **10–15 peer-reviewed sources** to:
 - Define key concepts/theories.
 - Highlight gaps your study will address.
- Synthesize findings in a **2–3 page annotated bibliography** or **conceptual framework diagram**.

3. Define Research Objectives & Hypotheses

- State **1–3 clear objectives** (e.g., *"Quantify noise levels in urban vs. rural habitats and correlate with bird vocalization frequency"*).
- Formulate **testable hypotheses** (null and alternative).

4. Choose a Methodology

- **Study Design:** Experimental, observational, modeling, etc.
- **Data Collection:** Specify tools (e.g., acoustic recorders, GIS mapping), sampling strategy, and timeline.
- **Analysis:** Statistical tests (e.g., ANOVA, regression) or qualitative methods (e.g., thematic coding).
- **Ethics:** Address permits, animal welfare (IACUC), or human subjects (IRB) approvals if needed.

5. Outline Expected Results & Implications

- Predict potential outcomes (even if hypothetical).
- Discuss how results could inform policy, conservation, or further research.

6. Address Limitations & Feasibility

- Acknowledge constraints (sample size, time, equipment) and mitigation strategies.

7. Write the Proposal

- Structure your proposal as follows (**10–15 pages, double-spaced**):
 1. **Title:** Concise and descriptive.

2. **Introduction:** Background, problem statement, objectives.
3. **Literature Review:** Key studies and gaps.
4. **Methods:** Detailed procedures for reproducibility.
5. **Timeline:** Gantt chart or table with milestones.
6. **Budget:** Itemized costs (equipment, travel, personnel).
7. **References:** APA/MLA format.

Portfolio Artifact: A polished research proposal (usable for grant applications or thesis proposals).

Various Weekly Assignments (10 assignments @ 20 points: 200 points)

Many will also be artifacts for Portfolio

Interview Guide, Field Notes, Content Analysis, etc.

Publishable Book Review (200 points) You will read three ethnographic books that utilize a variety of qualitative methods to collect their data. Here are some pointers in how to write a publishable academic book review:

Structure Your Review

- **Title:** Engaging but clear (e.g., “*Reimagining Conservation: A Critique of [Book Title]*”).
- **Introduction (1–2 paragraphs):**
 - Briefly introduce the book (title, author, publication year).
 - State its purpose and your overall assessment (e.g., “*This groundbreaking work challenges... yet falls short in...*”).
- **Summary (1–2 paragraphs):**
 - Concisely outline the book’s scope, arguments, and structure **without spoiling key insights**.
- **Analysis (2–3 paragraphs):**
 - Evaluate the book’s strengths (e.g., compelling research, readability) and weaknesses (e.g., gaps, biases).
 - Compare it to similar works in the field.
- **Conclusion (1 paragraph):**
 - Restate your assessment and suggest ideal readers (e.g., “*Essential for policymakers but less useful for field biologists*”).

Portfolio Artifact: A publishable book review.

Comparative Paper (1 @ 200 points)

You will be responsible for writing a two page, double spaced paper that compares the ethnographic methods utilized in the three different ethnographies you read. You will need to discuss concepts you learned about in critiquing the various methods used.

Grade Policies: For incompletes, you must speak with me ahead of time and have completed most of the course work. I do not round grades, and I do not change grades after they have been submitted. Grades are available on D2L so you can track your up to date progress in the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To be successful in the course you must be able to use D2L, and using Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

Instructional Methods

This course will be delivered entirely online. You must have access to D2L in order to complete the requirements for this course.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

You must log into D2L multiple times a week in order to be successful in this course. All course communications and assignments will be completed through D2L. If you have questions regarding access to D2L or technical requirements, information to reach out to Campus IT is provided below.

Interaction with Instructor Statement

I prefer communication via email. I do not have an office phone and am much more likely to respond to email. I will respond to email within 24 to 48 hours, between normal business hours of 8am to 5pm. Please be sure that when you email me, you use a proper greeting (Dr. Meszaros Professor Meszaros) an email body, and an appropriate closing. You should never send an email with just an attachment and no email body. Be sure you have an appropriate and informative subject line and include the **name and section of the course** you are enrolled in.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 90%-100% 900-1000 points

B = 80%-89% 800-899

C = 70%-79% 700-799

D = 60%-69% 600-699

F = 59% or Below 599

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or

those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

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COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Week One

Chapter One Introduction: From Why to How?

Assignment: Choose research topic and give background to why this topic is important.

Week Two

Chapter 2 How to Conceptualize Research

Assignment: Create a concept map for your research topic

Week Three

Chapter 3 How to Design a Qualitative Project

Assignment: Create a Research Question and Hypothesis. Outline what methods you would use to answer your research question.

Week Four

Read Hoang, Kimberly Kay. 2022. *Spiderweb Capitalism: How Global Elites Exploit Frontier Markets*. Stanford University Press.

Please provide 300-500 word summary of her methods and focus on what you would need to include for a publishable book review...this book can serve as the subject of your book review project but does not have to (there are two more options)

Week Five

Chapter Four: Methodological and Ethical Integrity in Research

Assignment: Download the University IRB's paperwork to conduct ethical research with human beings. Write a script for informed consent for your project.

Week Six

Chapter Five: How to Interview

Assignment: Create a research instrument related to your research. Will it be semi structured or structured? How long do you anticipate it would take to complete?

Week Seven

Chapter Six: How to Do Focus Groups

Assignment: Create a focus group instrument that allows for a variety of opinions to be expressed. Give me a summary of who you would want in your focus group.

Week Eight

Read Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. 2022. *Unfree: Migrant Domestic Work in Arab States*. Stanford University Press.

Please provide 300-500 word summary of her methods and focus on what you would need to include for a publishable book review...this book can serve as the subject of your book review project but does not have to (there are two more options)

Week Nine

Chapter Seven: Conducting Field Research

Assignment: Conduct participant observation of an event, place, space, etc. related to your research topic, even if very loosely related. Take copious amounts of field notes and submit them.

Week Ten

Chapter Eight: Unobtrusive Methods

Assignment: Conduct online research regarding your topic. Visit various websites and list them in your write up. What trends do you notice about how your topic is discussed online?

Week Eleven:

Chapter Nine: How to Do Data Analysis

Assignment: Code your in person observations and online research. What trends do you see emerging? What are the main ideas you see emerging in the data you collected from your various methodological endeavors?

Week Twelve

Read Meszaros, Julia. 2025. *Economies of Gender: Masculinity, "Mail Order Brides" and Women's Labor*. Rutgers University Press.

Please provide 300-500 word summary of her methods and focus on what you would need to include for a publishable book review...this book can serve as the subject of your book review project but does not have to (there are two more options)

Week Thirteen

Chapter Ten: How to Write up Qualitative Research

Publishable Book Review DUE. Can use one of the three books assigned in the course.

Assignment:

Week Fourteen

Assignment: Short Comparison Paper due Friday by 11:59 PM. How do the ethnographer's methods compare to each other? What strengths and weaknesses did people's different approaches have? Why were qualitative methods the best to answer their research questions? How do their methodological approaches inspire your future endeavors?

FINALS WEEK

Final Draft of Research Proposal due TUESDAY 12/9 at 11:59 PM on D2L.