

Music 9651
Qualitative Research in Music Education
Fall 2025

Instructor: adam patrick bell
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Office Hours: by appointment
Class Times: Information available on OWL
Class Location: Information available on OWL

Course Description

This course is designed to serve as primer on qualitative methods used in music education research. As a learning community, we will examine how music education researchers have used qualitative methods by critically reviewing extant content in peer-reviewed music education periodicals. We will examine which methods are used and why, and also assess how well a given method is implemented. We will also survey the range of methods that fall under the umbrella of qualitative research and determine which ones may work best for our intended purposes. To develop our skills as qualitative researchers, we will learn about and practice data collection methods, such as observing and interviewing, as well as practice analyzing the data we collect or generate. The course uses a scaffolded design to build toward the final project, which is a detailed methodological design presentation by each student. Adhering to real-world authentic practice in the field of music education, all students are expected to participate as good faith peer reviewers of each other's projects.

Graduate Course Learning Objectives

During this course, students will:

- examine, evaluate, and discuss different qualitative methods used in music education research
- review and critique the use of different qualitative methods used in music education research
- practice data collection (interviews and observations) and analyze data
- present a methodological plan for conducting a qualitative study
- participate in peer review

Course Materials

All course materials will be provided by the instructor. There are no anticipated costs for students. Required readings will be provided on OWL.

Method of Evaluation

Assignment	Detail	Weighting	Due date
Weekly Writing	Short writing pieces of no more than a page related to readings and discussions	10% (5 x 2%)	TBD
Assignment 1	Methods in the Real World of Music Education Research Part 1 – What's the Method? A Content Review Presentation	10%	Week 3
Assignment 2	Interviews and Observations	20%	Week 5
Assignment 3	Methods in the Real World of Music Education Research Part 2 – Rate that	10%	Week 6

	Method! A Critical Review Presentation		
Assignment 4	Analysis Presentation	20%	Week 9
Assignment 5	Methodological Design Presentation	30% (10% for slides and script; 10% for the presentation; 10% for peer review)	Weeks 11&12

Detailed descriptions of each assignment will be discussed in class and provided on OWL.

Course Timeline and Format

Week 1 (September 9) – Why should *you* do research? Values, Commitments, Positionality, Problems, Questions, and Aims; What's in an article and why?
 Week 2 (September 16) – The “Big 5” and Beyond – Introduction to Qualitative Methods
 Week 3 (September 23) – Assignment 1 – Methods in the Real World of Music Education Research Part 1 – What's the Method? A Content Review (Presentations)
 September 30th – No Class – National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
 Week 4 (October 7) – Interviewing and Observing; Research Questions
 Week 5 (October 14) – Assignment 2 – Interviews and Observations
 Week 6 (October 21) – Assignment 3 – Methods in the Real World of Music Education Research Part 2 – Rate that Method! A Critical Review (Presentations)
 Week 7 (October 28) – Ethics and Research Ethics Boards
 November 4th – No Class – Reading Week
 Week 8 (November 11) – Analyzing Qualitative Research Data
 Week 9 (November 18) – Assignment 4 – Analysis Presentation
 Week 10 (November 25) – Flex Date (to allow for guest presentations on other dates)
 Week 11 (December 2) – Assignment 5 – Methodological Design Presentations
 Week 12 (December 9) – Assignment 5 - Methodological Design Presentations

This schedule is intended to be flexible to accommodate the interests and needs of the class.

Any assigned readings will be made available on OWL. By design, in consultation with the instructor, students will often identify and select their own readings as they relate to assignments using Western's library systems.

Enrolment Restrictions

Enrolment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Music, as well as any student who has obtained special permission from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Note especially that plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. Students are expected to write all assignments in their own words. If you take an idea from another author, you must acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Instructor Statement on Accessibility

The following statements related to accessibility (“Health and Wellness,” “Statement on and “Accessible Education Western”) are required components of a syllabus as determined by the Senate and SGPS. These policies may not adequately address a learner’s accessibility needs. In an attempt to address our collective access needs as a class community, we will discuss and navigate accessibility continually through regular check-ins. All members of the class are encouraged to dialogue with the instructor about their individual access needs if they do not feel comfortable doing so amongst the class. Because access is relational and access needs can conflict, there can be no guarantees that all access needs will be met; however, as a class, we will strive to make our learning environment as accessible as possible to everyone involved, inclusive of students, the instructor, and guests.

Health and Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In general, I advise against using most “GenAI” tools in this course because it will not be beneficial for students to offload the cognitive tasks that they should learn how to perform as a researcher. There may be tools marketed as “AI,” such as those that use machine learning, that can be helpful to students in this class with some tasks. This is a topic that we can discuss on a case-by-case basis as we consider the ethical implications of the various tools available to us as researchers to perform labour.