

SOCI 5341.001
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS
M 3:00-5:50
UH 321

Instructor: Dr. Heather Jacobson
Office: 423 University Hall
Office Hours: M 10:00-11:00 and by appointment
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Course Description:

This seminar-style course introduces students to the qualitative tradition in sociology. We will study the assumptions underlying qualitative methods and important ethical and theoretical issues in field work. Students will become familiar with ethnographic research techniques (participant-observation and in-depth interviewing) and have the opportunity to implement those methods in an individual small-scale research project.

Course Learning Objectives

- 1) Students will learn about the place of qualitative methods in sociology.
- 2) Students will become familiar with field methods research techniques and issues.
- 3) Students will implement methods in a fieldwork project.

Course Structure:

Every class session will be divided into two parts. In the first half of class, we will discuss the readings and the topic of the week. During the second half of the class, we will focus on your research experiences.

Course Expectations:

Regular classroom attendance and active classroom participation is expected. Class participation includes attendance at every class, completion of reading assignments (by the class in which the material will be discussed), completion of class exercises and assignments, leading the discussion of two classes (instructions will be given in class), and regular, thoughtful contribution to class discussions. To succeed in this class you need to be able to not only attend class and do the readings but have the time, focus, and dedication to complete the research assignments.

Grades:

Grades for the course will be calculated on a 100-point scale, as follows:

Class participation (including leading 2 discussions): 15 points

General Fieldwork Assignments (Grocery assignments): 10 points total

Research project written assignments: 45 points

Research project final presentation: 5 points

Final paper: 25 points

Required Texts:

Esterberg, Kristin G. 2002. *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Emerson, Robert M. 2001. *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*. Waveland Press. Second Edition.

Several articles or book chapters are also on e-reserve or paper reserve at the UTA library. Please refer to the library handout if you have questions on accessing these documents.

*****Course Outline*****

Week One—January 13: Introduction to the Course

- Review of Syllabus

Week Two—NO CLASS JANUARY 20: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR DAY

**** Research Assignment Due:** *Working description of project*

Week Three—January 27: Orienting to Qualitative Research

- Kristin G. Esterberg. “What is Social Research?” Chapter 1
- Robert Weiss. “Introduction.” Chapter 1
- Clifford Geertz. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” Chapter 1 in Emerson
- Irving Seidman. “Proposing Research: From Mind to Paper to Action.” Chapter 3 from *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (instructions in class on how to access)

**** General Fieldwork Assignment Due:** *Grocery Check Out 1*

Week Four—February 3: Epistemology and Conceiving the Project

- Kristin G. Esterberg. “Strategies for Beginning Research.” Chapter 2
- Howard Becker. “Epistemologies of Qualitative Research.” Chapter 13 in Emerson
- Kathy Charmaz. “Grounded Theory.” Chapter 15 in Emerson

**** General Fieldwork Assignment Due:** *Grocery Check Out 2*

**** Research Assignment Due:** *Draft Project Proposal*

Week Five—February 10: Ethics and the IRB

- Kristin G. Esterberg, “Ethical Issues.” Chapter 3

**** Research Assignment Due:** *IRB protocol (with attachments)*

Week Six—February 17: Access

- Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn Lofland. 2006. "Getting In." Pps 33-53 in Lofland et al, *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth. Fourth Edition. (available on the library e-reserves webpage)
- Mitchell Duneier. "On the Evolution of Sidewalk." Chapter 7 in Emerson
- Robert S. Weiss. "Respondents: Choosing Them and Recruiting Them." Chapter 2

**** Research Assignment Due: Project Proposal with Interview Guide**

Week Seven—February 24: Interviewing

- Kristin G. Esterberg. "Interviews." Chapter 5
- Robert S. Weiss. "Preparation for Interviewing" and "Interviewing." Chapters 3 and 4

Week Eight—March 3: Reflexivity and Ethics

- Robert S. Weiss. "Issues in Interviewing." Chapter 5
- Dorinne Kondo. "How the Problem of "Crafting Selves" Emerged." Chapter 8 in Emerson
- Carol A.B. Warren. "Gender and Fieldwork Relations." Chapter 9 in Emerson
- Barrie Thorne. "Learning from Kids." Chapter 10 in Emerson

Week Nine—NO CLASS MARCH 10: SPRING BREAK**Week Ten—March 17: Participant Observation**

- Kristin G. Esterberg. "Observation: Participant and Otherwise." Chapter 4
- Irving Goffman. "On Fieldwork." Chapter 5 in Emerson
- Robert M. Emerson and Melvin Pollner. "Constructing Participant/Observation Relations." Chapter 11 in Emerson

**** Research Assignment Due: Fieldnotes from Interview 1**

Week Eleven—March 24: Coding and Analysis

- Kristin G. Esterberg. "Making Sense of Data." Chapter 8
- Jack Katz. "Analytic Induction Revisited." Chapter 14 in Emerson
- Robert S. Weiss. "Analysis of Data." Chapter 6

**** Research Assignment Due: Transcribed Interview 1**

Week Twelve—March 31: Telling the Story

- Kristin G. Esterberg. "Narrative Analysis." Chapter 9
- Robert Emerson. "The Face of Contemporary Ethnography." Part One Intro (pps 27-53 in Emerson)

**** Research Assignment Due: Transcribed Interview and Fieldnotes 2**

Week Thirteen—April 7: Content Analysis and Historical Research

- Kristin G. Esterberg “Unobtrusive Measures.” Chapter 6

**** Research Assignment Due: Coding List**

Week Fourteen—April 14: Evaluating Evidence

- Jack Katz. “Ethnography’s Warrants.” Chapter 17 in Emerson
- Michael Bloor. “Techniques in Validation in Qualitative Research.” Chapter 18 in Emerson
- Howard S. Becker. “Tricks of the Trade.” Chapter 16 in Emerson

Week Fifteen—April 21: Getting it Out There: Writing and Presenting your Research Writing

- Kristin G. Esterberg. “Writing About Research.” Chapter 10
- Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre. 2005. “Writing: A Method of Inquiry.” Pgs 959-978 in Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (ed), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (available on the library e-reserves webpage)
- Robert S. Weiss. “Writing the Report.” Chapter 7

Also recommended:

- Anne Lamont, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*.
- Howard S. Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*.

**** Research Assignment Due: Memo**

Week Sixteen—April 28: Student Presentations

FINAL PAPERS

**** Research Assignment Due: Final Papers**

Due Wednesday May 7 by 9 a.m. (place a hard copy in my box in the Sociology Department Office. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want it returned to you with comments)

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Working Description of Project

Email me short written description of your research project (as much as you have at this point) to me as you envision it at this stage. Try and answer the big questions: WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, and HOW. Due by 5pm, January 20th.

Grocery Check Out 1

Check out at a grocery store. Write detailed field notes of checking out.

Grocery Check Out 2

Follow a friend, family member, partner, or classmate during a trip to the grocery store. Write a set of detailed notes on your observations and on what you can find out about how people grocery shop, *without ever talking to them about it*.

Draft Research Project Proposal

A draft of your typed description of your research project (1-2 pages) and your interview guide (1-2 pages).

IRB Protocol with attachments

Go on the UTA IRB website and prepare an IRB protocol for your intended project. This includes any required attachments, such as your interview guide, consent form, and recruitment materials. As you are filling out the protocol write out the questions or concerns you have. Bring a print-out of both your filled-out protocol document and your questions to class (to be turned in).

Project Proposal with Interview Guide

A typed description of your research project (1-2 pages) and your interview guide (1-2 pages).

Fieldnotes 1

Detailed fieldnotes from your first interview.

Transcribed Interview 1

A typed verbatim transcript of your first interview. Please include a cover page on which you let me know which 5-7 pages of the transcript on which you would like feedback.

Transcribed Interview and Fieldnotes 2

A typed verbatim transcript of your second interview and your detailed field notes.

Coding List

A list of the codes you have developed for coding your data. Include *detailed descriptions* explaining to me what the codes mean and why you selected them

Memo

A typed memo detailing what has grabbed your attention so far. Why? How? What do you think might be going on? What hunches do you have? Do you have codes in mind? Any analytic themes? (1.5-3 pages single spaced)

Final Paper

This is a 15-20 page paper that addresses key issues in your independent research project over the course of the semester. The paper should include all of the following:

- 1) Statement of the problem or question that you address in your project

- 2) A description of the methods used to gather your data.
- 3) A discussion of the key issues, problems, and solutions in the design of your study. This should include a brief description of your experience in the field.
- 4) Preliminary analysis of your data including emerging themes, analytic categories, or concepts.
- 5) A plan for the next steps you would take to move this project forward, including data collection and methods of analysis.

The aim of this paper is to have you think through the issues covered in class in relation to your particular project and to consider next steps for your research. As such, your paper should also include:

- 6) Concepts and ideas discussed in class derived from the readings. Please rely on the class readings and be sure and properly cite them in your paper.

You may also include relevant literature on your study's topic, but the main focus of your paper should be on your research experience, project's design and implementation, and preliminary findings.

I expect the paper to be thoughtful and scholarly examination of key issues in qualitative research examined through the lens of your particular project.

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Academic Integrity: All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code: *I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Student Support Services: UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at www.uta.edu/resources.

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.