

**SOCI 5341.001/ SOCI 4306.001**  
**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS**

M 2:00-4:50

UH 321

Instructor: Dr. Heather Jacobson

Office: 442 University Hall

Office Hours: M 11:00-12:00 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.

**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.

Additional articles or book chapters are available on Blackboard.

**Recommended Texts:**

Becker, Howard. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**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 Requirements:

### 1. Participation (including response memos and discussion questions): 32 points

#### A. Attendance and Participation.

Regular classroom attendance and active classroom participation, without fail, 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 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 assignments. If you have a serious illness or emergency (*the only reasons for which you should ever miss class*) that keeps you from class, email me as soon as possible to let me know. Simply attending class but failing to actively participate in a meaningful way every class meeting will not allow you receive full marks for participation (and will, therefore, make it virtually impossible to receive an A in the course). Likewise, actively participating but missing class (without a serious illness or emergency) will also make it impossible to receive an A in the course.

#### B. Response Memos

Each week you will turn in a set of response memos on that week's readings. You should prepare a response to the topic for the week (which synthesizes your reactions to all of the readings) of at least 150 words (250 word maximum). Your memo should paraphrase what you see as the central questions and main arguments of that week's topic and then turn to your response to the articles. What did you learn about qualitative research from the articles? What surprised you? Intrigued you? Confused you? Response memos are due to me via email by noon on the Sunday prior to Monday's class in which the readings are assigned. (see note below\*)

#### C. Discussion Questions

Each week, email me questions for discussion by noon on the Sunday prior to class. Bring a copy of the questions yourself as well to class. We will use these questions as the basis for discussion. They will be read in class. Think about ways to write thought-provoking questions that will get discussion going. Avoid closed-ended (yes/no) questions. Number your questions and put your name before the number= example: Heather 1. (see note below\*)

**Graduate Students:** prepare at least 3 discussion questions per week.

**Undergraduates:** prepare at least one question per week.

\*NOTE: Please email your reading memo and discussion questions in one Word document. In the subject line of the email insert your last name, Qual Methods, and the week of the semester. So the subject line of the email will look like this: Jacobson Qual Methods Week Three.

**2. Research Assignments: 28 points total (4 points each)**

Below, find a series of 7 research assignments. You should submit the assignments on time (late assignments will be docked points starting one minute after their due time) to me at: [jacobson@uta.edu](mailto:jacobson@uta.edu). In the subject line of the email insert your last name and the research assignment number. So the subject line of the email will look like this: Jacobson Research Assignment 1.

**3. Final paper (extended research proposal): 35 points**

The final paper is an extended research proposal based on data you have independently collected and analyzed during the semester from in-depth interviews (undergraduates= 3 interviews; graduate students= 5 interviews). The paper should include all of the following:

- 1) Statement of the problem or question, supported by research citations that you address in your project.
- 2) A description of the methods used to gain access to your participants and establish field relationships.
- 3) The ethical problems you encountered.
- 4) A description of your methods for gathering your data.
- 5) A description of your methods for data analysis.
- 6) 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.
- 7) Preliminary analysis of your data including emerging themes, analytic categories, or concepts.
- 8) 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:

- 9) 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 should also include relevant literature on your study's topic. I expect the paper to be thoughtful and scholarly examination of key issues in qualitative research examined through the lens of your particular project.

Word limit (not including bibliography):

2,000 minimum-3,500 maximum words for **undergraduates**

3,500 minimum-5,000 maximum words for **graduate students**

The final paper is due via email to me ([jacobson@uta.edu](mailto:jacobson@uta.edu)) by Monday, December 10th by noon. Additionally, if you would like feedback, place a hard copy in my box in the Sociology Department Office by Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 9am (and

email me to let me know you have done so). Include a self-addressed stamped manila envelope so that I can return to you with comments.

#### **4. Research project final presentation: 5 points**

Each student will give a formal presentation of their research project to the class.

### **\*\*\*\*\*Course Outline\*\*\*\*\***

#### **Week One—August 27: Introduction to the Course**

- Review of Syllabus
- Discussion of possible research topics

#### **\*Assignment One Due (via email) by Monday, September 3 by noon**

A tentative proposal (single spaced: roughly 400 words for graduate students; roughly 200 words for undergraduates—not counting the reading list) exploring a possible individual research project for the class. Why does this topic interest you? Why is it sociologically relevant? Why would this topic be a good one for an interview-based project? What is your experience with this topic? Who would be interviewed and studied? How might you gain access to this population? What might you discover? Include a tentative reading list of research on this topic (full citations, using ASA citation style) that includes at least 5 items (these can be books, articles, chapters in edited books, or any combination of the three. They should be either written by sociologists (you can google the authors to find out) or in sociology journals (or interdisciplinary journals in which sociologist publish)).

- In preparation of turning in assignment one, read (and use as a guide): Seidman, Irving. 2005. “Proposing Research: From Mind to Paper to Action.” Pp 28-39 in *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, edited by Irving Seidman. New York, New York: Teachers College Press (on Blackboard)

#### **Week Two— September 3: no class (Labor Day)**

#### **Week Three- September 10: Orienting to Qualitative Research**

- Esterberg, Kristin. “What is Social Research?” Chapter 1
- Emerson, Robert. “Introduction: The Development of Ethnographic Field Research.” Pgs 1-26.
- Becker, Howard. “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research,” Chapter 13 in Emerson.
- Weiss, Robert. “Introduction.” Chapter 1
- Goodwin, Jeff and Ruth Horowitz. 2002. “Introduction: The Methodological Strengths and Dilemmas of Qualitative Sociology.” *Qualitative Sociology* 25(1): 33-47. (on Blackboard)

#### **\*Assignment Two Due by Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at noon**

Integrate any recommendations/feedback you’ve received into your proposal, flesh out the project, and add to your reading list so that it now totals at least 8 items (for graduate students) or 6 items (for undergraduates).

#### **Week Four— September 17: Figuring out the Field**

- Esterberg, Kristin. “Strategies for Beginning Research.” Chapter 2
- Goffman, Irving. “On Fieldwork.” Chapter 5 in Emerson.
- Weiss, Robert. “Respondents: Choosing Them and Recruiting Them,” “Preparation for Interviewing.” Chapters 2 and 3.

#### **Assignment Three due by Friday, September 21st at noon: Interview Guide**

A list of questions that you plan on asking during your interview. List them in the order you plan on asking them; organize by topic. Include prompts. The exact number of questions will vary depending upon your project and participants, but there is a minimum of 25 questions (excluding prompts).

#### **Week Five- September 24: Interviewing and Observing**

- Esterberg, Kristin. “Observation: Participant and Otherwise” and “Interviews” Chapters 4 and 5
- Emerson, Robert and Melvin Pollner, “Constructing Participant/Observation Relations.” Chapter 11 in Emerson
- Weiss, Robert. “Interviewing,” and “Issues in Interviewing.” Chapters 4 and 5
- Lareau, Annette. 2000. “My Wife Can Tell Me Who I Know: Methodological and Conceptual Problems in Studying Fathers.” *Qualitative Sociology* 23 (4): 407-433. (On Blackboard)

#### **Week Six—October 1: Ethics**

- Kristin G. Esterberg, “Ethical Issues.” Chapter 3
- Emerson, “Regulatory and Legal Issues in Fieldwork” Pgs 144-151.
- Babbie, Earl. 2004 “Laud Humphreys and Research Ethics.” *International Journal of Social Policy* 24 (3/4/5): 12-19. (on Blackboard)
- Berg, Bruce. 2001. “Ethical Issues.” Pps 39-65 in *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Science*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon. (On Blackboard)
- Leo, Richard. “Trial and Tribulations: Courts, Ethnography, and the Need for an Evidentiary Privilege for Academic Researchers.” Chapter 12 in Emerson

#### **Week Seven—October 8: Fieldnotes**

- Esterberg, Kristin. “Observation: Participant and Otherwise.” Chapter 4: *review pages 72-78*
- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 1995. “In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes” and “Writing Up Fieldnotes: From Field to Desk,” Chapters 2 and 3 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, edited by from Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (On Blackboard)
- Emerson, Robert. “Transforming Experience and Observation into Data: Writing Fieldnotes,” Pages 131-134 in Emerson.

- Franklin, Sarah and Celia Roberts. “Studying PGD.” From Sarah Franklin and Celia Roberts, *Born and Made: An Ethnography of Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (on Blackboard)

**Assignment Four due by Saturday, October 13th by noon: Fieldnotes**

Detailed fieldnotes from your first interview.

**Week Eight—October 15: Sampling Issues**

- Biernacki, Patrick and Dan Waldorf. 1981. “Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques in Chain Referral.” *Sociological Methods and Research* 10 (2): 141-163. (on Blackboard).
- Watters, John K. and Patrick Biernacki. 1989. “Targeted Sampling: Options for the Study of Hidden Populations.” *Social Problems* 36 (4): 416-430. (on Blackboard)

**Week Nine— October 22: Issues in the Field**

- Wielder, D. Lawrance. “Telling the Convict Code.” Chapter 2 in Emerson
- Thorne, Barrie. “Learning from Kids.” Chapter 10 in Emerson
- Duneier, Mitchell. “On the Evolution of Sidewalk.” Chapter 7 in Emerson
- Kondo, Dorinne. “How the Problem of ‘Crafting Selves’ Emerged.” Chapter 8 in Emerson

**Assignment Five Due by Friday, October 26th at noon: Transcribed Interview 1**

A typed verbatim transcript of your first interview. Please bold the 2-3 pages of the transcript on which you would like feedback.

**Week Ten—October 29: Issues in the Field II**

- Baca Zinn, Maxine. “Insider Field Research in Minority Communities.” Chapter 6 in Emerson
- Warren, Carol A.B. “Gender and Fieldwork Relations.” Chapter 9 in Emerson
- Emerson, Robert. “Fieldwork Practice: Issues in Participant Observation.” Introduction to Part II, pages 113-144.
- Reich, Jennifer A. 2003. “Pregnant with Possibility: Reflections on Embodiment, Access, and Inclusion in Field Research,” *Qualitative Sociology* 26 (3): 351-367. (On Blackboard)

**Week Eleven—November 5: Making Sense of Data**

- Charmaz, Kathy. “Grounded Theory.” Chapter 15 in Emerson.
- Esterberg, Kristen. “Making Sense of Data.” Chapter 8
- Katz, Jack. “Analytic Induction Revisited.” Chapter 14 in Emerson

**Assignment Six Due by Friday, November 9th at noon: Annotated 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

### **Week Twelve—November 12: Methods and Analysis**

- Reich, Jennifer. 2015. “Old methods and new technologies: Social media and shifts in power in qualitative research.” *Ethnography* 16 (4): 394–415 (on Blackboard)
- Emerson, Robert. “Producing Ethnographies: Theory, Evidence, and Representation.” Pgs 281-316.
- Katz, Jack. “Ethnography’s Warrants.” Chapter 17 in Emerson
- Bloor, Michael. “Techniques in Validation in Qualitative Research.” Chapter 18 in Emerson

### **Assignment Seven due by Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at noon: Memo**

A typed memo focusing on one specific idea or developing theme that has captured your attention thus far. Roughly 200 words for undergraduates, 300 for graduates.

### **Week Thirteen—November 19: On Writing and Presenting your Research**

- Becker, Howard S. “Tricks of the Trade.” Chapter 16 in Emerson
- Stack, Carol. 1993. Writing Ethnography: Feminist Critical Practice.” *Frontiers: a Journal of Women’s Studies* 13(3): 77-89. (on Blackboard)
- Erickson, Kai. 1989. “On Sociological Prose.” *Yale Review* 78(1): 535-538. (on Blackboard)

### **Week Fourteen—November 26: Student Presentations**

**Rough draft of Paper due by Tuesday, November 27<sup>th</sup> at noon**

### **Week Fifteen—December 3: Student-led writing session**

**The final paper is due via email to me ([jacobson@uta.edu](mailto:jacobson@uta.edu)) by Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup> by noon (see note above). Complete auxiliary materials package (all transcribed interviews, all fieldnotes, and all memos) due via separate email by Monday, December 10 by noon.**

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**University Attendance Statement:** At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required but attendance is a critical indicator in student success. Each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students’ academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I encourage you to attend class. However, while UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients “begin attendance in a course.” UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

**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/ao/fao/>).

**Disability Accommodations:** UT 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)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. 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 disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting: The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) <http://www.uta.edu/disability/> or calling 817-272-3364. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability).

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit [uta.edu/eos](http://uta.edu/eos).

**Title IX Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington (“University”) is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. *For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX) or contact Ms. Michelle Willbanks, Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-4585 or [titleix@uta.edu](mailto:titleix@uta.edu)*

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses 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.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code in their courses by having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. 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. Additional information is available at <https://www.uta.edu/conduct/>. Faculty are encouraged to

discuss plagiarism and share the following library tutorials

<http://libguides.uta.edu/copyright/plagiarism> and <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/>

**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>.

**Campus Carry:** Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in face-to-face and online classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” are directed to complete an online 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 via the SFS database is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. Students’ anonymity will be protected to the extent that the law allows. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law and aggregate results are posted online. Data from SFS is also used for faculty and program evaluations. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** for semester-long courses, 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.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

**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](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/studentssuccess/success-programs/programs/resource-hotline.php>

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