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Office hrs: T 2-4
8135 Social Science

Tuesdays 5:00 – 8:00 pm
8108 Social Science

Sociology 955
**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS –
Interviewing, Ethnography, and Analysis**

You have been told to go grubbing in the library, thereby accumulating a mass of notes and a liberal coating of grime. You have been told to choose problems wherever you can find musty stacks of routine records based on trivial schedules prepared by tired bureaucrats and filled out by reluctant applicants for aid or fussy do-gooders or indifferent clerks. This is called "getting your hands dirty in real research." Those who thus counsel you are wise and honorable; the reasons they offer are of great value. But one thing is more needful; first-hand observation. Go and sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and on the slum shakedown; sit in Orchestra Hall and in the Star and in the Garter Burlesk. In short, gentlemen, go get the seats of your pants dirty in REAL research.

--Robert E. Park

Course Overview:

Qualitative research is more than a method, it is a way of seeing; for those who are gifted and motivated, it can become a way of life. This approach to sociological inquiry can only be learned through total immersion in the work itself. Sociology 955 is therefore designed to take you through each stage of an interview-based or ethnographic research project, from design, to conducting fieldwork and interviews, to coding and analyzing data. The end result of your work in this class will be a write-up of a pilot study, complete with preliminary findings and suggested avenues for future research.

Therefore, every member of the class will be expected to come prepared to work on an ongoing field-based or interview-based project. Come to the first class meeting prepared to discuss ideas for a research question that will require participant-observation and/or in-depth interviewing as its primary mode of inquiry.

Throughout the course of the semester, you will be expected to gain access to a research site or population, take fieldnotes, conduct interviews and submit interview transcripts, and analyze your data. The first half of each class meeting will be devoted primarily to the readings for the week and to introducing the week's topic. You will be expected to work in pairs to prepare discussion questions for at least one week's readings. During the second half of the class period, you will have the opportunity to work on your projects as they evolve in small groups.

You will also be expected to familiarize yourself with qualitative works. To that end, we will collectively read and evaluate two books and several articles based on in-depth interviewing

and participant observation. You will also write a brief (5-7 page) methodological analysis of an ethnography or interview-based monograph of your choice from your substantive area.

Readings:

Our class readings will be of three types: epistemological introductions to specific research paradigms (i.e., methodology proper), "nuts and bolts" pieces that stress technique and conduct, and empirical examples. Each week's readings will sample more heavily from one group or another, depending on the topic at hand. Please note that as your writing and analysis responsibilities increase towards the end of the semester, the reading load goes down.

Required Texts: These books are available for purchase at A Room of One's Own.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2008. Constructing Grounded Theory. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Collins, Jane and Victoria Mayer. 2010. Both Hands Tied. University of Chicago Press

Emerson, Robert M. 2001. Contemporary Field Research: A Collection of Readings. 2nd Edition, Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.

Emerson, Robert M. 1995. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

McLeod, Jay. 2008. Ain't No Makin' It, 3rd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

*Xeroxed Articles: Much of our reading will be in the form of xeroxed articles that will be available on line at Learn@uw.

Recommended Texts:

The following are recommended readings. Becker's book is a handy guide for everyone who wants to avoid "writing like a sociologist," (a fate akin to being "stuck in Lodi again") Lofland and Lofland is a good basic text for field-based research. How to Write a Lot is a must for every scholar who wants to ever write ANYTHING. These readings are available on reserve in the library, or you may purchase them:

Bazeley, Patricia. 2007. Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo

Becker, Howard. Writing for Social Scientists. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Lofland, John and Lyn. Analyzing Social Settings, 4th ed. Wadsworth, 2005.

Silva, Paul J. How to Write a Lot, American Psychological Association, 2007.

Course Outline:

Our meetings will follow a standard format with two phases. During one half of each week's class, we will discuss the readings for that week. You will be assigned to write discussion questions based on the readings at least twice during the semester. During the second half of our class time, we will conduct a "research workshop" during which we will focus on some aspect of your projects in-progress. You will be expected to keep up with the readings and to be prepared to discuss your research project at each week's meeting. In addition, I will ask one or two of you to act as "designated researcher" for each week, bringing some aspect of your work for the group's discussion. All of these aspects of class participation, in addition to your written work, will be evaluated as part of your course grade.

Week 1
January 24

Situating Qualitative Research: Foundations and Mission

Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.

--Clifford Geertz

Readings:

Emerson, Contemporary Field Research, pps. 1-75

Max Weber, "Objectivity in the Social Sciences"*

Workshop Topic:

Generating a pilot study

Week 2
January 31

Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method

What you try to do is to understand as best you can, knowing that it always comes out of your own perspective, but you try to understand how the people that you are talking with or studying, construct the situation. I think grounded theory can be an enormous help with the checks to catch the kinds of constructions, and to have a sense of them. But it always comes from our perspective.

-- Kathy Charmaz

Readings:

Charmaz, Chs. 1, 6

Burawoy, "The Extended Case Method"*

Tavory, Iddo and Stefan Timmermans, "Two Cases of
Ethnography: Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method"*

Workshop Topic:

Introduce research projects

Week 3

February 7

Research Design: Connecting Question to Method

Rather than asking, "What is a case?" Ask, "What is this a case of?"

--Howard Becker

Readings:

Charmaz, 13-21

Weiss, Chapter 2

Patton, 39-68, 230-246*

Miles and Huberman, handout*

Workshop Topic:

Designing a Research Question, Sample Design

Gaining Access

Research Proposal Due

Week 4

February 14

Participant Observation and Field Notes

My immediate object in doing fieldwork at St. Elizabeth's was to try to learn about the social world of the hospital inmate, as this world was subjectively experienced by him... a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject.

-- Erving Goffman

Readings:

Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, pps. 1-107

Emerson, Contemporary Field Research, pps. 153-158

Workshop Topic:

Fast Food Field Notes

Field Notes Due

Week 5

February 21

Research Ethics and Relations in the Field

Statistics are people with the tears wiped off.

--Bradford Hill

Readings:

McLeod, Ain't No Makin It

(pps. 1-153, read methodological appendix first)
Emerson, Contemporary Field Research, 113-151
“Ten Lies of Ethnography”*
“Spies Like Us”*
Harvard Committee on the Use of Human Subjects*

Week 5, cont.

Workshop Topic:
Human Subjects Review

****Human Subjects Application due****

Week 6
February 28

Approaches to Interviewing

The clearest way to see through a culture is to attend to its tools for conversation.
--Neil Postman

Readings:

Weiss, Chapters 3 & 4

Workshop topic:

Creating Interview Guides

****Preliminary Interview Guide due****

Week 7
March 6

Assessing Interviewing Skills

"So- Do you have any pets?"

--Novice Researcher

Readings:

Weiss, Chapter 5

DeVault. “Talking and Listeneng from Women’s Standpoint”*

Jack and Anderson, “Learning to Listen”*

Riessman, “When Gender Isn’t Enough”*

Workshop Topic:

Evaluating and Revising Interview Guides

****First Transcript due****

Week 8
March 13

The Researcher's Standpoint

Field workers do not observe subjects behaving: they interpret human actions. To recognize that field work consists of inferring the meaning of human activity is to acknowledge the role that the observers play in their own analyses.

--Karp and Kendall

Readings:

Contemporary Field Research, 159-166, 239-259

Smith, "A Sociology for Women"*

Hill-Collins, "The Sociological Significance of the Outsider Within," *

Behar, Ruth. The Vulnerable Observer. Selections.

Workshop Topic:

Insider/Outsider Status

Short Papers Due

Week 9
March 20

Introduction to Coding-Open Coding

The trick is not to get yourself into some inner correspondence of spirit with your informants. Preferring, like the rest of us, to keep their souls their own, they are not going to be altogether keen about such an effort anyhow. The trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to.

--Clifford Geertz

Readings:

Charmaz, pps. 42-60

Weiss, Chapter 6

Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View,"*

Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, pps. 108-168

Workshop Topic:

Open Coding

****Revised Interview Guide due****

**Week 10
March 27**

Moving to Focused Coding

Quantitative measurements are quantitatively accurate; qualitative evaluations are always subject to the errors of human judgment. Yet it would seem far more worthwhile to make a shrewd guess regarding that which is essential than to accurately measure that which is likely to prove quite irrelevant. --Richard La Pierre

Readings:

Contemporary Field Research, 281-330, 335-360

Workshop Topic:

Focused Coding

****Open Coding Due****

*******Spring BREAK*******

April 1-8, 2012

**Week 11
April 10**

Focused Coding with NVivo
Meet in 3rd floor Computer Lab

Readings:

Charmaz, pps. 60-73

Bazeley, Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo, selections*

Workshop:

Introduction to Coding with NVivo
Computer Lab

*****Focused Code List Due*****

Week 12
April 17

Moving to Analytic Memos - Books

It is a vice of the scientific method when applied to human affairs that it fosters hemming and hawing and a scrupulousness that easily degenerates into obscurity and meaninglessness.

--Eric Hoffer

Readings:

Collins & Mayer, Both Hands Tied, entire.
Charmaz, Chapter 4

Guest Speaker – Jane Collins

Focused Code Map Due

Week 13
April 24

Writing Grants for Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Research

Readings:

NIH – Qualitative Research in Health Research*
NSF – Workshop on Scientific Foundations of
Qualitative Research*
Belgrave et al., “How do we talk to each other?”*

Week 14
May 1

Moving to Analytic Memos - Articles

Readings:

Macdonald “If we’re not calling you...we don’t need you”*
Other selected qualitative articles

Workshop Topic:

Presentations of Analytic Memos – groups I & II

Week 15

May 7

Final thoughts on writing up your work

Readings:

Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Chapter 7

Charmaz, Chapter 7

Workshop Topic:

Presentations of Analytic Memos – groups III & IV

*****Final Papers will be due in the learn@uw drop box on May 19*****

*****Draft of Analytic Memo Due*****
(final paper section two)

Final Project Write-Up

DUE 5/19/12

Your final paper will include three sections: a discussion of the design and implementation of your pilot study and what you learned from it; 2) an analytic memo elaborating in full one theme from your research to-date, and b) a detailed proposal outlining what you intend to do to move this project forward towards your thesis or a publishable project.

- I. Section one should consist of a complete discussion of your pilot study (5-7 pages), including the following elements:
 - a) The research question and a justification of its importance;
 - b) A statement of your research methods including the following: how the method fits the question; how you selected interviews, participant observation, or both; how you designed your sample; and any obstacles you encountered in the field, and a discussion of how you dealt with them;
 - c) The process of revising your interview guide: how you *operationalized* your research question; what topics seemed salient at first and how this list evolved once in the field; what you learned from your informants that lead you to revise your interview guide the way you did;
 - d) A description of your coding process: what surprises did you find in the themes that emerged? Disappointments? Discuss areas of inquiry that emerged and areas that you discarded and why.

- II. Section two will be an integrative/analytic memo fully elaborating (with quotes and discussion) one theme from your pilot study:
 - a) This aspect of the paper should be no less than 7-9 pages, and should include data to demonstrate your assertions (See Macdonald for examples).
 - b) Remember that you are trying to build an argument from the ground up, and that all of your assertions must be data-driven.
 - c) Think about how the theme connects with your larger research question and might contribute to a larger argument.
 - d) How do the sub-themes connect with theme?
 - e) How do the codes connect and/or nest within the sub-themes?
 - f) How do the quotes and/or fieldnotes illustrate the points you are trying to make concerning each level of analysis?

- III. Section three will present a brief proposal (five pages) outlining how you plan to implement the next phase of your research:
- a) Outline the most significant things you learned about your topic and about qualitative research from your experience of the pilot study.
 - b) Give an overview of your new research question, how you intend to explore it, why you have chosen this method, and why this new question is significant.
 - c) Discuss what additional data you would need to gather and how you intend to gather it - be specific.
 - d) What lines of inquiry do you intend to follow in analyzing the data? What some avenues you might pursue to linking the thesis project to the substantive literature in your field?

The paper should be approximately 15-20 pages long, and will be due on May 18th via e-mail to cmacdon@ssc.wisc.edu.

Weekly Assignment Due Dates:

You should keep an up-to-date portfolio of your ongoing work, including fieldnotes, transcripts, and the assignments listed below. You will be asked to hand in your portfolio with each new assignment, and we will comment on the new assignment as well as any work in-progress you include. It is important that your portfolio include all of your previous assignment so that we may track your progress. Completed portfolios, (your project materials do-date, including my comments), are due in class on May 7th. Final papers are due no later than 5pm on Friday, May 19th via learn@uw.

February 7	One-Page Pilot Study Proposal Due
February 14	Fast Food Field Notes
February 21	Human Subjects Proposal
February 28	Preliminary Interview Guide
March 6	First Transcript Due
March 13	*Short Paper Due*
March 20	Revised Interview Guide Due
March 27	Open Coding Due, 2 nd transcript
April 10	Focused Code List Due NVIVO Workshop
April 17	Focused Code Map Due
May 7	Draft of Analytic Memo Due Portfolio Due
MAY 11, 2011	*FINAL PAPER DUE* Upload to dropbox on learn@uw No later than 5pm CST