

QUALITATIVE METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY
SOCIOLOGY 319/WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES 317
FALL SEMESTER 2014
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS 9:30AM- 10:50AM
HALL OF LANGUAGES 105

INSTRUCTOR

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Tues 11am-1pm, and by appt.
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TEACHING ASSISTANT

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do we use qualitative research methods? What are different kinds of qualitative research methods? How do we conduct ethnographic research/participant observation? How do we conduct an interview? How do we conduct ethical research? How does our own background influence what we can learn from others? How do we analyze the data we collect and write it up in a paper?

This course explores the questions above and gives students an introduction to a range of qualitative research methods. We will all be sociological detectives. That is, we will use our sociological imaginations to independently explore research questions of our own design. The readings have been selected to give you examples of how to do qualitative research, what we can learn from qualitative research, both empirically and theoretically, and the dilemmas qualitative researchers confront such as, how to conduct research ethically or how their background influences their findings. Ultimately, knowing how to collect data, analyze it, and present it to others, are skills that are extremely valuable in the “real world”.

Conducting qualitative research is labor, time and writing intensive. It takes time to collect data, analyze data, write-up preliminary memos, and then complete a final paper. Through your research projects, you may learn things that confirm your hunches about “how things work” but you should also be prepared to encounter things that challenge those hunches.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course students will learn:

- 1) How to observe their social world carefully and systematically.
- 2) To engage in participant observation/ethnographic observations.
- 3) To conduct in-depth interviews.
- 4) To record and organize data from their observations and interviews.
- 5) To analyze data and think inductively.
- 6) To write-up their findings and analysis in a well-written and organized report.

REQUIRED BOOKS AND TEXTS

All course materials will be posted to blackboard. Students are REQUIRED to bring these materials to class. You do not need to buy any books, but you should buy a small (pocket-sized) notebook for your fieldnote “jottings.” If you own a voice recorder or, if your phone allows you to record voice memos, you may want to use one of these devices for your interviews. If you do not already own a recording device, you do not need to purchase one for this class.

CLASS FORMAT

The class meets twice a week for one hour and twenty minute sessions. Most classes will be comprised of a brief recap of what was covered in the prior class, a discussion of the readings for the day, and in-class activities that allow us to apply what we have learned in the readings. During the first third of the semester, on average, you will have two readings per week. During the last two thirds of the semester, as you begin conducting your independent research projects, you will more often be assigned one reading a week and more class time will be devoted to work-shopping your data.

In the last four classes, students will share their findings from their Participant Observation and/or Interview Project in a brief, 5-minute presentation.

OFFICE HOURS

I love meeting with students in office hours! Office hours are a great opportunity for you to ask additional questions about the course, discuss your research projects in more depth, and to discuss your educational careers more generally. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours or Liz's (your Teaching Assistant), please email me to set up a different time to meet. Feel free to come to office hours in pairs or groups.

CONTACTING ME

Liz and I will be available over email if you need to contact us for any reason. You should expect to wait at least 24 hours to hear back from either of us. If you email us on Friday, or over the weekend, please do not expect a response until Monday. Please use professional language, tone, and style in your written correspondence. For example, don't use texting language. DO use standard greetings- Dear Prof. Dow/ Professor Dow.

COURSE WEBSITE

There is a Blackboard site for this course and we expect you to follow it regularly. If you are enrolled in the class, you should automatically have access to the site. Please notify us if, at any point, you cannot access the site. We will use Blackboard as a means for updating the syllabus, making announcements, collecting some assignments and posting additional readings and resources.

GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course assignments are varied and aimed towards helping you achieve the learning objectives listed above. Your final grade will be calculated according to the following charts:

**A 93-100 | A- 90-92 | B+ 88-89 | B 83-87 | B- 80-82 |
C+ 78-79 | C 73-77 | C- 70-72 | D 60-69 | F below 60**

*Please note that if you seek to contest a grade, you must **wait 48 hours** and do so in writing, explaining in specific and substantive terms why you believe your grade should be reconsidered. You must submit grade contestations within one week of the assignment being returned. Upon further review of your work, your grade may be adjusted up, down or remain the same. *

PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF GRADING

| | |
|---|------|
| Class Attendance and Participation | 10 % |
| Reading Response Papers (7 out of 11 including one for each 4 Units) | 20 % |
| Participant Observation Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Proposal (2pts) ▪ First Set of Field Notes Coded (4pts) ▪ Preliminary Analytical Memo (for in-class peer editing workshop) (4pts) ▪ Final Paper (80 pts) ▪ Complete Coded Data Portfolio (10 pts) | 30% |
| Interviewing Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Proposal (2 pts) ▪ First Interview Transcript Coded (4pts) ▪ Preliminary Analytical Memo (for in-class peer editing workshop) (4pts) ▪ Final Paper (80 pts) ▪ Complete Coded Data Portfolio (10 pts) | 30% |
| Class Presentation | 10 % |

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: _____ **Total 10%**

Your active and engaged participation in class sessions is absolutely essential! Therefore, attendance and participation will count for a total of 10% of your final grade. There are several things taken into consideration when assigning participation grades. All students are expected to be active, attentive and respectful members of the class and to participate in class discussions and activities. This means coming to class prepared, **with the readings in hand**, ready to discuss and apply the materials, and ready to share your thoughts, questions and observations about the readings. All students are expected to follow digital etiquette, described in more detail below.

Attendance is Mandatory. I will take attendance at each class. Unexcused absences will significantly impact your final grade. **Students with more than SIX unexcused absences may fail the class**

entirely. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that class. I will excuse an absence if it has been negotiated with me in advance and is verified by legitimate sources. This does not mean emailing me right before class to inform me you will not be coming to class. Whenever you miss a class, and for whatever reason, it is YOUR responsibility to catch up on the material that we covered. I encourage you to consider exchanging email addresses with at least two other classmates that you can turn to in the case of an absence.

Name_____

Name_____

ASSIGNMENTS

RESPONSE PAPERS (7 of 11)

TOTAL 20%

Over the semester, we will read 11 examples of empirical research using qualitative research methods. You must turn in Response Papers for 7 of the 11 eligible readings (**designated by RR1-RR11**). You also must include a Response Paper for at least one reading from each of the 4 class units. The purpose of Response Papers is to expose you to a range of research projects using qualitative methods and to get you to think about how they may or may not relate to your own research interest. These assignments are also meant to encourage you to read the course materials. With that in mind, if I find that students are not keeping up with the course readings, I reserve the right to administer pop quizzes.

Your Response Papers can be no longer than one double-spaced page written in 12pt Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Longer responses will be returned to be edited down to fit the page limit and may incur grade penalties. Response Papers should contain the following three parts:

- 1) A concise summary of the main point(s) and methods of the reading. (1 paragraph) Ex: Annette Lareau studied how parents reproduced their class status.... She did this using interviews and participant observation. She found that middle class parents used x approach and working class parents used y approach.
- 2) A brief response to the article. (1 paragraph) Here you might comment on something you found interesting or that you learned from the reading. You might also comment on how this reading will influence or inform your research project or how it connects to some aspect of your personal experience.
- 3) A description of any questions about the reading or something you would like discussed in class. (1 paragraph)

RESPONSE PAPER GRADING

| | | | | |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ✓+ = 95 (A) | ✓+ / ✓ = 90 (A-) | ✓ = 88 (B+) | ✓ / ✓- = 85 (B) | ✓- = 80 (B-) |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|

LATE RESPONSE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. IF YOU DO NOT COMPLETE A RESPONSE PAPER FOR EACH UNIT YOUR OVERALL RESPONSE PAPER GRADE WILL BE PENALIZED BY 1/3 A LETTER GRADE.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

This semester you will conduct two independent research assignments: one using participant observation and one using interviewing. I have spaced the components of these assignments out over the semester so that you can get feedback from us and from your peers during in-class workshops. It is impossible to cram this work into a weekend or pull a dreaded all-nighter at the last minute. Some of our class sessions will be conducted as work sessions where you will swap your newly collected data and discuss it with each other. We will also engage in other small assignments and in class activities to build your qualitative tool kit. We will grade this work on both process (your research proposal and collecting and analyzing data) and product (your presentation of the research in two papers and one presentation).

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION PAPER PROJECT**TOTAL 30%**

The purpose of this assignment is to give you hands on experience doing participant observation. You will choose one setting (or type of setting) where you can conduct 3 sessions of observations and/or participant observations. Prior to going out into the field you will submit a research proposal describing the setting you will visit and why you are interested in that setting. You will also describe how you will gain access and your role in that setting (participant and/or observer). Each session should be 1 to 1.5 hours long during which you will record a detailed description of what occurred in fieldnotes. We will discuss these notes in class activities so it is important that you bring them to class on the relevant dates listed on the syllabus. These notes will be the data you analyze to write your paper so it is extremely important that you take the necessary time to write them. You should expect to write between **3-5 single spaced pages** of notes per session.

INTERVIEW PAPER PROJECT**TOTAL 30%**

The purpose of this assignment is to give you hands on experience doing interviews. You will interview two adults (age 18 or older) with the aim of answering a research question of your choosing. Each interview should last a minimum of 15 minutes. Prior to conducting your interviews, you will submit a research proposal describing your research question, method(s), description of potential interview participants, and a preliminary description of your interview questions. This project may be related to your participant observation project or may be something different. These interviews must be conducted in person, over the telephone or via video like Skype. **They cannot be conducted over email.** You should expect to write a **5-10 page single spaced** transcript for each 15-minute interview that you conduct. These transcripts will be the data you analyze to write your paper so it is extremely important that they are comprehensive and detailed.

PAPER FORMATTING: Both of these papers should be 5-7 double-spaced pages, written in 12pt. Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins.

PAPER SUBMITTING: You must upload your final papers to Turnitin **AND** bring a hard copy to class (or the drop off location) containing your complete coded data portfolio.

LATE PAPERS: Will be penalized one full letter grade each day late. After three days, late papers will not be accepted. The late penalty begins 15 minutes after the class has begun.

RESEARCH PRESENTATION**TOTAL 10%**

On the last four days of class, you will briefly present the findings from one, or both (if related), of your independent research projects in a 5-minute presentation. This presentation will include a description of your research question, the method(s) you used, and the analysis of your findings.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR DUE DATES
(EXCEPT RESPONSE PAPERS AND FINAL PRESENTATIONS)

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Sept. 11 | Participant Observation Project Proposal |
| Sept. 25 | First Set of Field Notes- Bring two copies to class. |
| Oct. 9 | Participant Observation Analytical Memo |
| Oct. 21 | P.O. Final Paper (with Complete Coded Data Portfolio) |
| Oct. 28 | Interview Paper Project Proposal |
| Nov. 6 | First Interview Transcript |
| Nov. 18 | Interview Analytical Memo |
| Dec. 5 | Interview Final Paper (with Complete Coded Data Portfolio) |

LATE PROJECT PROPOSALS, FIELD NOTES, TRANSCRIPTS AND ANALYTICAL MEMOS WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT. IF TIME PERMITS, WE WILL GIVE YOU FEEDBACK.

COURSE POLICIES

ACCOMMODATIONS

Our community values diversity and seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Syracuse University is committed to your success and to supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This means that no individual who is otherwise qualified shall be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activities solely by reason of having a disability. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), located at 804 University Avenue, Room 309, or call 315-443-4498. The ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities "Accommodation Authorization Letters," as appropriate, which you should then give to me. Accommodations are not provided retroactively; therefore, you must plan for accommodations as early as possible. For more information, see: <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions will result from academic dishonesty of any sort; students found to have plagiarized will receive an F for the course and be reported to the Dean. For more information and the complete policy, see: <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Syracuse University recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For spring semester, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class. For more information, see: http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm.

DIGITAL ETIQUETTE

To prevent undue distraction and to encourage a participatory and respectful classroom environment, the use of cell phones, laptop computers or PDAs is not permitted in class, unless required as an accommodation. If you use any type of electronic device in class, your participation grade will be lowered 1/3 a letter grade for each occurrence. Students who use such devices may also be asked to leave class and be marked absent.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

I have outlined the course readings in this syllabus prior to the beginning of the term but I reserve the right to modify the syllabus if the need arises. I also encourage your feedback, so please let me know if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions. Please note all readings should be completed by the date listed.

UNIT ONE

Week One

Why do Qualitative Research?

Our goal for the first unit is to have several brief introductions. We will be introduced to each other. We'll be working together throughout the semester in large and small groups so it is extremely important that we get to know one another. I will also give you an introduction to the course by providing an overview of the course goals and the course assignments. We will be introduced to the idea of being a sociological detective. We will also be introduced to why we do qualitative research and different kinds of qualitative research methods.

Aug 26: Introduction

Course Overview. Ice Breaker. Becoming Sociological Detectives. Examining the taken for granted.

Aug 28: Giving Voice and Questioning Objectivity

Sandra Harding. 1998. Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political, Philosophic, and Scientific Debate in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*.

Week Two

What are different types of Qualitative Research?

- Sept 2: Participant Observation/ Ethnography**
Elijah Anderson. 2004. "The Cosmopolitan Canopy." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 595. 14-31. **RR1**
- Sept 4: Interviews**
Jessica Vasquez. 2010. Blurred Borders for some but not "Others": Racialization, "Flexible Ethnicity," Gender, and Third-Generation Mexican American Identity. *Sociological Perspectives*. Vol. 53. 1 45-72 **RR2**

Week Three

What are different types of Qualitative Research?

- Sept 9:** Robert Emerson et al., 1995. Chapter Two, "In the Field: Participation, Observation and Jotting Notes," pp. 17-38 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sept 11: DUE: One Paragraph Proposal Describing Your Setting. Content Analysis**
Kelley Massoni. 2004. Modeling Work: Occupational Messages in Seventeen Magazine. *Gender & Society*. Vol 18. 1 47-65 (Content Analysis.) **RR3**

UNIT TWO

Week Four

How Do We Conduct Ethical Research?

In this unit, we will examine the ethical issues that social scientists confront when doing research. We must consider how our research may harm others emotionally, physically, professionally, or otherwise. We also must consider issues related to obtaining informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. We consider these issues by examining examples of research in which ethical standards were questioned.

****NOTE: You must do one of the two below readings as a reading response****

- Sept 16: Do No Harm and Informed Consent**
Allan M Brandt. "Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study." Pp. 64-77 in *Readings for Sociology*, Garth Massey, ed. New York: Norton. **RR4**
- Sept 18: Institutional Review Boards. Privacy and Confidentiality**
John Van Maanen. 1983. The moral fix: On the Ethics of Fieldwork. In *Contemporary Field Research* 269-287. **RR5**

UNIT THREE

Week Five

How Do We Conduct Participant Observation?: Gaining Access

In this unit, you will learn about participant observation and will engage in an independent research project of your choosing. We will discuss issues of gaining access to places to observe, the role you plan to take during your observations, the mechanics of taking notes and analyzing your data, and how your background might impact your data.

Sept 23: Judith Rollins. 1987. Chapter One, "Introduction," in *Between Women: Domesticity and Their Employers*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. **RR6**

Sept 25: **First set of field notes due in class. Bring in two copies for in-class workshop**
Re-read Robert Emerson et al., 1995. Chapter Two, "In the Field: Participation, Observation and Jotting Notes," pp. 17-38 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week Six:

How Do We Conduct Participant Observation?: Taking Notes

Sept 30: Erving Goffman. 1989. "On Fieldwork." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18(2): 123-132

Oct 2: **How we impact our data.**
Patricia Adler and Peter Adler. 2003. "The promise and pitfalls of going into the field." *Context* 2:2

Week Seven:

How Do We Conduct Participant Observation?: Analyzing Our Data

Oct 7: **Using our data to create theories or maps of the social world.**
Kathy Charmaz. 1988. The grounded theory method: 109-126 in Robert Emerson (Ed) *Contemporary Field Research*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Oct 9: **Preliminary Analytical Memo Due.**
In-class peer-editing workshop.

Week Eight:

How Do We Conduct Participant Observation?: Writing up our Findings.

Oct 14: Nina Eliasoph. 1999. "'Everyday Racism' in a Culture of Political Avoidance: Civil Society, Speech and Taboo," *Social Problems*, 46: 4. 479-502. **RR7**

Oct 16: Bettie, Julie. 2002. "Exceptions to the Rule: Upwardly Mobile White and Mexican American High School Girls." *Gender & Society*. 16:3 403-422. **RR8**

UNIT FOUR

Week Nine

How Do We Do Interviews?: Designing a Research Project

In this unit, you will learn about conducting interviews. You will engage in a second independent research project of your choosing for which you will interview two people. This project may build on your participant observation project or can be something completely different. You will learn about different types of sampling often used for interview based research and how to move a research interest to a research question. We will discuss issues related to finding participants, obtaining informed consent, collecting and analyzing data, and writing up your findings. You will also be exposed to various examples of research using interviews as the primary data source. As you read these examples, you should how they might inform your own research and the kinds of data used to support the author's analysis.

- Oct 21: Participant Observation Paper Due (NO READING)**
Introduction to Interviewing. Issues of Sampling. From Research Topic to Question.
- Oct 23: From Research Topic to Question. Finding Participants. Informed Consent.**
Lynet Uttal. 1996. Custodial Care, Surrogate Care and Coordinated Care: Employed Mothers and The Meaning of Childcare. *Gender & Society* 10:3. **RR9**

Week Ten

How Do We Do Interviews?: Data Collection/Creating Questions

- Oct 28: Interview Proposal Due. (NO READING)**
Creating an Interview Guide. Common Mistakes when Formulating Questions.
Paying Attention to Silence, Body Language, Laughter, and Sighs.
- Oct 30:** Amy Schalet. 2000. Raging Hormones, Regulated Love. *Body & Society* 6:1 **RR10**

Week Eleven

How Do We Do Interviews?/Analyzing Our Data

- Nov 4: Developing Rapport, Interviewing Across Difference. Listening to People.**
Marjorie DeVault. 1995. Ethnicity and Expertise: Racial-Ethnic Knowledge in Sociological Research. *Gender & Society*. 9:5
- Nov 6: First Interview transcript due. Bring in two copies of one transcript.**
Robert Weiss. 2004. In their own words: making the most of qualitative interviews. *Contexts*. 3:4

Week Twelve

Analyzing our data: Moving from specifics to generalizations and reviewing the literature

Nov 11: Conducting a Review of the Literature (NO READING)

Nov 13: Dana Berkowitz and William Marsiglio. 2007. Gay Men: Negotiating Procreative, Father, and Family Identities. Journal of Marriage and Family. **RR11**

Week Thirteen

How Do We Do Interviews

Nov 18: Preliminary Analytical Memo Due. Presentations Begin (NO READING)
In-class peer-editing workshop.
Present Findings from Projects (P.O., Interviewing or Both)

Nov 20: Presentations Continue
Present Findings from Projects (P.O., Interviewing or Both)

THANKSGIVING BREAK- NO CLASSES
WEEK FOURTEEN
NOVEMBER 23-30

Week Fifteen

Dec 2: Presentations Continue
Present Findings from Projects (P.O., Interviewing or Both)

Dec 4: Presentations Continue
Present Findings from Projects (P.O., Interviewing or Both)

Dec 5: DUE: Final Paper due by 1:00pm. Hard copy submitted to me at 319 Maxwell **AND** via Turnitin.

READING GUIDE

The following questions are a guide for you as you do your readings for the class. Not every question, however, will apply to every reading on the syllabus.

1. What appears to be the central question or concern guiding this researcher's analysis? (If the paper is not an empirical study (based on data that is being analyzed), this may be the only question for you to consider.)
2. What are the sources of data? What alternative or additional sources of data might have been useful?
3. How would you characterize the relationship between the researcher and the social actors in the research setting? Is this discussed in the article? How might this relationship impact their data?
4. What ethical issues might this researcher have had to address?
5. How does the researcher connect the data presented to her findings?
6. What concepts does the researcher use to summarize her findings?
7. How does this research inform your individual research projects?