

# **SOCIOLOGY 824 - Qualitative Research Methods**

## **Spring 2009**

**Professor: Dana Britton**  
**Office: Waters 213**  
**Office hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 12:30 - 2:00**  
**and by appointment**  
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This aim of this course is to teach you how to conduct qualitative research in the social sciences. The course outlines major sociological debates about qualitative methods and explores issues of theory and types of methodologies. The primary emphasis, however, is on a hands-on approach. The objectives of this course are (1) to examine the philosophy and epistemology of qualitative methods, (2) to understand various approaches to qualitative research, (3) to develop the skills to design a qualitative research project, to gather and analyze qualitative data, and to write up qualitative findings.

### **COURSE FORMAT**

Sessions in this course will usually be divided into two parts. Part of the course will be conducted as a seminar - members discuss assigned reading materials. Each session will also include a task component. Class members will review and comment on all stages of classmates' research in progress.

### **REQUIRED READINGS AND COURSE MATERIALS**

Books/readings for this course fall into two categories - methodological guides and exemplars. In the former category are three texts (two required, one recommended) and some additional readings devoted to helping you learn the process of qualitative research. In the latter are pieces of research that illustrate the various approaches we will discuss.

#### **Books**

- Esterberg, Kristen. 2002. *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 0767415604
- Daniels, Jessie. 1995. *White Lies: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in White Supremacist Discourse*. New York: Routledge. 0415912903
- Weiss, Robert Stuart. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press. 0684823128
- Williams, Christine. 2006. *Inside Toyland: Working, Shopping, and Social Inequality*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 0520247175

#### **Recommended (not ordered from bookstore):**

- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 0226206815
- Becker, Howard. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 0226041085

Additional readings, listed below - - note well, the article assignments may change. I will always stay at least two weeks ahead (e.g., the readings for 2/15 will be final no later than 2/1), and I will not increase the number of readings. Reading assignments from the books are final as listed below.

**Course materials:** You must have access to a tape recorder (micro or standard size) or a digital recorder. We will discuss the pros and cons of different kinds of equipment during the first class session. No videorecording for the purposes of this course. I do not want to deal with the IRB complications in a group this large.

## **Course Requirements**

Final project: You will be required to collect and analyze three in-depth interviews and write a research report. Your project must have my approval as well as the approval of the university's IRB. You will write and turn in a letter of intent, which is due by February 4th. Human subjects materials (which include a research proposal, interview schedule, and informed consent form) will be completed and submitted by February 18<sup>th</sup>. Topics cannot be changed after this point. See other deadlines below. The final report will be approximately fifteen pages long and will comprise 50% of your course grade. This paper is due and will be presented during the last two sessions of the course. Late papers lose one letter grade for each day they are late. Components of the project will constitute 30% of your grade. See below for more specifics.

Seminar contribution: Attendance and quality of contribution to discussions will constitute 20% of your course grade. High quality discussion contributions indicate to me that the seminar participant has read, considered, and critiqued the weekly readings. Tangible evidence of this will be provided by weekly discussion questions, which must be submitted by 5:00 P.M. on the Wednesday preceding the seminar, in-class discussions, a brief presentation on April 29th (more on this in class), and the final presentation of your research report.

Human subjects review (training and application): Anyone who conducts research with human subjects must complete online training and get approval for their projects from the KSU Institutional Review Board (see <http://www.ksu.edu/research/human/index.htm>). You must complete the online training by 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, January 27th. To access the modules, you will need a username and password which will be provided in class. If you have completed this training within the last three years you are not required to do so again. After you complete the training you will submit IRB review materials. We will discuss drafts of these materials in class.

### **Grade summary:**

Final research report - 50% - 100 points

Research report components – 30% - 60 points

    Letter of intent – 10 points

    IRB materials – 25 points

    Coding tree – 10 points

    Methodology section – 15 points

Seminar contribution - 20% - 40 points

The standard scale will be used for the purposes of assigning final grades.

## CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

**January 21** - Review syllabus, course requirements and expectations

Task session: How to do IRB training

IRB Training must be completed by 5 PM on January 27

**January 28** - Epistemology in qualitative/quantitative research

Esterberg: Pp. 1-13 and chapter 2, and Weiss, Chapter 1

Goffman, Erving. 1989. On Fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18:123-132. K-State Online

Brunt, Lodewijk. 1999. Thinking About Ethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28: 500-509. KSOL

Lieberson, Stanley. 1985. Introduction and Further Suggestions. Pp. 3-13 and 218-235 in *Making it Count: The Improvement of Social Research and Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press. K-State Online

Task session: Issues raised by IRB training

**February 4** – Unique issues and dilemmas in qualitative research

Weiss, Chapter 5

Blee, Kathleen. 1998. White-Knuckle Research: Emotional Dynamics in Fieldwork with Racist Activists. *Qualitative Sociology* 381-400. Kluwer Online

McCorkel, Jill A. and Kristen Myers. 2003. What Difference Does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field. *Qualitative Sociology* 26(2): 199-231. Kluwer Online

Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "You Still Takin' Notes? Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent. *Social Problems* 27 (3) 284-297. JSTOR

Tolich, Martin. 2004. Internal Confidentiality: When Confidentiality Assurances Fail Relational Informants. *Qualitative Sociology* 27(1): 101-106. Kluwer Online

Ortiz, Steven M. 2004. Leaving the Private World of Wives of Professional Athletes: A Male Sociologist's Reflections. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 33: 466 - 487. KSOL.

Task session: Discuss letters of intent, IRB procedure

Letter of intent due

**February 11** - CANCELLED for German conference

Read and respond to Weiss, Chapters 2, 3 and 4

**February 18** - Ethical and political issues

Esterberg: Chapter 3 and Appendix A

Weiss, Appendices C and D

Zussman, Robert. 2002. Editor's Introduction: Sex in Research. *Qualitative Sociology* 25(4): 473-477. Kluwer Online.

Goode, Erich. 2002. Sexual Involvement and Social Research in a Fat Civil Rights Organization. *Qualitative Sociology* 25(4): 501-534. Read responses following this article by Bell, Manning, Saguy and Williams. Kluwer Online

Hessler, Richard M. et al. 2003. Qualitative Research on Adolescent Risk Using E-Mail: A Methodological Assessment. *Qualitative Sociology* 26 (1): 111-124. Kluwer Online

Stacey, Judith. 1988. Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography? *Women=s Studies International Forum* 11(1): 21-27. K-State Online

Guillemin, Marilys and Lynn Gillam. 2004. Ethics, Reflexivity, and "Ethically Important Moments" in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 10: 261 - 280. Highwire.

Task session: final review of IRB materials  
IRB materials must be submitted  
Begin NVIVO tutorial

**February 25** – Guest speaker: Doing field research in an international context

Readings TBA - I will keep you posted on whether this class will happen.

Additional resource - Grounded theory: A thumbnail sketch.  
<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html>

**March 4** - Interviewing

Esterberg, Chapter 5

Schilt, Kristen. 2006. Just One of the Guys?: How Transmen Make Gender Visible at Work. *Gender & Society* 20: 465 - 490.

Dellinger, Kirsten and Christine Williams. 2002. The Locker Room and the Dorm Room: Workplace Norms and the Boundaries of Sexual Harassment in Magazine Editing *Social Problems* 49(2): pp. 242-257.

JSTOR Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7791%28200205%2949%3A2%3C242%3ATLRATD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-3>

Britton, Dana M. 1999. Cat fights and gang fights: Preference for work in a male-dominated organization. *The Sociological Quarterly* 40(3): 455-474. KSOL

Read, Jen'nan Ghazal and John Bartkowski. 2000. To Veil or Not to Veil?: A Case Study of Identity Negotiation among Muslim Women in Austin, Texas. *Gender & Society*, 14: 395 - 417.

Hollander, Jocelyn A. 2004. The Social Contexts of Focus Groups. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 33: 602 - 637.

Revised interview schedule due  
Task session: mock interviews/critiques (I)

**March 11** - Participant and non-participant observation/Ethnography  
Esterberg, Chapter 4

Kang, Miliann. 2003. The Managed Hand: The Commercialization of Bodies and Emotions in Korean Immigrant–Owned Nail Salons. *Gender & Society* 17: 820 - 839.

Williams, Christine. 2006. *Inside Toyland: Working, Shopping, and Social Inequality*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 0520247175

Task session: mock interviews/critiques (II)

**March 25** - Unobtrusive methods  
Esterberg, Chapter 6

Daniels, Jessie. 1997. *White Lies: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in White Supremacist Discourse*. New York: Routledge.

Interviews and transcribing begin (assumes IRB approval)

Task session: Transcribing, downloading and using Express Scribe

**April 1** – CANCELLED: MSS

**April 8** - Race and gender in qualitative research

Merton, Robert. 1972. Insiders and outsiders: A chapter in the sociology of knowledge. *American Journal of Sociology* 78(1): 9-47.

De Andrade, Lelia Lomba. 2000. Negotiating from the Inside: Constructing Racial and Ethnic Identity in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 29: 268 - 290.

Riessman, Catherine. 1987. When gender is not enough: Women interviewing women. *Gender & Society* 1(2): 172-207.

Arendell, Terry. 1997. Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: A Woman Interviewing Men. *Qualitative Sociology* 20 (3): 341-368.

Lareau, Annette. 2000. My Wife Can Tell Me Who I Know: Methodological and Conceptual Problems in Studying Fathers. *Qualitative Sociology* 23 (4): 407-433.

Data analysis begins

Task session: Intro to NVIVO  
Complete tutorial, all interviews into NVIVO before next class session

**April 15** – Analysis and interpretation

Esterberg, Chapter 8

Weiss, Chapter 6, Appendix E

Wolcott, Harry F. 1994. *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapter 2. K State Online

Cherukuri, Suvarna, Dana M. Britton and Mangala Subramaniam. 2009. Women in an Indian State Prison: Intersections of Gender, Caste and Class. *Feminist Criminology* (forthcoming).

Task session: More on NVIVO

**April 22** - Action research

Esterberg, Chapter 7

Detardo-Bora, Kimberly A. 2004. Action Research in a World of Positivist-Oriented Review Boards. *Action Research* 2:237 - 253.

Morgan, D.L. 1996. Focus Groups. *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 129-153.

Chiu, Lai Fong. 2003. Transformational Potential of Focus Group Practice in Participatory **Action** Research. *Action Research* 1:165 - 183.

Whyte, William Foote. 1995. Encounters with participatory action research. *Qualitative Sociology* 18: 289-299.

Task session: Coding critique - bring interview transcripts and index trees

**April 29** - Doing exemplary research

Seminar participants will bring in ONE empirical book, book chapter, or article in their field that uses qualitative methodology and that they see as an exemplary piece of research. Students will be prepared to discuss the substance of the piece, as well as its strengths and weaknesses.

Esterberg, Chapter 9

Marshall, Catharine and Gretchen B. Rossman. 1999. *Designing Qualitative Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Chapter 7). K-State Online

Presentations of exemplary research

Task session: refining coding, advanced analysis techniques

**May 6** - Professional issues - Defending a qualitative proposal and publishing

Esterberg, Chapter 10

Weiss, Chapter 7

Richardson, Laurel. 1994. Writing: A method of inquiry. Pp. 516-529 in Denzin, Norman and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. K-State Online.

Golden-Biddle, Karen and Karen D. Locke. 1997. *Composing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Excerpt). K-State Online.

Task session: critiquing methods sections  
Methodology sections due

**May 13**– Presentations – papers due