

QUALITATIVE METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY

Sociology 319 / WGS 317

Spring 2010

Jan 19- May 4

TTH 3:30-4:50

Crouse-Hinds Hall 017

Prof. Alecea Standlee

Office: 321 Maxwell Hall,

Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

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This course provides an introduction to qualitative research methods. It is organized as a team research project. We will all work together collecting qualitative data and deciding how to analyze it. Our readings will be concerned with the basic procedures of participant observation and interviewing, the concepts underlying qualitative analysis, and the theoretical, ethical, and practical issues that arise while conducting qualitative social research. However, you will learn mostly by doing research. At the end of the semester, each of you will write an analytic paper, based on data drawn from the pool of observations and interviews we have produced together.

Qualitative research is labor-intensive and it can be surprisingly time-consuming. It can also be fascinating and richly rewarding, on both intellectual and personal levels. Working in a team is also challenging, but a wonderful experience if everyone pitches in and brings enthusiasm and good humor to the team. So be prepared to work hard and to have some fun!

Course Objectives

Sociology 319 is designed to give you an introduction to some of the research skills used by professional sociologists. These skills are also extremely useful for anyone, and they can be applied in many other jobs. The course should also help you understand and interpret the results of social scientific research, since you will have an "insider's" understanding of where data and findings come from. You will learn:

- to observe carefully and systematically
- to conduct an interview
- to record and organize data
- to think inductively
- to present your analysis in a clearly-written report

These are skills you can use almost anywhere (and skills you can "sell" to potential employers).

Required Text

Esterberg, Kristin. 2002. *Qualitative Methods in Social Research* New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing.

Articles will be available on Blackboard

Course Requirements

Your *active* participation in class sessions and project work is *essential*. “Participation” will sometimes involve short, informal writing assignments, which may be completed in class or assigned as homework. They will not be graded, however if they are not completed it will count against your grade

The majority of your grade will be based on the work you do on several kinds of data production assignments. I will grade these assignments on both process (your effort and commitment to the task) and product (the quality of the data you produce).

The final assignment for the course will be the analytic research report (6-10 pages) you will prepare as your final course paper. I will give further instructions about each part of your work.

We will begin with some individual work and then divide the class into groups that will focus on particular areas or topics; each group will plan their data collection collaboratively (in class) and then work individually or in pairs to conduct research focused on their area or topic.

Summary of grading system:

- Attendance and Participation 20 pts
 - Includes in class activities and discussion
- Data production activities: 10 pts
 - Observation: Warm-up exercise
 - Open-ended interview
- Data contributed to your group’s investigation:
 - Research plan 10 pts
 - Data portfolio 40 pts
 - 3-5 sets of fieldnotes
 - 2-3 Memos
- Final (analytic) paper 20pts

Your data portfolio will contain 3-4 sets of fieldnotes, as outlined in your research plan. You should turn in notes as you complete them; we will read and comment, and you should revise the notes before you hand in your portfolio.

We will take attendance at each class; more than two unexcused absences will affect your grade. If you are seriously ill or have an important and unavoidable conflict, your absence will be excused; please email me BEFORE class.

All of the data collected will be made available, (with the permission of interviewee’s) to the group. **Therefore, please turn in a digital copy of all assignments before 5pm Friday of the week that it is due in class.**

Policy Notes:

- ◆ The professor reserves the right to change the syllabus and assignments. Changes may be made to accommodate the specific needs of the class.

- ◆ High standards of academic integrity are valued and required by both the university and myself. **Plagiarism, intended or unintended, will not be tolerated.** A student caught plagiarizing will face serious consequences. The infraction will be reported to the Academic Integrity Committee and the student will receive an F on the assignment.
 - When producing written assignments and the final research paper, citations, proper use of quotation marks and paraphrasing, along with a bibliography are requisite. For guidance see me or go to the Writing Center at <http://wrt.syr.edu/wc/wcintro.html> or visit HBC 101.
 - Online sources must be cited properly and use carefully. See me if you have questions.

- ◆ **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For more information, see Office of Disability Services, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>

- ◆ Readings listed for each day of class in the course schedule are to have been read **prior** to coming to that day's class.

- ◆ Student athletes need to submit permission forms signed by a coach in advance to be excused from class and are responsible for making up missing assignments and readings.

- ◆ Classroom conduct: This course is heavily reliant on discussion, which includes difficult dialogue at times. **This is an inclusive and safe classroom.** All discussion points, opinions, and questions are valued; as such students are expected to treat one another and the professor thoughtfully and with respect. Pejorative or discriminatory language will not be tolerated and students who insist on such behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.

- ◆ Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off before coming to class. **Please do not text message or work on your laptops during class!**

Course Schedule

Jan 19 - Course Introduction

Jan 21- “The Body Ritual of the Nacimera”

Jan 26- Esterberg Chapter 1 “What is Social Research? “

Jan 28- Workshop: Introduction the Participant Observation Activity and Discussion

Feb 2- Esterberg Chapter 4 “Observation: Participant and Otherwise

Feb 4- Workshop: How do I know what to look for? Discussion and Comparison.

Fieldnotes Due in Class (Please Bring Two Copies)

Feb 9- Esterberg Chapter 3 “Ethical Issues

Feb11- Workshop: Identifying and Thinking about Ethics

Feb 16- Esterberg Chapter 5 “Interviews”

Feb 18- Workshop: Practicing Interviews in Class

Feb 23- Esterberg Chapter 9 Narrative Analysis

Feb 25- Workshop: Understanding we tell Stories?

Interview Due in Class (Please Bring Two Copies)

Mar 2- Esterberg Chapter 2 “Strategies for Beginning Research”

Mar 4- Workshop: What is your plan?

Research Plan Due

March 9- Blackboard: Read “Jelly’s Place”

Mar 11- Workshop: In class meeting and group planning session

March 14-21 Spring Break

Mar 23- Esterberg Chapter 7 “Action Research”

Mar 25- Workshop: Impact Statement.

Mar 30- Esterberg Chapter 6 “Unobtrusive Measures”

Apr 1- Workshop: Analyzing existing Data

(Please bring 2-3 sets of notes from the data pool that are relevant to you)

Apr 6- Esterberg Chapter 8 Making Sense of Data

Apr 8- Workshop: Analysis and coding of Your data

(Please bring 1-2 sets of your own data to class)

Apr 13- Blackboard “Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes: Memoing and Coding”

Apr 15- Workshop: Memoing and Thinking about your Data.

Apr 20- Esterberg Chapter 10 “Writing about Research”

Apr 22- Workshop: Writing and Outlining

(Portfolio Due)

Apr 27- Presentations

Apr. 29- Presentations

May 4- Last Day of classes (No Meeting)

(Final Paper Due by 5pm)