

Qualitative Research Methods
SOCL 7213
Spring 2018
Tuesday 1:30-4:20

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Course Description:

The goal of this seminar is to expand and refine your methodological imagination and skills by familiarizing you with a set of methodological strategies and techniques that are broadly defined as qualitative. **This is not a seminar where we will debate the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative versus quantitative methodologies and analysis.** We will be focusing on methods that are employed for the purpose of generating and analyzing data that are not normally tapped by or amenable to survey research, demographic techniques, or experimental procedures. Many of these methodologies require researchers to spend time in the social reality that is constantly being constructed, negotiated and contested by those who participate in it. As qualitative researchers, we will observe, listen to, read, and analyze the behaviors, activities, discourses, and productions of social actors. This course will focus on how to conduct sociological research by attending to words, practices, interactions, discourses, explanations, emotions and identities. We will examine how these micro level phenomena intersect with social structure and larger cultural meanings and institutions.

In this seminar, you will learn the process of qualitative data collection and analysis. However, this is not simply a *how-to* course, as qualitative research is intimately connected to and driven by theory. This course is very theoretically oriented and many readings are quite dense. This is because methodological questions are secondary to questions of paradigm. Paradigm is (generally speaking) a worldview that guides the researcher not only methodologically, but also ontologically and epistemologically.

Because I am the author of this course, it is only fair that I identify my paradigmatic orientations from the start and *locate myself* within the construction of the course. Broadly speaking, I am a social constructionist who is heavily influenced by feminist and poststructuralist scholarship, theories, and methods. I view reality as mutually constructed between researcher and participant. There is not one single truth or reality; rather, there are multiple realities with differing material consequences based on one's social location. Throughout my own research and this course, I pay particular attention to notions of reflexivity, power, subjectivity, representation, responsibility, and praxis. Substantively, I am a sociologist interested in gender, sexuality, bodies, and embodiment and the methodological examples I highlight throughout the seminar reflect my interests.

Qualitative research encompasses a diverse, complex, and messy patchwork of theories and methodologies and I look forward to guiding you through this exciting learning

process. The course will rely heavily on student contribution and feedback. You will both become researchers and reviewers of each other's research.

Practically, you should plan on spending at least 10 hours a week on the class (not including actual class-time). You should expect to spend about 1-2 hours of field-note taking for each hour of fieldwork, and about one hour of transcription per 10 minutes of taped interview. Finding good sources for content analysis can also take a good deal of time and energy. *If you don't think you can spend this amount of time on the class, please don't take it.*

Course Objectives:

1. Provide students with a critical appreciation for the qualitative tradition in sociology
2. Acquaint students with a diversity of qualitative methods and associated theoretical, ethical, and pragmatic issues
3. Instruct students on how to conduct qualitative research that is descriptively rich, theoretically illuminating, and ultimately publishable.

Course Organization:

We will begin by learning the practices and paradigms of qualitative research. Next, we will examine ethical issues related to qualitative research, including an exploration of how to locate oneself, as a researcher, within the research project. Third, we will dive into hands-on data collection, beginning with participant observation / ethnography, then interviews, and then content analysis. Throughout the weeks of data collection, we will simultaneously engage in the iterative process of qualitative data analysis, using a grounded theory approach. The course will commence with each student presenting and submitting a final project, which will in most cases be a formal research proposal that includes preliminary findings and analyses.

Required Course Materials

1. Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Leavy, Patricia. 2017. *The Practice of Qualitative Research (3rd edition)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
2. Charmaz, K. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
3. Atkinson, Paul. 2017. *Thinking Ethnographically*. Sage Publications
4. Holstein, James A. & Gubrium Jaber, F. 1995. *The Active Interview*. Qualitative Research Methods Series 37. Thousand Oaks, CA Sage.
5. A selection of articles and book chapters are available electronically. These are designated in the reading schedule by (E) electronic and (M) Moodle.

MY POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF GRADUTE STUDENTS:

1. I never discuss grades over e-mail. If you want to discuss your performance in this course, I am more than happy to set up an in-person meeting or a telephone meeting if you are not able to make it to my office hours.
2. I will not tolerate tardiness, multiple absences, or for lack of a better term, slacking off. If I see that you are not keeping up with readings or engaging critically in class discussion your final grade will suffer.
3. I am very laid back but have extremely high expectations. I promise that we will have fun in this course if you simply try your absolute best to engage the material and learn from both myself and from your fellow colleagues.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

The following assignments are designed to facilitate your mastery of qualitative research methods. Please note, below are only brief descriptions of the expectations for the assignments of the course. Further details will be provided in class. In general all participants in this seminar will be expected to attend class, read all assigned material, participate in and lead discussions, and complete assigned writing assignments and presentations. Specific assignments are as follows:

Student Responsibilities and Grading

In Brief:

Discussion Leader	25%
Overall Class Participation	25%
Qualitative Research Project	50%
Total	100%

Discussion Leader (25 %)

You will be responsible for 1-2 discussion facilitations during the course of the semester, depending on the preferences of everyone in the course (we will take a vote on the first day). When it is your turn to be a discussion leader, I expect that you will spend sufficient time organizing your in-class facilitation. You should do several things to prepare for your assigned weeks:

Write critical response paper between 2-5 pages that critically discusses (NOT SUMMARIZES) the readings. **For empirical studies** think about the strengths and weaknesses of the research design. How does the researcher integrate themselves within their research? Are there ethical issues? Does it generate theory? For **methodological/theoretical writings**, think about if you were to use this method/theory/analysis; what would be some concerns? How does it advance understanding of the topic? Has this reading strengthened your ability to measure theoretical concepts? Be able to discuss (NOT READ) your critical response paper in class.

Develop approximately 5-10 thought provoking questions for the class to discuss based on the readings for the week. You must provide the other students in the class and me with a copy of these questions via e-mail 24 hours prior to class. Having these questions in hand two days in advance is **ESSENTIAL** and should improve the quality of the class discussions as well (Please Plan Ahead!). You should be prepared to share your insights to the questions you develop.

Purpose: To provide you with opportunities to process the material and develop your ability to critique the readings. This procedure will: ensure that you take a pro-active role in the class, encourage you to discover materials relevant to the course that are not part of the assigned readings, and facilitate group discussion. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you will be challenged to develop your writing skills and public speaking abilities in a friendly environment. These talents are essential to your career development.

Overall Class Participation (25%)

I expect you to come prepared to all classes including those in which you are not the discussion leader. This means that you should read all of the material and think about the discussion questions that will be distributed prior to each seminar. From my perspective, the quality of your comments and questions is as important or more so than the number of times you speak. Your overall class participation also includes your class attendance. This course is organized to foster a group-learning environment. For this reason, your absence not only hampers your ability to participate in class discussion but also precludes you from offering other students in the class insightful commentary that you may have offered if you had shown up to class.

To receive an “A” in participation, I do not expect you to demonstrate full understanding of the week’s readings, but I expect you to demonstrate that you have read closely, identified what you do and do not understand, and are able to discuss how the reading for the week relates to other readings we have read class. **In order to insure this, you are expected to come to class every day with a paragraph (approximately 5 sentences) that you may or may not be asked to read aloud in class detailing the main points of what you read for the week, your interpretation of the author’s arguments, any strengths and weaknesses, and finally, any questions you have about the book.** Such an exercise will help guarantee that you are sufficiently prepared for each seminar.

Please observe the following rules for discussion:

- 1) Discussion should be mostly between students, rather than directed through me.
- 2) No student may speak twice until every student has spoken once.
- 3) Before sharing your thoughts, you must respond to the previous speaker in a way that demonstrates thoughtful listening. Phrases like “building on what she said...” or “jumping off of that...” are NOT adequate.
- 4) IF you wish to change topics or return to an earlier topic, you must declare that you’d like to “pivot” and ask if anyone has more to say about the previous topic before you pivot.
- 5) Please be prepared with page# and paragraph# whenever drawing from reading materials.

Purpose: By assigning points to students' overall participation in this seminar, I hope to increase the effort students put into their reading assignments when they are not discussion leaders. I also want to ensure that everyone recognizes the value of being involved in an interactive type of seminar. We will all learn more from each other if we come prepared and are eager to share our thoughts.

Semester-Long Project (50%)

You are to prepare a paper based on qualitative research conducted throughout the semester. The paper should be analytical and shed empirical light on a methodological or substantive problem. A purely descriptive paper will not be acceptable. The final paper is to be written as if it were being submitted for publication consideration by an academic journal. Multiple-author papers are acceptable from team projects.

Your project will consist of several tasks:

Getting Started:

You will need to identify a compelling research question that can be addressed through qualitative methodology (specifically through observation, interviews, and textual, visual, or digital analysis)

You will need to choose a research question or a set of interrelated research questions.

You will need to choose two qualitative methods to use to answer your research question(s)

You will need to have an idea about your setting, participants, and textual data

Methodological and Writing Assignments:

Conducting qualitative research is a multi-step process. You will be required to fill out an IRB and produce a consent form. Depending on the research methods you choose, you might collect ethnographic fieldnotes. You might construct an interview guide or a focus group interview. You might transcribe interviews or focus groups. You might choose to analyze textual, visual, or digital data. Regardless of which methods you choose, you will be required to code and analyze your data and produce theoretical memos.

This class depends on your assessment of your peers' work. Throughout the course, you will be expected to evaluate the fieldnotes, interview guides, interviews, textual analysis and coding schemes of your peers.

You will also be required to turn in drafts of sections of your papers throughout the semester.

Yes, qualitative research is arduous but well worth the work! Because all of these are required steps to producing your final paper, your performance on these assignments will be factored into your final project grade. While my expectations of your work are high, I understand that this is a learning process for each of you. Therefore, I plan to personally go over each of these small assignments with you if necessary.

The numerical requirements of fieldnotes, interviews, focus groups, and textual data will be individually decided depending your research questions, whether you are working individually or as a group, where you are in your academic careers, and on your specific projects. However, please note that as a general rule, you should plan to stay in the field for at least an hour each time you conduct an observation.

Writing a Qualitative Paper:

You should organize your paper in the following manner:

1. Abstract
2. Introduction (include statement of the problem and specific questions, rationale for studying these issues)
3. Literature review and theoretical orientation (make sure this is clearly focused on your specific concerns; that you address the relevant literature, weave it together in a cohesive narrative, and critique it, finding those spaces and gaps that your research fills)
4. Research Design (include description of space, statement about data collection, recruitment and sampling, textual/visual/digital material, discuss reflexivity, detail the type of analysis you are using and your coding scheme)
5. Findings...this is where the analysis comes in (I expect subheadings here!)
6. Discussion (limitations, theoretical advancement, policy implications, areas for future research)
7. Reference List
8. Appendix: Interview guide, and other documents if necessary
9. Your text, including the abstract but excluding pages devoted to references (and appendices if you have any), should be 20 double spaced pages (Please make every effort not to exceed 25 text pages). **Use 1" top/bottom and side margins and a 12 inch font.**

Purpose: This project provides you the opportunity to strengthen your ability to identify an important research question and to develop a strategy for conducting research that will address your question. You will also have the opportunity to leave the confines of the ivory tower and enter the field. This project affords you the opportunity to conduct qualitative research! From a practical point of view, this type of project prepares you for your future research efforts (theses, dissertations, and other projects).

Course Schedule

January 16: An Introduction to Qualitative Research and Syllabus

Reading Assignments:

1. Jeff Goodwin and Ruth Horowitz, 2002. Introduction: The Methodological Strengths and Dilemmas of Qualitative Sociology. *Qualitative Sociology* 25, 33-47. (E)
2. Pfeffer, Carla. 2014. I Don't Like Passing as a Straight Woman. Queer Negotiations of Identity and Social Group Membership. *American Journal of Sociology*, 120, 1-44. (E)
3. Mears, Ashley. 2014. Working for Free in the VIP: Relational Work and The Production of Consent. *American Sociological Review*, 80, 1099-1122.
4. Desmond, Matthew. 2012. Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty. *American Journal of Sociology* 118, 88-133. (E)

5. Saguy, A. C., & Gruys, K. (2010). Morality and Health: News Media Constructions of Overweight and Eating Disorders. *Social Problems*, 57, 231-250. (E)

We will go over the syllabus, discuss the readings and develop the discussion leader schedule in class

Course Assignments:

1. Read and familiarize yourselves with LSU IRB
http://www.lsu.edu/research/resources_for_faculty/research_compliance/institutional_review/IRB.php
2. Complete NIH human subjects training online
<https://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>
3. Begin to think about your semester projects. Decide if you want to work as an individual or in a group. If you decide to work as a group, begin conversing with your peers, aligning interests, and forming your groups. Begin formulating your research questions. Think about which research method(s) you plan on using to answer your research questions. You do not have to use every qualitative methodology we learn about in this class, but you must use at least two I your semester long projects.

January 23: Understanding The Practice and The Paradigms of Qualitative Research

Reading Assignments:

1. Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Leavy, Patricia. 2017. *The Practice of Qualitative Research (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. Chapters 1-3.
2. Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. 2000. Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research.” (Pp. 1-30) in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln *Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd ed.)* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (M)
3. Patricia Adler & Peter Adler. 2008. Of Rhetoric and Representation: The Four Faces of Ethnography. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 49, 1-30. (E)
4. Desmond, Matthew. 2014. Relational Ethnography. *Theory and Society* 43, 547-79. (E)

Course Assignment:

2-3 page summary of your research problem, including its relation to existing knowledge based on a cursory literature review, as well as a detailed description of your research design. Come to class prepared to discuss your project.

January 30: Locating Your Self and Research Ethics in Qualitative Research Reading Assignments

1. Sanders, Clinton. 1997. Earn as You Learn: Connections Between Doing Qualitative Work and Living Daily Life. *Qualitative Sociology*, 20, 457-463. (E)
2. Gallagher, Charles A. 2004. White Like Me? Methods, Meaning, and Manipulation in the Field of White Studies. (Pp. 203-223) in *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Levy (Eds). New York: Oxford. (E)
3. Gailey, Jeannine A. and Ariane Prohaska. 2011. Power and Gender Negotiations During Interviews with Men about Sex and Sexually Degrading Practices. *Qualitative Research*, 11, 365-380. (E)
4. Rupp, Leila and Taylor, Verta. 2011. Going Back and Giving Back: The Ethics of Staying in the Field. *Qualitative Sociology*, 34, 483-496. (E)
5. Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Leavy, Patricia. 2017. In *The Practice of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks: Sage. Chapter 4

Course Assignments:

1. Brief (1-2 page) narrative explaining your personal and scholarly relationship to this project. Locate yourself in your research and discuss some possible ethical issues you might encounter in the field.
2. Projects finalized for IRB. This means you must have your research questions and your research methodologies outlined. Have a fairly solid plan for the research you plan to undertake this semester – remember, you do not have to use every qualitative methodology we learn about in this class, but you must use at least two. Depending on your research questions and methodologies, you should identify your ethnographic space(s), the population you are interested in studying, sampling and recruitment, the type of textual/visual/digital material you will include, and start thinking about possible interview questions for your participants.
3. Complete IRB forms and consent forms.
<http://www.lsu.edu/research/downloads/irb/Exemption-Application-Newest.pdf>

February 6: Thinking Ethnographically

Reading Assignments:

1. Atkinson, Paul. 2017. *Thinking Ethnographically*. Sage Publications.

Course Assignments:

1. If you are collecting fieldnotes, your first set of fieldnotes is due
2. Switch notes with a peer and assess each other's work

February 13: Mardi Gras Holiday No Class

Collect data!

February 20: Interviewing (Part 1) and Focus Groups

1. Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Chapters 3 & 4
2. Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Leavy, Patricia. 2017. In *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, Chapters 5 & 6
3. Wilder, JeffriAnne. 2010. Revisiting 'Color Names and Color Notions': A Contemporary Examination of the Language and Attitudes of Skin Color Among Young Black Women. *Journal of Black Studies*, 41, 184-206. (E)
4. Madriz, Esther. Focus Groups in Feminist Research. (M)

Course Assignment:

1. If you are doing interviews, your interview guide is due
2. Switch with a peer and assess each other's work
3. If you are collecting fieldnotes, your next set of fieldnotes is due
4. Switch notes with a peer and assess each other's work

February 27: Interviewing (Part 2)

1. Holstein, James A. & Gubrium Jaber, F. (1995). *The Active Interview*. Qualitative Research Methods Series 37. Thousand Oaks, CA Sage.

Course Assignment:

1. If you are doing interviews, your first transcribed interview is due
2. Switch transcribed interviews with a peer and assess each other's work
3. If you are collecting fieldnotes, your next set of fieldnotes is due
4. Switch notes with a peer and assess each other's work

March 6: Researching Media: Images and Texts

Reading Assignments:

1. Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Leavy, Patricia. 2017. In *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, Chapter 9
2. Skalzki, Paul D., Kimberly A. Neuendorf, and Julie A. Cajigas. 2017. Content Analysis in the Interactive Media Age, in *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Chapter 7 (M)
3. Blum, Linda & Stracuzzi, Nena F. Gender in the Prozac Nation: Popular Discourse and Productive Femininity. *Gender & Society*, 18, 269-286. (E)
4. Berkowitz, Dana. 2017. Botox Nation. Chapter 1: Marketing Agelessness. (M)
5. Martin, Karin A., and Emily Kazyak. 2009. Hetero-Romantic Love and Heterosexiness in Children's G-Rated Films. *Gender & Society* 23, 315-336 (E)

Course Assignment:

1. If you are doing content analysis, please turn in 2-3 pages with analysis notes
2. Switch with a peer and assess each other's work
3. Methods section of paper due (everything except for analysis section)

March 13: Grounded Theory Analysis

Reading Assignments:

1. Charmaz, Kathy. (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8

Course Assignments:

1. Find two articles relevant to your project that use qualitative research methods and write a 1-page paper on each evaluating the data collection methods, analyses, and theoretical contributions. Consider how your research will both fit with and expand upon these authors' scholarly findings. This assignment is part of your semester long project because it will eventually help with your literature review.

March 20: Qualitative Data Analysis

Reading Assignments:

1. Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Chapters 9 & 10
2. Clarke, Adele. From Grounded Theory to Situational Analysis: What's New? Why? How? (M)
3. Clarke A, Montini T. 1993. The many faces of RU486: tales of situated knowledges and technological contestations. *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 18, 42-78 (E)
4. Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Leavy, Patricia. 2017. In *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, Chapter 11

Course Assignments:

1. Theoretical memo due
2. Switch theoretical memo with a peer and assess each other's work
3. Literature review due

No Class March 27: Spring Break

April 3: Coding and Analysis: Atlas TI Workshop in Lab

Reading Assignments:

1. Readings and Tutorial Videos TBA

Course Assignment:

1. Theoretical Framework and detailed outline of findings due

April 10: Other Qualitative Methods: Case Studies, Autoethnography, and Narrative Analysis

1. Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Leavy, Patricia. 2017. In *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, Chapter 8

2. Adams, Tony E. 2006. "Seeking Father: Relationally Reframing a Troubled Love Story." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 12, 4: 704-723. (E)
3. Anderson, Leon. 2006. Analytic Autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35, 4, 373-395. (E)
4. Ronai, Carol Rambo. 1995. Multiple Reflections of Child Sex Abuse: An Argument for a Layered Account. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 23, 4, 395-426. (E)
5. Loseke, Donileen R. 2007. The Study of Identity as Cultural, Institutional, Organizational, and Personal Narratives: Theoretical and Empirical Integrations. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48, 661-688. (E)
6. Matthew Brooks. 2006. "Man-To-Man: A Body Talk Between Male Friends," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, 185-206. (E)

Course Assignment:

1. Revised Literature Review, Methods, and at least one section of findings due

April 17: Writing up Qualitative Research

Reading Assignments:

1. Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Chapters 11-12
2. Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy & Leavy, Patricia. 2017. In *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, Chapter 12

Course Assignment:

1. Complete draft of paper due to class
2. Switch with a peer. You are to review your peer's paper as you would review a journal article

April 24: Research Project Day

Course Assignments:

1. Present projects with initial findings to class
2. Receive and provide feedback
3. Your review of your peer's work is due

Final Papers due May 1th by 5:00 via e-mail

