

Northwestern University
Fall 2017

Research Methods for Gender & Sexuality Studies

GNDR_ST 396-0-20

T –Th 11 AM – 12:20 PM, University Library 3322

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Office hours: Wednesday 11 AM -12 PM, Thursday 2-3 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves as an introduction to research methods in the interdisciplinary study of gender and sexuality. We will explore a range of methods used in the qualitative social sciences and the humanities, including one-one-one interviewing, participant observation, focus groups, content analysis, and archival analysis. We will discuss the relationship between research methods and other crucial aspects of research design, including formulating research questions, creating implementation plans, selecting sampling strategies, selecting analytical strategies, and writing up results.

We will have three guest speakers. Anna Michelson (PhD student in Sociology) will talk about designing her project “Embracing the Erotic: Negotiating Multiple Boundaries of Sexuality and New Media in Romance Genre Fiction.” Oscar Cornejo Casares (PhD student in Sociology) will speak about the process of designing, implementing, and writing his senior thesis, “Freedom University & the Tyranny of Home: The Politics of Belonging in the Era of Modern Segregation.” Finally, Prof. Stephen Hill (Senior Associate Director of the Office of Fellowships) will talk to us about writing a successful research proposals and fellowship applications at Northwestern.

Students are expected to do all assigned readings, attend class regularly, participate in class discussion, and complete all assignments. Assignments include writing a short critical list review and drafts of research proposals, providing peer review comments, and incorporating peer review comments into their work. Depending on their specific situation, each student will produce: (1) a complete research proposal for a planned GSS project, (2) a complete implementation and/or analytical plan for data they are currently collecting, or (3) an analysis and report of findings based on data collected for a research project (which can be their senior thesis).

GOALS:

- To design or refine a research proposal in gender and sexuality studies, including proposals for students’ senior theses.

- To discuss the connections between different parts of a research proposal, from research questions to analytical and writing plans
- To learn the ropes of presenting research proposals and findings, and of providing and receiving peer review comments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to:

- Do all **required readings** prior to each class session.
- Complete all assignments for the class:
 - *Subject position (1 page). **Due 9/20 by 5 PM.**
 - *Research questions (1 page). **Due 9/25 by 10 AM.**
 - Critical lit review (3 pages). Midterm assignment. **Due Monday, 10/16 by 10 AM.**
 - *Methodological design (1-2 pages). **Due 10/25 by 5 PM.**
 - *Analytical and writing plan (1-2 pages). **Due 10/30 at 10 AM.**
 - Draft of proposal, implementation/analytical plan, or report for peer review (10-12 pages). This builds on the different pieces written so far. It compiles, summarizes, and links different parts of the proposal and implementation plan. **Due according to the instructions listed below for peer review groups 1, 2, 3, and 4.**
 - Final proposal, implementation/analytical plan, or report for peer review (10-12 pages). This is a revision of the draft submitted for peer review, incorporating peer review comments and refining the design. **Due Tuesday 11/21 by 5 PM.**

* Note: These four assignments are grouped below under the category “Preliminary written assignments”

- **Submit** all written assignments electronically on Canvas.
- Use the following **format** for written assignments:
Short writing assignments (Subject position, research questions, critical lit review, methodological design, analytical and writing plan): standard Word margins, **single spaced (or 1.5 lines)**, font: Times Roman 12. Include page numbers on all pages, and don’t forget to write your name on the first page

Complete proposal (draft and final version): 1-inch margins, **1.5 lines to double spaced**, font: **Times Roman 12**. Include page numbers on all pages, and don't forget to write your name on the first page. Length: 12-15 pages.

- **Attend** class on a regular basis and participate in class discussion.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Grading:

In this class you will earn a grade by completing the following assignments:

Preliminary written assignments	20% of the final grade
Critical lit review	15% of the final grade
Draft of complete proposal/report and peer review	20% of the final grade
Final complete proposal/report	15% of the final grade
Attendance and class participation	30% of the final grade

There will be no extensions except in situations of medical emergency or comparably serious justification. Please note that there is no excuse for failing to keep electronic backups of your data (for example, on flash drives, CDs, external hard drives, or other computers) in case your primary computer fails or your hard drive crashes.

Being fully present during class:

You must come to class having already read the assigned readings for that day. I strongly encourage you to ask questions and offer opinions and comments. I see class discussion as an important component of adult learning. Students are also expected to be not just physically present in the classroom but also mentally present. Students should not be otherwise occupied with email, texting, computer games, or other online activities that are not part of the class goals and activities.

Diversity of opinions:

Please keep in mind that you may be exposed to opinions that differ considerably from your own. Disagreement with the instructor or other students is fine, as long as you are respectful in how you present your own points of view. Peer reviewers are expected to provide constructive critiques of the drafts they are reading.

Communication:

This course will use the new Canvas course management system (<http://www.it.northwestern.edu/education/learning-management/login.html>). You are responsible for logging in, checking regularly for posted announcements, and obtaining

readings and assignments from the site. You are also responsible for checking your registered email accounts regularly. I encourage you to come talk to me individually about your projects or any questions related to the course during my office hours.

Syllabus is subject to change:

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of unforeseen circumstances. I will post announcements of changes on Canvas.

Academic integrity:

Academic integrity is fundamental for this course, and plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

I strictly follow university regulations concerning academic integrity, which means that I report all suspected violations of the policy (including suspicion of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, obtaining an unfair advantage, and aiding and abetting dishonesty) to the Assistant Dean for Advising and Academic Integrity, who then carries out a formal investigation. Please familiarize yourself with the university's policy on academic integrity (see <http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>). You should understand that examples of plagiarism include obtaining text from any source (including the Internet), and passing off such text as your own work, rather than citing the source of the material. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Accessibility:

Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak to the Accessible NU Center: <http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/about-us/our-office/evanston-campus/index.html>. Please also speak with me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential.

Courtesy toward others:

Make sure your cell phone is turned off or set to vibrate. Don't engage in conversation with other students that is not part of the class discussion. Please keep to a minimum interruptions and distractions caused by late arrivals or early departures.

Class materials and lectures

Students are prohibited from selling (or being paid for taking) notes during this course to or by any person or commercial firm without my express written permission. No audio or video recordings of class are permitted without my permission.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Part I – Literature Reviews, Theory, and Research Design

Week 1

Class 1 – September 19: Introduction

- Introductions
- Reading instructions
- Research on gender and sexuality
- Subject position
- Writing contracts

No assigned readings

If you already have a research topic in mind for your research proposal, please come prepared to briefly describe it during the class introductions. Otherwise, think about some issues in GSS that interest you and that you might consider for a research proposal.

Assignment, due Wednesday, September 20 at 5:00 PM (must be uploaded as a Word file on Canvas).

Subject Position: Write a one-page reflection about your subject position as a gender and sexuality studies researcher:

- How do you expect that your subject position may influence your views and conclusions?
- If you plan to conduct interviews, apply questionnaires, or carry out other research activities involving human subjects, how do you think your participants may respond to you given who you are?

We will discuss this assignment in class 2, so it is crucial that you turn it in on time so that I have a chance to read it before class.

Class 2 – September 21: Research design

- Discussion of the concept of subject position
- Research design (basic components)
- Research questions and specific aims

Readings:

Carrillo, Héctor. 2002. *The Night Is Young: Sexuality in Mexico in the Time of AIDS*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Preface (pp. ix - xii), Introduction (pp. 1-11), and Appendix 2: “Methodology” (pp. 317-324).

Salzinger, Leslie. 2003. *Genders in Production: Making Workers in Mexico’s Global Factories*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-8).

Pascoe, C.J. 2007. *Dude You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Appendix (pp.175-193).

As you read, pay close attention to what the three authors say about their own subject positions and about their entry into their research field sites.

Assignment, due Monday, September 25 by 10:00 AM (must be uploaded as a Word file on Canvas).

Research questions: Write a first draft of your research questions and specific aims (one page or less). I suggest thinking of two to three research questions and two to three specific aims. (Specific aims usually are stated as goals and begin with phrases such as “to describe,” “to analyze,” “to explore,” or “to examine.”)

We will discuss this assignment in class 3, so it is crucial that you turn it in on time so that I have a chance to read it before class.

Week 2

Class 3 – September 26: Feminist epistemology

- Discussion of research questions and specific aims
- Discussion of the readings by Smith

Reading:

Smith, Dorothy. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. Chapters 2 and 3. **READ PAGES 49-117.**

As you read, consider the following questions:

- What are Smith’s views on the subject position of women researchers and on feminist epistemology?
- Do her perspectives apply only to women, or can they be extended beyond gender to other demographic forms of difference?
- Smith was writing in the mid-1980s. Do these views still resonate in the 2010s?

Class 4 – September 28: Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Reviews

- Selecting theoretical frameworks
- Critical lit reviews: Identifying gaps in the literature
- Making the literature work for you

Readings:

Pascoe: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-24).

Salzinger: Chapter 2 (pp. 9-34).

As you read, pay close attention to how these authors incorporate the extant literature in the process of constructing the theoretical frameworks that inform their own research. What gaps do they identify and how do they propose to fill them? What innovative linkages do they make between literatures that were not previously in dialogue?

Part II – Methodological and analytical approaches

Week 3

Class 5 – October 3: Interviewing

- Accounts of lived experience and individual interpretation
- Interview guides vs. the interview as conversation
- Interactive co-constructions
- What makes a good interview?

Readings:

Carrillo, Héctor and Amanda Hoffman. 2019 “‘Straight with a Pinch of Bi’: The Constructions of Heterosexuality as an Elastic Category among Adult US Men.” *Sexualities*, published online (doi:10.1177/1363460716678561): 1-19.

Miller, William L. and Benjamin F. Crabtree. 1999. “Depth Interviewing.” In *Doing Qualitative Research*, Benjamin F. Crabtree and William L. Miller (eds.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE (pp. 89-107).

Lamont, Michèle, and Ann Swidler. 2014. “Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing.” *Qualitative Sociology* 37: 153– 71.

As you read my and Amanda Hoffman’s article, pay close attention to our use of interview material, as well as how we organized the data by themes.

Based on the other two readings, come prepared to discuss the value of interviewing, what makes a good interview and the best strategies to negotiate the interactions between interviewer and interviewee, and how interviews can be combined with other methods.

Class 6 – October 5: Focus groups and group interviews

- Eliciting shared knowledge through interaction
- Eliciting collective ideologies and meanings

Readings:

Allen, Louisa. 2005. “Managing Masculinity: Young Men’s Identity Work in Focus Groups.” *Qualitative Research* 5, No.1: 35-57.

Bowleg, Lisa et al. 2011. “‘What Does It Take to Be a Man? What Is a Real Man?’: Ideologies of Masculinity and HIV Sexual Risk among Black Heterosexual Men.” *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. 13, No.5: 545-559.

As you read, reflect on the kinds of knowledge that focus groups in these two articles generate. Pay close attention to what these authors say about the use of focus groups as a means to obtain information about shared knowledge, collective ideologies and expectations.

Week 4

Class 7 – October 10: Contextualizing: History, culture, and geography

- How to contextualize research findings within the broader histories, cultures, social structures, and physical spaces in which people interact with each other.
- How much context and background is necessary?

Readings:

Carrillo: Chapter 1 (pp.13-35) and chapter 5 (pp. 97-128)

As you read chapter 1, pay close attention to how I use my brief historical account to setup the context in which the sexualities that I investigated were unfolding. In chapter 5, read carefully my description of specific gay spaces and the variations in the social relations among them. What do you think influences such geographical variations? Would my research be different if I had focused only on a single one of those spaces?

Week 5

Class 8 – October 12: Participating and observing

- Observing through an ethnographic prism
- Making the familiar look strange
- Combining ethnography with interviews
- Writing field notes

Readings:

Salzinger: Chapter 4 (pp.51-74)

Pascoe: Chapter 3 (pp. 52-83)

Bogdewic, Stephen. 1999. "Participant Observation." In *Doing Qualitative Research*, Benjamin F. Crabtree and William L. Miller (eds.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE (pp. 47-69).

As you read, pay close attention to how these authors use material from their field notes and also sometimes combine them with excerpts from their interviews. Think about the balance between being an observer and being a participant and the range of possibilities in between.

Week 6

Mid-term assignment: Due Monday, October 16 by 10 AM (must be uploaded as a Word file on Canvas).

Critical lit review: Write a four-page literature review consisting of the following two parts:

Part 1: Provide a list of 15 to 20 articles or books that you plan to read and that will inform your literature review for your project. Choose works that relate to the topic of your research and that you believe are essential for you to design your study and then later analyze your data and discuss your findings. You do not need to have read them in their entirety, but you should have looked at them carefully enough to know that they really do relate to your project. They should include a mix of books, articles, and other sources as appropriate. Some of them should be theoretical sources, while others can be articles or monographs reporting empirical findings from related research.

Part 2: Choose the top six to eight readings that that you think are the most important for your project. Write one paragraph on each of these readings—a short critical review of each that addresses the following questions: Why is this source important to your project? What are the author’s main claims or findings? How do the author’s claims, findings, and conclusions help you in terms of your research? What gaps do they leave? How do you expect that your own research will address those gaps?

NOTE: Your reviews must not be merely summaries of the articles. I want you to reflect on how you will engage with this literature and how you expect it will be helpful to you in conducting your research).

One good model is to write four sentences: a first sentence that describes *what* is in the source, i.e. “A history of gay life in New York between 1950 and 1970”; a second sentence that describes the author’s *approach* and why the work is or isn’t *useful*, i.e. “A study based on 20 life-history interviews with older gay men”; a third sentence that describes the author(s) *findings* and what the piece leaves unanswered, i.e. “The author finds that these men encountered considerable homophobia in their jobs; however he doesn’t tell us much about their family lives”; finally, a fourth, optional sentence that gives your informal opinion, i.e. “Mostly anecdotes, but good for getting the atmosphere of the times” or “Dry as dust, but great for facts”. The purpose of these annotations is so that months or even years from now, you can quickly locate the sources you identified this quarter and remember which one is which.

Class 9 – October 17: Designing a Senior Thesis

Guest speaker: Oscar Cornejo Casares (PhD student, Sociology) will present from his senior thesis at Dartmouth College

Reading:

Cornejo Casares, Oscar. 2017. “Freedom University & The Tyranny of Home: The Politics of Belonging in the Era of Modern Segregation.” Read Chapters 1-3 (pp.7-69).

As you read, pay close attention to Oscar's literature review and research design, and how he incorporated the two.

Class 10 – October 19: Sampling issues

- How to select a sample
 - Making decisions on sample size and characteristics (Who? How many? How varied? Etc.)
 - Achieving maximum variability
 - Linking sampling, methods, and research questions

Reading:

Curtis, Sarah et al. 2000. “Approaches to Sampling and Case Selection in Qualitative Research: Examples in the Geography of Health.” *Social Science and Medicine* 50: 1001-1014

As you read, reflect about how one chooses how many and what kinds of sources (human subjects, archival documents, texts) may be necessary to investigate your own research questions. How can initial sampling schemes be adjusted along the way? How do researchers know that they have collected enough data and stop?

Class 11 – October 24: Writing a Research Paper

Guest speaker: Anna Michelson (PhD student, Sociology) will present from her Second Year Paper at Northwestern

Reading:

Michelson, Ana. 2017. “Embracing the Erotic: Negotiating Multiple Boundaries of Sexuality and New Media in Romance Genre Fiction.”

Assignment: Due Wednesday, October 25 by 5 PM (must be uploaded as a Word file on Canvas).

Methodological design: Write a two-page summary of your methodological design. Make sure to do the following:

- 1) Explicitly state how your selection of methods responds to your research questions. Why do you believe this is the best methodological approach to answer them?
- 2) Describe your methods and your sampling strategies. How do you plan to obtain the data that will inform you analysis?

If you plan to collect or are collecting data with subject participants: How do you plan to recruit them? How much variability do you expect to find and along which demographic variables? What are your criteria for inclusion? How large a sample do you believe will generate enough data for you to do your analysis?

If you plan to analyze archival materials or other secondary sources: How will you access the materials that you need? How large or small is the number of materials that you can access? What archives will you plan to work with and

what kinds of materials do they contain? Provide a preliminary list and short description of the materials that you will analyze, including novels, poems, movies, photographs, posters, paintings, scripts, or performances.

We will discuss this assignment in class 12, so it is crucial that you turn it in on time so that I have a chance to read it before class.

Class 12 – October 26: Making sense of your data: Analytical Strategies

- The process of interpretation
- The process of classifying, coding, and identifying patterns

Readings:

Miller, William L. and Benjamin F. Crabtree. 1999. "The Dance of Interpretation." In *Doing Qualitative Research*, Benjamin F. Crabtree and William L. Miller (eds.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE (pp. 127-143).

Crabtree, Benjamin F. and William L. Miller. 1999. "Using Codes and Code Manuals: A Template Organizing Style of Interpretation." In *Doing Qualitative Research*, Benjamin F. Crabtree and William L. Miller (eds.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE (pp. 163-177).

Carrillo, Codebook example.

As you read, focus in particular on the mind frame and explicit strategies and exercises that aid the process of interpretation. Think also about how to move from a collection of individual texts (transcripts, documents, etc.) to a broader consideration of the patterns that emerge from considering them collectively.

Week 7

Assignment: Due Monday, October 30 by 10 AM (must be uploaded as a Word file on Canvas by 10:00 AM):

Analytical and writing plan: Write a two-page summary of your analytical and writing plan. Make sure to do the following:

- 1) Describe how much data you expect to end up with and how you will analyze them. What system will you use to code and classify your data and make sense of the patterns that emerge?
- 2) Anticipate what variations you may find: What patterns do you expect may emerge from your data?
- 3) Briefly discuss what you may do if you have outliers and disconfirming cases.
- 4) Write a brief paragraph detailing your writing plan and estimating how much time you will need to write up the results of your research.

Note: We will discuss this assignment in class 13, so it is crucial that you turn it in on time so that I have a chance to read it before class.

Class 13 – October 31: The Full Research Proposal

- Putting all the pieces together
- Checking for flow and narrative

Readings:

Marshall, Catherine and Gretchen Rossman. 1999. *Designing Qualitative Research*. Chapter 2: “The ‘What’ of the Study: Building the Conceptual Framework.” Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon. 1988 (1995). “The Art of Writing Proposals” SSRC.

As you read, think about what are the best strategies to weave together the different parts of your proposal so that your final product makes sense. What adjustments must one make for the research design to be solid and feasible, and for the proposal to have the right sequence and read well?

Class 14 – November 2: Successful Research Proposals and Fellowship Applications

Guest lecturer: Prof. Stephen Hill, Senior Associate Director, Office of Fellowships

No readings

Assignment: Peer reviews Group 1: Students whose proposals will be presented and peer reviewed on **November 7** must upload their drafts on Canvas **by 5 PM on Sunday, November 5**. They must also prepare a 5-minute presentation on their project that they will do at the beginning of their peer review.

The file that you upload must be a full draft of your research proposal or research report. Your draft must be between 12 and 15 pages long (plus references) according to your specific project. Peer reviewers will prepare 10-minute comments providing feedback to the author. The feedback must consist of constructive suggestions and critiques meant to help the author improve the quality of the proposal. Peer reviewers can also raise questions and point out issues that are unclear.

Part III – Research proposals and peer reviews

Week 8

Class 15 – November 7: Oral presentations and peer reviews

All students must read the proposals being presented and reviewed today. The authors will do a 5-minute presentation at the beginning of their peer review. The assigned peer reviewers must come prepared to provide review comments (they will have 10 minutes each).

Assignment: Peer reviews Group 2: Students whose proposals will be presented and peer reviewed on **November 9** must upload their drafts on Canvas **by 5 PM on Tuesday,**

November 7. They must also prepare a 5-minute presentation on their project that they will do at the beginning of their peer review. **INSTRUCTIONS APPEAR ON P.12.**

Class 16 – November 9: Oral presentations and peer reviews

All students must read the proposals being presented and reviewed today. The authors will do a 5-minute presentation at the beginning of their peer review. The assigned peer reviewers must come prepared to provide review comments (they will have 10 minutes each).

Assignment: Peer reviews Group 3: Students whose proposals will be presented and peer reviewed on **November 14** must upload their drafts on Canvas **by 5 PM on Sunday, November 12.** They must also prepare a 5-minute presentation on their project that they will do at the beginning of their peer review. **INSTRUCTIONS APPEAR ON P.12.**

Week 9

Class 17 – November 14: Oral presentations and peer reviews

All students must read the proposals being presented and reviewed today. The authors will do a 5-minute presentation at the beginning of their peer review. The assigned peer reviewers must come prepared to provide review comments (they will have 10 minutes each).

Assignment: Peer reviews Group 4: Students whose proposals will be presented and peer reviewed on **November 16** must upload their drafts on Canvas **by 5PM on Tuesday, November 14.** They must also prepare a 5-minute presentation on their project that they will do at the beginning of their peer review. **INSTRUCTIONS APPEAR ON P. 12.**

Class 18 – November 16: Oral presentations and peer reviews

All students must read the proposals being presented and reviewed today. The authors will do a 5-minute presentation at the beginning of their peer review. The assigned peer reviewers must come prepared to provide review comments (they will have 10 minutes each).

Week 10

November 21: No class

Assignment: Final proposal due by 5 PM: Submit assignment electronically via Canvas. You are expected to revise your research proposal/report incorporating some of the comments that you received during your peer review. The length of the final proposal/report should be 12-15 pages long.

November 26 – Thanksgiving holiday