

SOCIOLOGY 403  
METHODS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

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This course is designed to provide first-year sociology graduate students with the opportunity to learn how to conduct qualitative field research (participant observation/ethnography and in-depth interviewing) in a supportive, collaborative atmosphere. While there are other methodologies that fall within the rubric of qualitative research (life history analysis, focus group studies, conversation analysis, and textual analysis), the reality of a short quarter system forces us to be selective. I will be happy to discuss these matters with students individually or if there is sufficient interest to schedule additional class meetings. As it is, you will discover that we do not have sufficient time to discuss all important topics. This can subsequently be done in independent study courses.

Often novice qualitative researchers feel themselves to be tight-rope walkers who lack a net. Our intellectual community - our class - will be that net. As an instructor, I am looking for you to make mistakes - mistakes from which you can learn. I expect you to present your research, "warts and all." In return, I will attempt - as much as self-esteem permits - to share the wide range of mistakes that I have made in four decades of qualitative research on topics as diverse as Little League baseball, fantasy gaming, trade school education, restaurant kitchens, mushroom collecting, high school debate, self-taught art, government meteorology, competitive chess, graduate education in visual arts, and my current research on senior citizen activism.

THIS IS A WORKING SEMINAR. That means that I expect you to be "in the field" collecting ethnographic data (in the form of field notes) throughout the quarter. You should be thinking today of what research site makes the most sense for your research. Remember for this brief project you do not need to choose the area in which you wish to devote your career, but rather one to which it is easy to gain access and one in which you will feel comfortable. As a general rule, I prefer that you not study a group that you are already involved in as a member or in which close friends participate. For reasons related to issues of human

subjects, it is best that you do not plan to study protected populations or groups of children, unless you have already started the process of obtaining human subjects approval.

I hope that you will be collecting data no later than the beginning of the third week, and will be collecting data through week seven or eight (including at least two in-depth interviews). Depending on the nature of your research site, I hope you to spend at least four hours/week collecting data (more would be better), and you probably should plan to spend at least that much time typing up your field notes. In addition, you need to conduct a rudimentary literature review on the topic that you have chosen. When you add to this the reading for this class, this will be a considerable time burden. The only justification for this burden is the claim that by the end of the course you will have a clear sense of the challenges and virtues of these methodologies. Some of you will choose these methodologies for your future research and some of you will know what to avoid.

In addition to this being a working seminar, it is also designed to involve professional training. To this end, you will be required to make a 15-20 minute scholarly presentation to the class (including time for questions) and submit a "journal-type" paper in professional form. This paper should incorporate excerpts from your field notes and in-depth interviews, some literature, and theoretical analysis. As a general rule, papers should be 15-25 pages in length. Your grade will depend primarily on the quality of the paper and the presentation, although other assignments are required, which in some instances could raise your grade. The amount of work required in the class makes incompletes likely. While some papers are handed in by the end of the quarter, I expect all papers to be submitted by April 1, 2016.

The class is structured so that typically on Thursday we will discuss general methodological issues and case studies, and on Tuesday we will discuss your on-going research. In the fifth week, I wish to meet individually with each member of the class to discuss your projects. I also will divide the class into groups of three. These groups will provide you with another level of support. Hopefully within these groups you can be brutally honest about your fears and failures, as well as sharing your successes. I ask that each group schedules a lunch during the third, sixth, and ninth week.

#### READINGS

Peter and Patricia Adler, Membership Roles in the Field  
Howard Becker, Writing for Social Scientists  
Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw, Writing

Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Second Edition  
Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, The Discovery of Grounded Theory  
James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium, The Active Interview  
Sherryl Kleinman and Martha Copp, Emotions and Fieldwork  
John Lofland, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn Lofland,  
Analyzing Social Settings, Fourth Edition  
John Van Maanen, Tales From the Field, Second Edition

DON'T PANIC! Most of these volumes are short.

#### CLASS SCHEDULE

January 5 INTRODUCTION

January 7 TYPES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Lofland, Chapters 1-2, 6

Howard S. Becker, "Becoming a Marijuana User," American Journal of Sociology 59, 1953, 235-42.

January 12 WRITING FIELD NOTES

Emerson, Chapters 1-4

January 14 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ISSUES

Visit of Kathleen Murphey

January 19 ETHICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Gary Alan Fine, "Ten Lies of Ethnography," Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 22 (3, October 1993):267-294.

Alice Goffman, On the Run, Methodological Appendix

David Shulman, "Dirty Data and Investigative Models," Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 23 (2, July 1994): 214-253.

Due: FAST FOOD FIELD NOTES

January 21 DISCUSSION OF FAST FOOD FIELD NOTES

January 26 ESTABLISHING FIELD RELATIONSHIPS

Lofland, Chapter 3, 4

Adler and Adler, all

Mitch Duneier, Slim's Table, Chapter 1

January 28 NO CLASS

February 2 Individual Meetings

February 4 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH SITES AND RESEARCH  
QUESTIONS

Problems of Entree

Due: HUMAN SUBJECTS FORM (long version)

February 9 THE SELF IN THE FIELD

Kleinman and Copp, all

Reuben A. Buford May and Mary Pattillo-McCoy, A Do You  
See What I See? Examining a Collaborative Ethnography. @  
Qualitative Inquiry 6, 2000, 65-87.

February 11 THE SELF IN THE FIELD

February 16 BUILDING THEORY

Glaser and Strauss, Chapters I-III, V

Lofland, Chapters 9

Gary Alan Fine, "The Culture of Production: Aesthetic  
Choices and Constraints in Culinary Work." American  
Journal of Sociology. 97, 1992: 1268-94.

Steve G. Hoffman, "How to Punch Someone and Stay  
Friends: An Inductive Theory of Simulation." Sociological  
Theory 24, 2006, 170-193.

Tim Hallett, "The Myth Incarnate: Recoupling Processes,  
Turmoil and Inhabited Institutionalism." American  
Sociological Review 75, 2010: 52-74.

Due: Five pages of field notes

February 18 DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL MODELS

February 23 INTERVIEWING

Holstein and Gubrium, all

February 28 INTERVIEWING DISCUSSION

Bring five pages from an interview

March 1 WRITING UP ETHNOGRAPHY

Lofland, Chapter 10

Becker, all

Van Maanen, all

March 3 NO CLASS

March 8 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH - 1

March 10 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH - 2