

SOCIOLOGY 476  
**Interview Methods Graduate Seminar**  
**Spring 2018**  
**Wednesdays, 10:00am-12:20pm**  
**Location: University Hall 318**

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Office Hours: by appointment

Please book at <http://www.meetme.so/celestewatkins-hayes>

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this course, students will develop the necessary skills to conceptualize, plan, and execute interview-based research projects. We will cover topics such as fine-tuning a research idea, formulating research questions, designing a rigorous research plan, navigating the IRB process, recruiting respondents, creating the interview guide, conducting interviews, and analyzing and writing up data. We will also consider reflexivity, ethics, and the complexities of interviewing various populations. Students at all levels of the graduate student process are welcome, as course participants will be organized into working groups based on their project's current stage. However, the course tends to focus on issues that arise at the beginning stages of a second year paper or dissertation proposal.

Each week, participants will spend the first portion of the allotted time discussing course readings and receiving practical instruction from the professor on some aspect of the research process. During the second portion of the class each week, students will gather in their working groups to discuss current concerns and ideas arising from their individual interview-based research projects. In preparation for the working group meetings, students will be asked to write and read short documents (e.g. drafts of abstracts, interview guides, etc) that have been prepared by their group partners for these feedback sessions.

**THE WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

10:00 -11:20am – Discussion of assigned readings and instruction on aspects of field work

11:20-11:30am – Break

11:30a-12:15pm – Meet with peer working group

12:15-12:20pm – Reports out; Final thoughts

**REQUIRED READING:**

Robert S. Weiss. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*

*ALL OTHER COURSE READINGS CAN BE FOUND ON CANVAS*

*Throughout the syllabus, you will see several readings identified as "Recommended." Many speak to specific issues related to projects proposed by members of the class or that will likely*

*come up throughout your interviewing careers. I encourage you to explore these readings, and perhaps even read a few pieces with your working groups. They can be found on Canvas as well.*

#### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Active attendance and participation: 25%**

**Midterm assignment – research proposal: 25%**

**TWO Peer review memos on midterm research proposals: 15%**

**Final assignment: Two interview transcripts and analytic memo: 35%**

**Active attendance and participation:** Students are required to read all assigned readings and attend each session prepared to discuss the materials in an analytical and critical manner. Throughout the course, you will be asked to submit documents to your working group for review. Attendance and participation (including submitting documents to your working groups) will account for **25% of the course grade**. Working group documents should be uploaded to Canvas in your group page or provided in class (please make sure that Celeste has a copy).

**Midterm Assignment:** The midterm assignment will be **due on May 2 by 11:59pm CST** (via Canvas upload). It will account for **25% of the course grade**.

**Research Proposal:** Write a research proposal outlining the rationale and plan for an interview-based research study that you are or will be conducting. **The proposal must be no longer than 10 double-spaced, double-sided pages (excluding references and interview guide) using 12pt Times New Roman font. There must also be an 11<sup>th</sup> page with a project budget, outlining the expected costs and a brief justification of the expenses.** The proposal should reflect the caliber of a proposal that you would submit as part of a fellowship or grant application. The proposal should include an abstract, statement of the problem, research questions, specific aims of the study, literature review, an initial conceptual framework (if appropriate), methodology (rationale for using interview data as a component of the study, discussion of participant recruitment strategy, eligibility requirements and selection goals), interview guide, data analysis plan, and brief explanation of the expected product from the project (second year paper, publishable article, dissertation, etc.). Throughout the proposal, students should draw upon at least five course readings to support the arguments and plans presented. One of the five readings should be an outside source or recommended reading that addresses issues related to interviewing your specific population of interest.

**Peer review memos on midterm assignments:** Reviewing and evaluating research proposals and papers will be an ongoing part of your work as scholars. It is also helpful to see how others are pitching and presenting their projects. Each student will be asked to review the Midterm Assignment of two classmates and draft a one-page “blind” memo on each proposal/paper (single-sided, single-spaced) evaluating the quality, clarity, feasibility, and creativity of the project and how the author presented it. These memos will account for

**15% of the course grade and are due on May 9 by 11:59pm CST (via the Canvas Peer Review system).**

**Final Assignment:** The final assignment will be due on **Monday, June 11 by 11:59pm CST** and will account for 35% of the course grade. Please submit the materials via Canvas.

**Two interview transcriptions and analytic memo:** By the end of the course, you will have two additional resources to bring to your second-year paper or dissertation proposal. You will have received feedback from the instructor and two classmates outlining potential areas of improvement. Now, for the final project, interview 2 individuals who are either members of the population that you wish to study or have significant insight into this group. Submit the two transcripts along with an analytic memo discussing (1) the interview experience, (2) the key substantive insights, and (3) some conceptual analysis that connects your research questions, existing literature that you seek to engage, and what you learned in these interviews. The analytic memo should be 3-5 pages double-spaced.

These interviews will also serve you when you eventually revise your research proposals. Some of the best research proposals incorporate pilot interview data in order to demonstrate (a) the feasibility of executing the project, (b) the important findings that the work is just beginning to reveal, (c) the places to go next in the research, and (d) the researcher's skills in collecting and analyzing interview-based data.

#### Key Questions:

*What citation style should I use for my assignments?* Chicago-style with Author-Date in-text citation is preferred, but you can select any widely used citation style.

*How can I get the most out of this course?* While course readings will be helpful, you will likely learn the most by practicing your developing techniques and talking frequently about your project with the instructor and your colleagues. Office hours, the opening class discussion, and the working groups are all designed to do this. Rather than waiting until the midterm and final assignments are due to work extensively on your projects, work on them throughout the quarter, using the working groups as places to workshop research questions, data collection plans, interview guides, interview transcripts, data analysis plans, etc.

*What should we do in our working groups?* At each meeting, select a time keeper to set a timer to ensure that each member gets 15 minutes for his/her project to be the focus of discussion. When it is your turn in the group, provide an update on the project, raise any questions/concerns for discussion, and have the group review a document that moves your project forward. If the document is longer than a page, it should be submitted ahead of time. Develop norms for the group in terms of when pre-reads should be submitted.

**Remember that this is a collaborative space in which intellectual rigor, compassion, generosity, and collegiality are critical. As such, the professor will evaluate the**

degree to which your contributions to the group are constructive as part of the participation grade.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### PART 1: Introduction – Conceptualizing a Sensible Research Project

**Week 1: April 4 – What do you want to understand and why? What will be your scientific contribution?** Identifying your research topic, finding your opportunity in the literature, and articulating your specific aims

- Booth, Colomb, and Williams Ch. 2, “Connecting with Your Reader”
- Booth, Colomb, and Williams Prologue to Section 2, “Planning Your Research Project” and then Chapter 4 “From Questions to a Problem”
- Maxwell's Interactive Model of Research Design

**Week 2: April 11 –How will you answer your research questions?** Fine-tuning your research questions, pondering your conceptual framework, designing your research plan

WG deliverable: revised research questions & conceptual map

- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. “Designing for Quality.” Pp. 59-70 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (second edition)*. California: Sage.
- Maxwell, Joseph, “Research Questions: What do You Want to Understand?” Chapter 4 in *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*.
- *Recommended:* Nalita James and Hugh Busher, “**Internet Interviewing**” - Ch. 11 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.

### PART 2 - In the Field

**Week 3: April 18 – How will you find your respondents, and what will you ask them?**

Setting up your research operation, recruiting participants, the interview guide, and the craft of interviewing

WG deliverable: Data Collection Plan (what population will you interview? How many? How often? Eligibility criteria? Variation priorities?)

- Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, Chapter 2, “Respondents: Choosing Them and Recruiting Them.”

- Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, Chapter 3, "Preparation for Interviewing"
- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. "Designing Main Questions and Probes." Pp. 152-72 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (second edition)*. California: Sage.
- Recommended: Grinyer and Thomas, "**The Value of Interviewing on Multiple Occasions or Longitudinally**" – Ch. 14 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.
- Recommended: Herzog, "**Interview Location and Its Social Meaning**" – Ch. 13 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.

**Week 4: April 25 - How will you protect your respondents and conduct ethical research? What are some considerations around interviewing diverse populations?**

**Visit from representative from IRB**

**WG Deliverable: Draft of Interview Guide**

- Weiss, *Learning from Strangers* Chapter 4, "Interviewing."
- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. "Conversational Partnerships." Pp. 71-94 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (second edition)*. California: Sage.
- Recommended: Finlay, Linda, "**Five Lenses for the Reflexive Interviewer**" – Ch. 22 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.
- Recommended: LaSala, Michael C. "**When Interviewing "Family" Maximizing the Insider Advantage in the Qualitative Study of Lesbians and Gay Men.**" *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 15, no. 1-2 (2003): 15-30.
- Recommended: Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, Appendix D: **Consent Forms**
- Recommended: Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, Appendix C: "**Sources of Bias and Their Control**"
- Recommended: Reuben A. Buford May, "**When the Methodological Shoe is on the Other Foot: African American Interviewer and White Interviewees.**" *Qualitative Sociology*. January 2014.
- Recommended: Kaiser, "Protecting Confidentiality" – Ch. 31 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.

**Week 5: May 2 - How will you gather the data that you need?** More of the craft of interviewing, co-creating an informative conversation, technology in the field  
**Midterm Assignments Due tonight via Canvas**

WG Deliverable: Revised Interview Guide

- Young, Alford. 2004. "Experiencing in Ethnographic Interviewing about Race." Pp. 187-202 in *Researching Race and Racism*, edited by M. Blumer and J. Solomos. New York: Routledge.
- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. "Preparing Follow up Questions." Pp. 152-72 in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (second edition)*. California: Sage.
- Hermanowicz, J.C. (2002) "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed," *Qualitative Sociology* 25(4): 479-499.
- A Useful Reference for Your Assignment: Maxwell, Joseph, "Research Proposals: Presenting and Justifying a Qualitative Study," Chapter 7 in *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*.
- Recommended: Biernacki, Patrick and Dan Waldorf. 1981. "**Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques in Chain Referral.**" *Sociological Methods and Research* 10(2): 141-163.
- Recommended: Seidman, Irving. "**Technique Isn't Everything, But It is a Lot.**" In *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*.
- Recommended: Watters, John and Patrick Biernacki. 1989. "**Targeted Sampling: Options for the Study of Hidden Populations.**" *Social Problems* 36 (4): 416-430
- Recommended: Ostrander, Susan A. 1993. "**Surely you're Not in This Just to Be Helpful: Access, Rapport, and Interviews in Three Studies of Elites.**" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22:7-27.
- Recommended: Seidman, Irving. "**Proposing Research: From Mind to Paper to Action**"
- Recommended: Talmage, John. "Listening to, and for, the Research Interview" – Ch. 20 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.

**Week 6: May 9 – What should you do after the interview?** Data organization, analytic memos, transcription, respondent relations, and deciding when to exit the field

**Peer Review Memos due by 11:59pm via Canvas**

WG Deliverable: Plan for finding 2 interviewees for final project with initial contact made

- Lofland, John et al. 2006. "Data Logging in Intensive Interviewing: Guide and Write-Ups." Pp. 99-117 in *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* by John Lofland et al. California: Thompson.
- McLellan, E., K. MacQueen and J. Neidig (2003) "Beyond the Qualitative Interview: Data Preparation and Transcription", *Field Methods* 15(1): 63-84.
- Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "'How many cases do I need?' On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research." *Ethnography* 10(1): 5-38.
- Recommended: Lillrank, "Managing the Interviewer Self" – Ch. 19 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.

### **PART 3 – Reporting the Results**

**Week 7: May 16 – How will you analyze your data?** Coding, condensation, and interpretation; an introduction to Atlas Qualitative Analysis Software

WG Deliverable: Beginning of codebook (10 important codes)

- Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. "Data Analysis in the Responsive Interviewing Model," in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (second edition)*. California: Sage.
- Kathy Charmaz and Linda Liska Belgrave - "Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis" – Ch. 24 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.
- Recommended: **"Investigating Ruling Relations: Dynamics of Interviewing in Institutional Ethnography"**– RECOMMENDED FOR THOSE STUDYING ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES
- Recommended: Kvale and Brinkmann, Chapters 11-12 on **analysis** In *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviews*.

**Week 8: May 23 – How will you tell a coherent, compelling, and analytically astute story?** Writing the paper/chapter using interview data

WG Deliverable: ½ group - one interview transcript with preliminary ideas for analytic memo

- Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, Chapter 7, "Writing the Report."
- Watkins-Hayes, Pittman-Gay, and Beaman, "'Dying From' to 'Living With' Framing Institutions and the Coping Processes of Black Women Living with HIV/AIDS."
- Recommended: Potter and Hepburn "Eight Challenges for Interview Researchers" – Ch. 38 from *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Edited by Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney. Sage Publications 2012 edition.
- Recommended: Mario L. Small, "De-Exoticizing Ghetto Poverty: On the Ethics of Representation in Urban Ethnography," *City & Community* 14, no. 4 (2015): 352–58.
- Recommended: Kvale and Brinkmann, "Improving Interview Reports." In *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviews*. Ch. 14.

**Week 9: May 30 – How might you be wrong?** Key debates on validity in the research process

WG Deliverable: ½ group - one interview transcript with preliminary ideas for analytic memo

- Maxwell, Joseph, "Validity: How Might You be Wrong?" Chapter 6 in *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*.
- Lamont, Michèle, and Ann Swidler. "Methodological pluralism and the possibilities and limits of interviewing." *Qualitative Sociology* 37, no. 2 (2014): 153-171.
- Recommended: Colin Jerolmack and Shamus Khan, "Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy," *Sociological Methods and Research*.
  - Responses to Jerolmack and Khan by Karen Cerulo, Paul DiMaggio, Stephen Vaisey, and Douglas Maynard.
  - Colin Jerolmack and Shamus Khan, "Toward an Understanding of the Relationship between Accounts and Action" *Sociological Methods and Research*.
  - Online discussion at: <http://orgtheory.wordpress.com/2014/03/17/should-sociologists-stop-interviewing-people/>
- Recommended: Kvale and Brinkmann, "The Social Construction of Validity." Chapter 13 in *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviews*.

**FINAL PROJECT DUE: Monday, June 11 by 11:59pm CST.**