

Seminar in Qualitative Field Methods
JOMC 850
Wednesday, 2:00pm-4:50pm, JOMC 338

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Hours: Wednesdays, 1-2pm
and by appointment

Course Goals

This course provides students with an in-depth introduction to the theory and practice of qualitative communication research. The class has four objectives: 1) to provide students with a rich introduction to the epistemology, theory, and ethics of qualitative research; 2) to teach students how to formulate research interests and plan for fieldwork; 3) to help students acquire skills in field observation, interviewing, and interpretative analysis; and, 4) to provide students with the opportunity to deeply engage with books that are among the strongest in this tradition, and that all originated as dissertation projects.

The course is designed both for students who plan on utilizing qualitative methods in their work and those who are just seeking a deeper understanding of this approach to research. Students who are planning on utilizing qualitative methods in their work are encouraged to use this course as an opportunity to further their thesis, dissertation, or other research projects. Students who work primarily in other research traditions are encouraged to consider how qualitative methods can complement their research.

Readings

There are eight required books for this class, in addition to book and journal readings that will be available on Sakai.

Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk*. Macmillan, 1999.

Robert M. Emerson. *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations* (2nd Edition). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2001.

Kristin Luker, *Salsa Dancing in the Social Sciences*. New York, Vintage Books.

Alice Marwick. *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in a Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013.

Vicki Mayer. *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*. Duke University Press Books, 2011.

Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. *Ground Wars: American Campaigns Between Door-to-Door and Databases*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Fred Turner. *The Democratic Surround: Multi Media and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic 60s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Robert Weiss. (1995). *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Science of Interviewing*. New York: Free Press.

Grades

Graduate grades are H, P, L, F. I determine your grade by active participation in class, the quality of your assignments, and your work in relation to others.

The following is a general description of graduate grades:

- H means a truly outstanding performance in the class and on assignments.
- P is a solid performance overall in the class and on assignments.
- L is a performance in the class and on assignments that is below the acceptable level for graduate students. It means the student does not understand the course material very well, does not have a grasp of what is required in this area at the graduate level, is not participating in the class, is not handing in assignments on time, or is not participating in research basics or in-class exercises.
- F is failing.

Grading Percentages

Participation: 20%

Assignments: 30%

Final Paper: 50%

Course Requirements

Participation

This course is organized as a seminar, and as such it is premised on active discussion. You are expected to come to class having completed the readings and ready to discuss them. Critical interpretations of the literature encountered in the course are particularly valued.

Sakai Discussion

You are responsible for posting a long-form discussion comment (about 500 words) each week about the readings on the course Sakai forum. These comments should be reasoned and developed starting points for group discussion, and they should end with the posing of at least one question that we will take up in class. You are responsible for reading the comments of your peers in advance of class.

Assignments

“Opening” a Text for Class Discussion: Due Date TBA

At some point in the course you will “open” a text for class discussion. This entails a formal presentation that 1) summarizes the key arguments of the text, 2) presents and assesses the methodological approach(es) of the author, 3) and commences class discussion. Your presentation should focus on the relationship between theory, method, and evidence. You are also responsible for facilitating the discussion of the text.

Research Assignments

There are a number of assignments throughout the course designed to give you hands-on research experience. You are expected to come to class having completed these assignments or ready to complete them in class.

Term Paper

In the hope that this class will further your research, you can pursue one of three options for your class paper.

Option 1: Research Proposal

The proposal will be a dissertation, grant, or IRB proposal detailing questions relating to a research topic, presenting an in-depth literature review, and proposing a viable empirical strategy for carrying out the study.

Option 2: Research Project

Students pursuing this option will conduct original qualitative research during the course of the semester and write a paper based on it. The goal is that this could potentially become a journal article or even a chapter of a thesis or dissertation. You may choose any methodological approach discussed in class. Your paper must specify the method you used and defend your approach. Students pursuing this option must also complete the Collaborative IRB Certification training online (if you have not already) at: <https://research.unc.edu/offices/human-research-ethics/researchers/training/index.htm>. If you planning on carrying this work outside of class, you should also complete an IRB proposal (I am happy to guide you in this).

Option 3: Your Choice

I am open to other approaches to the final paper given the diversity of student interest in the class. If you want to pursue a different project, submit your plan in writing. This option is particularly appropriate for students who primarily work with other methods and want to complement their ongoing work, or late stage graduate students who already have projects under way and would like to link the content of this course to their current research.

For all three options, you will present your preliminary work midway through the semester and deliver a 15 minute presentation of your final paper to the class during the scheduled final exam period.

The Honor Code

The Honor Code is in effect at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. If you have questions about the Honor Code, please see me or read more at <http://honor.unc.edu>

Course Schedule

Session One: January 8th

Course Overview

Paul Edwards, "How to Read a Book v4.0."

Available online at: <http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>

Session Two: January 15th

Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk*

Session Three: January 22nd

Introduction to Qualitative Research

Becker, "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research," in Emerson, 317-330

Emerson, Introduction and Part 1 (pp. 1-54)

Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. (2003). "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research." In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 1 - 45). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Available online at: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/17670_Chapter1.pdf

Luker, 1-50

Mario Small. (2008). "Lost in Translation: How to Not Make Qualitative Research More Scientific." Available online at: <http://home.uchicago.edu/~mariosmall/documents/Lost.pdf>

Session Four: January 29th

Theory and Qualitative Research

Glen A. Bowen. (2006). "Grounded Theory and Sensitized Concepts." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5(3), 12-23.

Michael Burawoy. (1998). "The Extended Case Method." *Theory and Society* 16(1): 4-33.

Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," in Emerson, 335-353

Jack Katz, "Analytic Induction Revisited," in Emerson, 331-334

Luker, 51-98

Michael Schudson. (1989). "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols." *Theory & Society*, 18: 153-180.

Session Five: February 5th

Nielsen, *Ground Wars*

Session Six: February 12th

Cases and Sites

Bent Flyvbjerg, (2006). "Five Misunderstandings about Case Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(2), 219-245.

Alexander N. George and Andrew Bennett. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapter 1.

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson. (1997). "Discipline and Practice: "The Field" as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology." In Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Luker, 99-189

George E. Marcus. (1995). "Ethnography In/Of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24(1), 95-117.

Charles Ragin. (1999). "The Distinctiveness of Case Oriented Research." *HSR: Health Services Research*, 34(5). Available online at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1089057/pdf/hsresearch00022-0061.pdf>

Mario Small. (2009). "How Many Cases Do I Need: On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-based Research." *Ethnography* 10(5), 5-38.

Session Seven: February 19th

Planning and Conducting Fieldwork

Maxine Baca Zinn. "Insider Field Research in Minority Communities." In Emerson, pp. 159-166.

Howard Becker. (1958). "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation." *American Sociological Review*. 23(6). Available online at: <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2089053?uid=3739808&uid=2&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21101585136367>

Christina Chavez. (2008). "Conceptualizing from the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality." *The Qualitative Report* 13(3), 474-494. Available online at: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-3/chavez.pdf>

Robert M. Emerson and Melvin Pollner, "Constructing Participant/Observation Relations," in Emerson, 239-259.

Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. (1995). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 2. Available online at: <http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit/SEAreadings/Robert%20et.al.%20-%20Writing%20Ethnographic%20Fieldnotes.pdf>

Brooke Harrington. (2002). "Obtrusiveness as a Strategy in Ethnographic Research." *Qualitative Sociology* 25(1). Available online at: <http://www.mathcs.duq.edu/~packer/Courses/Psi4105/Harrington%2002%20obtrusiveness.pdf>

Baca Zinn, "Inside Field Research In Minority Communities," in Emerson, 159-166

Session Eight: February 26th

Ethics of Fieldwork

Association of Internet Researchers. "Ethical Guide." Available online at: <https://aoir.org/documents/ethics-guide/>

Clifford Christians, "Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research." In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Available online at: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/5317_Denzin_and_Lincoln_Chapter_6.pdf

Chih Hoong Sin. (2005). "Seeking Informed Consent: Reflections on Research Practice." *Sociology* 39, 277-294.

Paul Spicker. (2011). "Ethical Covert Research." *Sociology* 45(1), 118-133.

Arlene Stein. (2010). "Sex, Truths, and Audiotape: Anonymity and the Ethics of Exposure in Public Ethnography." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39(5), 554-568.

Session Nine: March 5th

Vikki Mayer, *Below the Line*

Assignment:

Project proposal presentations

Session Ten: March 19th

Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround*

Session Eleven: March 26th

Interpretative Methods

Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda James, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus. (1997). "Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman." Sage Publications (in association with the Open University), 1-40.

Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis."

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in Emerson, 55-75

Luker, 190-197

Barbara Sharf and Marsha Vanderford, "Illness Narratives and the Social Construction of Self." *Handbook of Health Communication*. Available online at: <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=zr5ebS81fcoC&oi=fnd&pg=PA9&dq=%22Barbara+Sharf%22&ots=dFkGk2DJw&sig=6plZNilbkbWMoKpnIzYKnHG5OpU#v=onepage&q=%22Barbara%20Sharf%22&f=false>

Session Twelve: April 2nd

Interviewing

Margarete Sandelowski. (1994). "The use of quotes in qualitative research." *Research in Nursing & Health* 17(6): 479-482, 1994

Margarete Sandelowski. (2002). "Reembodying Qualitative Inquiry." *Qualitative Health Research*. 12(1): 104-115.

Marleen S. Williams, Steven R. Thomsen^b, J.Kelly McCoy (2003). "Looking for an accurate mirror: A model for the relationship between media use and anorexia." *Eating Behaviors* 4(2): 127-134

Robert Weiss. (1995). *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Science of Interviewing*. New York: Free Press.

Assignment:

Sample interview questions and interviewing exercise

Session Thirteen: April 9th

Alice Marwick, *Status Update*

Assignment:

Internet field observation

Session Fourteen: April 16th

Data Analysis

Tehmina Basit. (2003). "Manual or Electronic? The Role of Coding in Qualitative Data Analysis." *Educational Research* 45(2), 143-154.

Luker, 198-241

Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chapter 6. Available online at: <http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit/SEAreadings/Robert%20et.al.%20-%20Writing%20Ethnographic%20Fieldnotes.pdf>

Assignment:

In-progress project presentations

Session Fifteen: April 23rd

Evaluating and Writing Up Qualitative Research

Howard Becker, "Tricks of the Trade," in Emerson, 353-360

Michael Bloor, "Techniques of Validation in Qualitative Research: A Critical Commentary," in Emerson, 383-396.

Kate Caelli, Lynne Ray and Judy Mill. (2003). "'Clear as Mud': Toward Greater Clarity in Generic Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Research* 2(2), 1-13.

Norman K. Denzin. (2009). "The Elephant in the Living Room: Or Extending the Conversation About the Politics of Evidence." *Qualitative Research* 9(2), 139-160.

Mark Easterby-Smith, Karen Golden-Biddle, and Karen Locke. (2009). "Working With Pluralism: Determining Quality in Qualitative Research." *Organizational Research Methods* 11(3): 419-429.

Jack Katz, "[From How to Why: On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography Parts One and Two](#)". *Ethnography*, 2 (4): 443-473, 2001 and *Ethnography* 3(1), 63-90, 2002.

Both parts available online at: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/katz/current.htm>

Michael Pratt. (2009). "For the Lack of a Boilerplate: Tips on Writing Up (and Reviewing) Qualitative Research." *Academy of Management Journal* 52(5): 856-862.

Margarete Sandelowski and Julie Barroso. (2002). "Reading Qualitative Studies." *International Journal of Qualitative Research* 1(1), 74-108.

Assignment:

In-progress project presentations. And, in advance of class, share at least one qualitative research article or book that you have found in the course of your project that you think presents data effectively.

Session Sixteen: May 30th

Final Presentations