

## **SOCY 632: Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods**

**Spring 2015, University of Maryland**

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:15

Location 1101 Art-Sociology Building.

Professor Dana R. Fisher

Office: 3133 Art-Sociology

Office Hours: 1-3 Tuesdays

This course is designed as an introductory course in qualitative research methods, it provides a general overview of the ways sociologists collect qualitative information about social phenomena, focusing on how to collect and analyze data that are reliable and applicable to our research questions. We will begin by constructing a research question that will drive our work for the entire semester. In this course, you will learn three of the main ways that qualitative data are used in sociological research: analysis of written material, participant observation, and open ended semi-structured interviews.

**Prerequisites:** Enrolled as a student in the sociology graduate program or instructor's permission

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

On completion of Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods, students will be able to:

- Utilize a number of different qualitative research methods to conduct research.
- Demonstrate understanding of which qualitative methods are most appropriate for which types of research questions and research projects.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in evaluating how qualitative methods have been used in social scientific research.

**Additional REQUIRED Readings are available through the course's Site on Canvas.**

NOTE: You should read over the reading(s) indicated on the syllabus *prior to* class. Some material will not be discussed in class. You should be certain you understand the main points of each chapter or article, and how they relate to qualitative methods as a whole. You should focus on making connections among ideas in readings from class discussions.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Attendance and Participation**

Class Attendance is **required**. You are required to be in class for the entire period. If you are late to class, or leave early, you are expected to get the information you missed from another student. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to consult with another student to obtain a complete set of notes and to find out about any assignments that you may have missed. If you have a university-authorized excuse for missing a Quiz or turning in a paper, it must be documented in writing and turned in the following class period or attached to your late assignment for consideration. Since attention to class, and participation in discussion and group exercises are important to the learning process both for the class as a whole and for you, attendance and participation are counted as part of your overall course grade.

## **Labs and Computing**

There are no lab or technology requirements for this class.

## **Paper Assignments**

You will have three paper assignments (20% each) due during the semester that will help you learn and understand concepts and prepare for class discussions. Due dates are in class (electronic assignments will not be accepted), but will be specified for each assignment. Late assignments will not be accepted or graded. Assignments turned in after lecture on the due date are considered late. If you are late to class, your assignment is late and will not be graded. A final presentation the synthesizes the work from each project is required at the end of the class.

## **Requirements and Grading:**

- (1) Paper Assignments (20% each for total of 60%)
- (2) Class participation and fulfilling weekly assignments (25%)
- (3) Final Presentation (15%)

In accordance with university policy you must have attempted the midterm exam, assignments and the final project for a passing grade; grades of "incomplete" are not given except in extreme situations, and the following letter grades will be awarded:

A	93-100%
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	Below 60%

## **Academic Integrity**

Cheating or any form of academic dishonesty can result in a permanent grade of "F/dishonesty" for the course. Written documents regarding late assignments or missed exam that contain false information are considered academic dishonesty cases and will be handled accordingly.

**Additionally, in accordance with the university's nationally recognized Honor Code, on every homework, exam, and on the reflection projects, you must write by hand the following honor pledge at the top of your work "*I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/exam*" and sign your name.**

## **Students with Learning, Emotional, Psychological and Physical Disabilities**

In accordance with university policy, every effort will be made to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation Form that has been updated for the Fall 2013 semester. This form must be presented to me no later than October 1, 2013. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who do not provide me with

documentation that has been reviewed by DSS after October 1, 2013. If you are having difficulties in reading, note taking, writing, or preparing for exams, please take advantage of the campus Learning Assistance Service. See [www.counseling.umd.edu/LAS](http://www.counseling.umd.edu/LAS) for further information.

### **Disruptive Students**

It is university policy and my policy that students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to show civility with one another, the teaching assistants, or myself will be subject to being referred to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct. See [www.jpo.umd.edu](http://www.jpo.umd.edu) for further information.

### **Medical Excuses**

Campus Senate policy requires students who are absent due to illness/injury to furnish documentary support to the instructor. I require students to contact me by email *prior to* class time to indicate that you have an illness or an injury. You must provide written documentation verifying your illness/injury immediately upon your return to class. You will not be allowed to turn in missed assignments or make up quizzes, tests, papers, etc. if you have not provided this documentation. Documentation not presented to me in a timely manner will not be accepted. In addition, if it is found that you have falsified the documentation provided, I will refer you to the University's Student Conduct Office."

### **Religious Observance**

In accordance with university policy on religious observance, students must provide in writing a request for a make-up exam if I have indicated a date on this syllabus that you are unable to make due to a specific religious observance (specify) on a specific date.

### **Inclement Weather**

If campus is closed due to inclement weather or other campus emergencies, and assignments and/or exams are scheduled during the closure, the assignments are due the next time our class meets.

### **Required Books at the University Book Center:**

Duneier, Mitchell and Ovie Carter. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux. ISBN 978-0374527253

Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN 978-0520241134

Ferree, Myra Marx, William A. Gamson, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht. 2002. *Shaping abortion discourse : democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-052179384X

Fisher, Dana. 2006. *Activism, inc.: how the outsourcing of grassroots campaigns is strangling progressive politics in America*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press. ISBN 978-0804752176

Khan, Shamus. 2011. *Privilege*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. ISBN 978-0691156231

Lofland, John, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing social*

- settings: a guide to qualitative observation and analysis, 4<sup>th</sup> edition.* Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company. ISBN 978-0534528614
- Newman, Katherine S. 1999. *No shame in my game : the working poor in the inner city.* New York: Knopf and the Russell Sage Foundation. ISBN 978-0375703799
- Warren, Carol A. B. and Tracy X. Karner. 2010. *Discovering qualitative methods : field research, interviews, and analysis.* New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0195384291
- Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies.* New York: Free Press. ISBN 978-0684823126

*Additional Readings are available online.*

## **Weekly Syllabus: Schedule of Topics and Readings**

### **Week 1, Session 1 (26 January): Introduction**

Go over Syllabus and discuss 1<sup>st</sup> assignment

### **Week 1, Session 2 (28 January): Overview**

#### **Readings:**

Howard Becker, 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research." Pp. 53-72 in *Ethnography and Human Development. Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*, ed. Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard A. Schweder. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Khan and Fisher. 2013. Introduction to *The Practice of Research.* Oxford University Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture"

#### **Assignment:**

In pairs meet your "partner" and, based on the data that you observe, write a narrative summary.

### **Week 2, Session 1 (2 February): Constructing a Research Question**

#### **Readings:**

Special issue on Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy, edited by Katherine Newman. 2002. *Sociological Methods and Research*, (volume 31, number 2). Read first four articles

National Science Foundation. 2004. *Workshop on Scientific Foundations of Qualitative Research.* Washington, DC. Available at:

<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2004/nsf04219/nsf04219.pdf>

#### **Assignment:**

Develop a general research question that will direct your research for the semester, write a two-page review of the research questions that have been asked and the main methods used

in the research. Identify sources that you will use for the three components of the class: analysis of written text, participant observation, and open ended semi-structured interviews.

### **Week 2, Session 2 (4 February): Qualitative analysis of Written Text**

#### **Readings:**

Warren, Carol A. B. and Tracy X. Karner. 2010. *Discovering qualitative methods : field research, interviews, and analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 8-9: 177-245

#### **Assignment:**

Refine research question for this methodological approach—submit this research question. Class discussion will determine how much data must be collected and analyzed for the written text assignment. Enter data into database (excel), identify THREE theoretically driven codes that will be used to code your data and provide clear operationalizations of these codes and start coding.

### **Week 3, (9 and 11 February): Written Text II**

#### **Readings:**

Ferree, Myra Marx, William A. Gamson, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht. 2002. *Shaping abortion discourse : democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.(part 1)

**Assignment:** Complete Coding and prepare summary of analysis for class.

### **Week 4 (16 and 18 February): Written Text III**

#### **Readings:**

Ferree, Myra Marx, William A. Gamson, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht. 2002. *Shaping abortion discourse : democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.(part 2)

**Assignment:** Submit Paper 1 on findings from analysis of written text.

### **Week 5 (23 and 25 February): Participant Observation**

#### **Readings:**

Burawoy, Michael (2003). Revisits: An Outline of a Theory of Reflexive Ethnography. *American Sociological Review*, 68(5):645-679.

Lofland, John, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing social settings : a guide to qualitative observation and analysis, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company. Parts 1 and 2: 9-178.

#### **Assignment:**

Refine research question for this methodological approach and submit. Set-up your field research: gain access, and set up a sampling frame and plan for data collection.

### **Week 6 (2 and 4 March): Participant Observation II**

**Readings:**

Warren, Carol A. B. and Tracy X. Karner. 2010. *Discovering qualitative methods : field research, interviews, and analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 5: 107-125.

Khan, Shamus. 2011. *Privilege*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

**Assignments:** Collect 7 hours of data, take field notes on your time in the field. Type up field notes.

**Week 7 (9 and 11 March): Participant Observation III****Readings:**

Jerolmack and Kahn. Forthcoming. "Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy."

Duneier, Mitchell and Ovie Carter. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.

**SPRING BREAK week of 16 March****Week 9 (23 and 25 March): Participant Observation IV****Readings:**

Bourgois, Philippe. 1998. "Just Another night in a Shooting Gallery." *Theory, Culture, & Society*. Volume 15 (2): 37-66.

Goffman, Alice. 2009. "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto." *American Sociological Review*. Volume 74 (June): 339-357.

**Week 10 (30 March and 1 April): CATCH-UP Week**

**Assignment:** Submit Paper 2 on findings from analysis of field research.

**Week 11 (6 and 8 April): Open Ended Semi-Structured Interviews****Readings:**

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

**Assignment:** Refine research question for this methodological approach and submit. Set-up your field research: gain access, and set up a sampling frame and plan for data collection. Develop Interview Protocol (3 interview questions plus follow-ups).

**Week 12 (13 and 15 April): Interviews II****Readings:**

Fisher, Dana. 2006. *Activism, inc. : how the outsourcing of grassroots campaigns is strangling progressive politics in America*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

**Assignment:** Conduct your interviews (5) and write fieldnotes of each meeting. Transcribe data and come up with 3 codes for analysis.

**Week 13 (20 and 22 April): Interviews III**

**Readings:**

Newman, Katherine S. 1999. *No shame in my game : the working poor in the inner city*. New York: Knopf and the Russell Sage Foundation.

**Assignment:** Manually code transcripts (stage 1 of analysis—discuss additional stages that one would do).

**Week 14 (27 and 29 April): Interviews IV**

**Readings:**

Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

**Week 15 (4 and 6 May): CATCH-UP WEEK**

**Assignments:** Submit Paper 3 on findings from analysis of interview data.

**Week 16 (11 and 13 May): Final Presentations Synthesizing Findings from Three Projects**