LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Qualitative Methods: Sociology 5113WA

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Winter 2011
Mondays 9:00-12:00

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**Description And Objectives**

This seminar course is designed to introduce students to the principles behind qualitative research and methods and discuss issues such as:

⇒ the relationship between theory and method
⇒ reasons for the use of qualitative methods in sociology
⇒ how to distinguish “good” qualitative research from research that is poorly executed
⇒ ethical issues in qualitative research
⇒ writing qualitative research.

**Readings**

Students are expected to engage in critical reflection and debate of the ideas presented in readings:


A significant number of other required readings are either in books on reserve in the library, or (some) can be borrowed from the professor. As well, pdf’s of journal articles are posted to Moodle.

**Assignments and Weight (see details, pp 5ff)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Location paper (4-6 pp)</td>
<td>Feb. 14</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observational Research Report (10-20 pp)</td>
<td>Mar. 21</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focused Literature Review (6-8 pp)</td>
<td>Apr. 11</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation</td>
<td>Every class</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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**Schedule of Weekly Topics and Readings**

**Week 1**

**Jan 10**

*Introduction to the course*

Readings:


Bloor, Michael. "Addressing Social Problems through Qualitative Research." Ch. 22 in *QR3*

Week 2  Paradigmatic Assumptions  
Jan 17  
Readings:  

In-class work for week 2, be prepared to discuss the paradigmatic assumptions that most attract you and why.

Week 3  Issues in Interpretivism and Constructionism  
Jan 24  
Readings:  

In-class work for Week 3, bring to class a piece of qualitative research that you think is interesting and be prepared to discuss: why it is interesting; what are the paradigmatic assumptions framing the research; and the author’s voice.

Week 4  Reflexivity and Social Location  
Jan 31  

In-class work for Week 4, be prepared to discuss your own social location and how that affects your research interests.

Week 5  Ethical Issues  
Feb 7  
Readings:  
Ryen, Anne. "Ethics and Qualitative Research.” Ch 23 in QR3.  

Recommended:
For Week 5, complete the TCPS tutorial and be prepared to discuss the extent to which you now feel informed about and able to address ethical problems that can arise when doing qualitative research. Comment on who's interests are protected by the TCPS.

Due Feb 14, Week 6: 4-6 pp on the significance of social location regarding what it’s possible for you to research.

Week 6  Issues in Gathering Observational Data
Feb 14  Readings:

For Week 6, come with ideas for your observational assignment. We will discuss what you might observe, how you might do it and what you expect to observe.

Week 7  Analyzing Texts
Feb 28  Readings:
Coffey, Amanda & Paul Atkinson. “Analysing Documentary Realities.” Ch. 5 in QR3.
Prior, Lindsay. “Using Documents in Social Research.” Ch. 6 in QR3.
Recommended:

In-class assignment for Week 7, bring to class a short text to discuss and analyze using techniques outlined in this week’s readings – perhaps a magazine or newspaper article.

Week 8  Issues in Reviewing the Literature
Mar 7  Readings:
Becker, Howard S. “Terrorized by the Literature.” Ch. 8 in WSS
Dixon-Woods, Mary. "Systematic Reviews and Qualitative Methods.” Ch. 18 in QR3
Recommended web resources:
The Literature Review: A Few Tips on Conducting It -
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review
Writing a Literature Review - http://www.smu.ca/administration/library/litrev.html
Literature Reviews - http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/literature_review.html

**In-class assignment for Week 8**, bring to class a short literature review on a subject that interests you and that you think is particularly good and be prepared to discuss why you think it is good.

**Week 9**  
**Issues in Interviewing**

Mar 14

Readings:
- Miller, Jody & Barry Glassner, The "Inside" and the "Outside": Finding Realities in Interviews, Ch 8 in QR3
- Holstein, James & Jaber Gubrium, "Animating Interview Narratives," Ch 9 in QR3  
- Wilkinson Sue, “Focus Group Data,” Ch 10 in QR3

Recommended:
There is a well-developed literature on qualitative interviewing, discussing both theoretical and “how to” issues. See, for example:
- Elliot Mishler, Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative
- H. Rubin and Irene Rubin, Qualitative Interviewing
- Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, Handbook of Qualitative Interviewing
- Steiner Kvale, InterViews

**In-class assignment for Week 9**, bring to class an article based on qualitative interviewing, preferably one that is relevant to your own research topic. Be prepared to discuss the extent to which the article adequately discusses how the interview data were created; and how the interview data add to an understanding of your topic.

**Week 10**  
**Narrative Inquiry**

Mar 21


Recommended:

**In-class assignment for Week 10**, bring an example narrative to discuss how to resist what Reissman (p. 312) calls “narrative seduction.” How and why was the narrative produced and what do you make of it?

**Due Mar. 21: Observational Research Report**

**Week 11**  
**Analysis, Interpretation, and Evaluative Criteria**

Mar 28

Readings:
- Charmaz, Kathy and Anthony Bryant, Grounded Theory and Credibility.” Ch. 16 in QR3
- Rapley, Tim. "Some Pragmatics of Qualitative Data Analysis." Ch 15 in QR3

Recommended:
In-class assignment for Week 11, be prepared to discuss the pros and cons of various analytic strategies (e.g. narrative inquiry; grounded theory; thematic analysis), how different strategies produce different versions of reality, and how we might go about deciding on the adequacy of any analysis offered.

**In-class assignment for Week 11**

**Week 12  Writing Qualitative Research**

Apr 4 Readings:
- Becker, Howard S. *WSS.*
- Marvasti, Amir. “Three Aspects of Writing Qualitative Research: Practice, Genre and Audience.” Ch. 21 in *QR3.*

For Week 12, be prepared to discuss the writing process.

Due Apr 11: 6-8 pp focused literature review

**Assignment Details**

**Format Guidelines for Written Assignments**

⇒ do not include a title page but write your name and the title of your paper at the top of the first page
⇒ all papers must be typed and double-spaced, using a font size comparable to Times New Roman 12 pt. or Arial 11 pt.
⇒ margins on each page must be at least 1” on all sides
⇒ page numbers must be on all pages except the first
⇒ do not staple your pages but use a paper-clip
⇒ do not place your paper inside any kind of cover
⇒ grammar and spelling can make or break a paper, thus all papers MUST BE PROOFREAD
⇒ use ASA format for the list of references

**Seminar Participation (40%)**

A. General Participation (20%)

This seminar course depends upon the active and informed participation of all members of the seminar. Weekly seminar discussions and presentations are best when they are dynamic, informed, creative, stimulating and collective. Thus, all students will be expected to be prepared to discuss issues raised by the readings. Students (even when not responsible for facilitating a seminar discussion) are expected to reflect on the readings bring questions and comments for discussion that are based on the required readings, and be prepared to contribute to in-class exercises.

Your grade will reflect the degree of preparation you show for each class and the degree of thoughtful and critical contributions to class discussions and in-class assignments that you show.

B. Seminar Facilitation (20%)

Each student will be expected to lead three seminar discussions based on a week's readings (2 seminars in pairs, 1 alone). This requires:

⇒ briefly summarizing the significance/relevance of main points/arguments/ideas
⇒ offering some critical reflection about the ideas and arguments put forward – e.g. how they are constructed, their coherence, and how the readings compare and contrast regarding the week's topic
being prepared to respond to questions, and
encouraging class discussion of issues. Seminar leaders may want to bring handouts for the class to follow.

Note that to encourage class discussion, you need to do more than simply come with a list of questions to ask. You need to have already spent time critically reflecting on issues so that you can engage in discussion yourself.

**Paper on the Significance of Social Location, due Feb. 14 (15%)**

Identify a qualitative research project that interests you, and discuss the role played by your own social location in shaping your interest. Include a discussion of how your social location affects:

⇒ the kinds of research questions that interest you;
⇒ your approach to research; and
⇒ the kinds of things it is possible for you to find out as you do research. With reference to your identified interest, are there ways in which your social location constrains what you can learn?

Further details to be discussed in class.

**Observational Research Report, due Mar. 21 (20%)**

You are required to observe a situation without interacting with others and write a reflexive and analytical report that includes:

⇒ a discussion of your conceptual baggage;
⇒ a discussion of the process of discovery;
⇒ a presentation of the data;
⇒ an analysis of the data; and
⇒ a conclusion.

Further details to be discussed in class.

**Focused Literature Review, due Apr. 11 (25%)**

Details TBA

**References**


**Selected Qualitative Journals**

Forum: Qualitative Social Research
<http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm>

International Journal of Qualitative Methods

International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education

International Journal of Social Research Methodology

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography

Qualitative Health Research

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative Research

Qualitative Sociology

Studies in Symbolic Interaction

Symbolic Interactionism