

Sociology 183
Spring 2009 TTh, 9:30-10:50 am
Instructor: Kathryn M. Young
Office: Bldg. 120, Room 53
kmyoung@stanford.edu

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Course Description

Qualitative (non-statistical) social science research can form the basis of surprising and profound discoveries about individuals and societies. Ethnographies, surveys, interviews, and focus groups contribute insight and depth to our understanding of the human condition and shed light on processes that may not be identifiable using big data sets.

In this course you will learn how to design qualitative methods projects which you can put to good use as early as this summer. You will brainstorm a project, set research goals, and learn to collect data, observe research ethics, and write up your work. By the end of the course you will have a clearly-defined project and be ready for fieldwork. This course is especially ideal for students interested in doing research this summer, and/or writing an honors thesis.

Requirements

Participation: 25%

Mini-Assignments: 25% (5%)

Book Review: 15%

Final Paper Draft: 10%

Final Paper and Presentation: 25%

Participation

Come to each class prepared to engage actively in discussion. Readings are due the day for which they are assigned—if a reading is listed under “April 12,” that means you need to read it before the April 12 class. Attendance is expected at every class session.

Contacting the Instructor:

I have office hours Thursday afternoons from 1-3 pm and by appointment. Feel free to drop by office hours just to chat, even if you don't have a specific question. I'm also available via email and will try to respond to questions within 48 hours.

Laptop Policy

Laptops are not permitted in class.

Honor Code:

As a Stanford student, you agree to abide by the Honor Code. This includes not giving or receiving unpermitted aid in work to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading. You are also responsible for seeing to it that others uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code. Unless otherwise stated by the instructor, all assignments in this class are to be your sole efforts.

Disability Accommodations and Other Services

If you know or are concerned that you may have a disability, contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) (<http://www.stanford.edu/group/DRC/>, info@drc.stanford.edu). The DRC can provide a variety of resources to aid instruction, and will work with the instructor and the student to arrange suitable accommodation. If you require accommodation, it is your responsibility to contact the DRC, which will keep the details of your circumstances in confidence and work with you and your instructors to arrange suitable accommodation. Physical or mental conditions that interfere with your ability to complete coursework as scheduled in a syllabus constitute circumstances in which you should consult the Disability Resource Center.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is available to help students who experience a wide variety of personal, academic and relationship concerns. Contact (650) 723-3785 (24 hours a day).

Materials:

Emerson, Robert., et. al. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.
Fink, Arlene. 2002. *How to Ask Survey Questions* (2nd Ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
Lofland, John, et. al. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings* (4th Ed.). Thomson/Wadsworth.
McDermott, Monica. 2006. *Working-Class White*. University of California Press.
Weiss, Robert S. 1995. *Learning From Strangers*. The Free Press.

Other readings will be available on Coursework, noted “CW” in the syllabus. The books are available at the Stanford Bookstore, but online booksellers like alibris.com and powells.com have used copies at excellent prices (be sure to get the correct editions).

Late Work: You have 24 hours’ extension to use on one assignment—no need to explain why or ask me in advance. In general, late work will not be accepted.

Logistics: Use standard formatting for everything you turn in: double-space, 1-inch margins, 11- or 12-pt Times New Roman, etc.

Mini-assignments: Six will be assigned, and you are required to do five. They should be roughly 350 words. The purpose of these assignments is to let you practice, and receive feedback on, skills you learn in this class. They need not be polished works of social scientific genius.

Meetings with the Instructor: As part of the participation for this class, you are required to meet with me at least once (and I recommend twice) during the quarter to discuss your progress. I’ll have a sign-up sheet for these meetings available in the first or second week of class. They will generally take place right after class.

SYLLABUS

Note: Since this is a highly interactive seminar, some of these readings may be changed or adjusted based on the class's interests. When this occurs, you'll get plenty of notice, and I'll never add more pages than I remove, so the workload will stay similar to what you see here.

Week 1, Class 1. Tuesday, March 31: Introduction: Why Do Qualitative Work?

- *Readings:* Syllabus

Week 1, Class 2. Thursday, April 2: Developing a Project; Methodological Approaches

- *Readings:* Lofland: Intro and Ch. 1; McDermott: Intro

Week 2, Class 3. Tuesday, April 7: Choosing a Site, Gaining Access, Building Trust

- *Readings:* Lofland: Chs. 2-3; McDermott: Ch. 1 and Appendix 2; Blee, "Inside Organized Racism" (CW).

Week 2, Class 4. Thursday, April 9: Research Ethics and Human Subjects

- *Readings:* Sin, "Seeking Informed Consent" (CW), Allen, "Spies Like Us" (CW); Humphreys, "Tearoom Trade" (CW); Human Subjects Websites (CW).
- *Due:* Mini-assignment #1: Framing Your Question and Approach

Week 3, Class 5. Tuesday, April 14: Intro to Ethnography and Participant-Observation

- *Readings:* Lofland Ch. 4; Emerson Ch. 1; Geertz: "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (CW); Waters, "Black Identities" Appendix (CW).
- *Due:* Selection of book for your book review (to me via email by 5 pm)

Week 3, Class 6. Thursday, April 16: Ethnographic Fieldnotes

- *Readings:* Emerson Chs. 2-5
- *Due:* Mini-assignment #2: Fieldnotes

Week 4, Class 7. Tuesday, April 21: Interviews

- *Readings:* Weiss: Chs. 1-4.

Week 4, Class 8. Thursday, April 23: Interviews

- *Readings:* Weiss: Ch. 5 and Appendix C; Finkel et. al: "Race-of-Interviewer Effects in a Pre-election Poll" (CW).
- *Due:* Mini-assignment #3: Interview Practice

Week 5, Class 9. Tuesday, April 28: Surveys: Question and Response Types; Language

- *Readings:* Fink: Chs. 1-3; Krosnick: "A Review: Question Wording and Reports of Survey Results" (CW); Couper: "Web Surveys" up to p. 475 (CW).

Week 5, Class 10. Thursday, April 30: Surveys: Asking About Knowledge and Attitudes

- *Readings:* Fink: Chs. 4 and 6; Schurman: “Attitudes vs. Actions Versus Attitudes vs. Attitudes” (CW); Javeline: “Response Effects in Polite Cultures” (CW).
- *Due:* Mini-assignment #4: Writing Survey Questions

Week 6, Class 11. Tuesday, May 5: Data Analysis; Coding; Memoing

- *Readings:* Weiss: Ch. 6; Emerson Ch. 6

Week 7, Class 13. Thursday, May 7: Putting it All Together

- *Readings:* McDermott: Ch’s 2-6 and conclusion
- *Due:* Mini-assignment #6: Critique of McDermott

Week 6, Class 12. Tuesday, May 12: Use of Atlas.ti and other Software

- *Readings:* TBA (CW)
- *Due:* Mini-assignment #5: Coding and Memoing Practice

Week 7, Class 14. Thursday, May 14: Reliability, Validation, and Interpretation

- *Readings:* TBA
- *Due:* Book reviews (bring enough copies for everyone in the class)

Week 8, Class 15. Tuesday, May 19: Writing Up Qualitative Work

- *Readings:* Weiss: Ch. 7; Emerson Ch. 7.

Week 8, Class 16. Thursday, May 21: Writing Up Qualitative Work; Peer Reviews

- *Readings:* none
- *Due:* Final Paper Draft (three copies).

Week 9: NO CLASS

- *Due:* Email peer reviews to me and to your peers by Tuesday, May 25 at 10 am. (This is part of your participation grade.)

Week 10, Class 17. Tuesday, June 2

- *Readings:* None
- *Due:* Presentations

Finals Week

- *Due:* Final Paper by Monday, June 8 at noon (in my box if you’d like written comments; otherwise via email).