

The University of Georgia

Sociology 6750

Qualitative Methods of Social Research

Th 5:00-7:45, Baldwin Hall 114A

Instructor:	Joseph C. Hermanowicz	Term:	Fall, 2008
Telephone:	706-542-3129	Office:	Baldwin 324A
E-mail:	jch1@uga.edu	Office Hours:	By Appointment

Purpose:

This course is an overview of qualitative research methods in sociology and related fields. The course shall engage the practitioner with the practicalities, realities, limitations, and underpinnings of methods for qualitative research. In illustration, the course will concentrate on those qualitative research approaches that have defined a core of scholarly work in sociology. These include: observation, the interview, case studies, focus groups, life histories and life stories. In addition, the course will examine the use of film as an approach to qualitative research.

The course is designed to educate and prepare students according to specific objectives:

1. To understand and evaluate the principles of qualitative research methods.
2. To recognize when, and when not, to use qualitative research methods.
3. To differentiate between and implement varying methods of qualitative research.
4. To apply a qualitative research method to a setting.
5. To collect and appropriately record qualitative data.
6. To link qualitative data to sociological concepts and to build theory.
7. To formulate and engage in analysis of qualitative data.
8. To tell about some aspect of society by writing clearly from qualitative research.

Qualitative research, when done well, is challenging to say the very least. It requires a substantial investment of time, including time away from one's normal routines and comfortable surroundings. The learning of qualitative research methods and the development of a course project is highly cumulative: our class meetings will often build on one another. Attendance is imperative, as is your completion of and active engagement with all of the readings for when they are assigned.

Format:

The course will operate as a combination of lecture and discussion. The objectives of the course will be pursued through a schedule of readings, lectures, and class participation. In addition, students will complete an independent research project in the use of qualitative methods for social research.

Readings:

The required readings for the course are listed on the course schedule. They are available through the UGA electronic course reserves: <http://gil.uga.edu/> The password is: **qualmethods**

Requirements:

1. Reading, as listed on the course schedule.
2. Mid-Semester Exercises. The exercises will include:
 - A 1-2 pp. research proposal
 - An observational description
 - An interview protocol

Credit for these exercises will be given only if submitted on or before the date when they are due. All exercises should be submitted in hard copy only; no e-mail submissions.

3. Term Research Project & Paper. Each student will complete an independent research project that includes the use of interviews and observation. These methods will be used (in whole or in part) to study a topic selected by the student.

The topic may pertain to a student's area of interest or be related to ongoing research, including research as part of a thesis, dissertation, or other research project. The course project must involve fieldwork and data collection during the present term. Projects exclusively based upon texts, documents, media, etc. are not appropriate for this course, unless they also involve a fieldwork component. The project may be viewed as a pilot study in anticipation of a full-fledged undertaking.

The project will result in a research paper that describes the research setting(s) and respondents; presents, analyzes, and interprets the results of the research, and begins to formulate theory in connection to the collected data. All materials from the research project, including fieldnotes, interview protocols, and interview tapes will be submitted with the final paper. (See special handout.)

Summary of Steps of the Term Project:

- A. Select Topic and Fieldwork Setting(s).
- B. Prepare a Research Proposal.
- C. Collect Data.
- D. Analyze Data.
- E. Prepare an Oral Presentation on Fieldwork (last 4 class meetings)
- F. Write Research Paper.

Grades:

Attendance is obligatory. A point system for course requirements is as follows:

Research Proposal	10 pts.
Mid-Semester Description Exercise:	20 pts.
Mid-Semester Interview Protocol:	20 pts.
<u>Term Research Project:</u>	<u>100 pts.</u>
Total:	150 pts.

Final grades are based on the distribution below. There is no rounding.

140-150 pts. = A
135-139 pts. = A-
132-134 pts. = B+
125-131 pts. = B
120-124 pts. = B-
117-119 pts. = C+
110-116 pts. = C
105-109 pts. = C-
90-104 pts. = D
0-89 pts. = F

Academic Honesty:

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. Ignorance of these policies is not an acceptable defense against violations of them. “A Culture of Honesty” and materials related to University policies governing academic work, including the disciplinary actions that will automatically be taken if a student violates academic honesty policies, may be found at:

<http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>

Grievances:

The Department of Sociology has a Human Rights Committee for the resolution of student grievances. Any student registered for a sociology course at the University who feels that he or she has not been treated in a fair or professional manner by an instructor is advised to follow these procedures:

- 1) The student should discuss his or her problems with the instructor of the course, unless extenuating circumstances prohibit such discussion.
- 2) If that discussion does not resolve the grievance, the student should then discuss the problem with the Head of the Sociology Department.
- 3) If that discussion does not resolve the grievance to the student's satisfaction, the student may request the activation of the Human Rights Committee by submitting a letter to the Chair of the Committee.

The Human Rights Committee will have the responsibility of investigating all charges in accordance with procedures on file in the Sociology Department, copies of which are available to students. The Committee will also have the responsibility of making recommendations in writing to the Head, copies of which will be made available to the student and instructor. The Department Head will review the recommendations, and make a decision, in writing, with copies to the student and instructor. Any appeal of that decision must be made to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Course Schedule

*The course syllabus is a general plan for the course;
deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Aug. 21: Introduction & Orientation to Qualitative Methods

Becker, Howard S. 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research." In Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard A. Shweder (eds.), Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry, 53-71. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Aug. 28: Part I
Qualitative Data & Theory

Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research, 21-77. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

For Reference Only—Illustration of Inductive Theory & Qualitative Data:

Goffman, Erving. 1959. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. See especially chapter 1, "Performances." (Not on reserve)

For Reference Only—Illustration of Deductive Theory & Qualitative Data:

Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 2003. Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. See especially pp. 26-35; 114-195. (Not on reserve)

Part II
Designing Qualitative Research: Framing Questions and Problems

Becker, Howard S., Blanche Geer, Everett C. Hughes, and Anselm L. Strauss. 1961. "Design of the Study" and "Perspective, Culture, and Organization." In Boys in White: Student Culture in Medical School, 17-48. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sep. 4: Part I
Getting In & Getting Along in Qualitative Research

Bosk, Charles L. 1979. "Appendix: The Field Worker and the Surgeon." In Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure, 193-213. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Part II
Ethics in Qualitative Research

Film: Titicut Follies, Part 1

Research Proposals Due:

In a 2 pp. double-spaced statement, account for the research you propose to conduct. Write clearly and logically, so that someone unfamiliar with you, would know what you are going to do.

1. State the research question of the study. (What)
2. State the specific planned research site(s). (Where)
3. State the plan for how the research will be conducted. (How)

Sep. 11: Parts I & II
Ethics in Qualitative Research

Film: Titicut Follies, Part 2

Anderson, Carolyn and Thomas W. Benson. 1988. "Direct Cinema and the Myth of Informed Consent: The Case of Titicut Follies." In Larry Gross, John Stuart Katz, and Jay Ruby (eds.), Image Ethics: The Moral Right of Subjects in Photographs, Film, and Television, 58-90. New York: Oxford University Press.

Scarce, Rik. 1994. "(No) Trial (But) Tribulations: When Courts and Ethnography Conflict." Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 23:123-149.

Sep. 18: Part I
Observation

Suttles, Gerald D. 1968. "The Ecological Basis of Ordered Segmentation," "Institutional Arrangements." In The Social Order of the Slum: Ethnicity and Territory in the Inner City, 13-60; See tables pp. 69; 139; 162; 177-180. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Part II
Observation

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. "Writing Up Fieldnotes II: Creating Scenes on the Page," "Pursuing Members' Meanings." In Writing Ethnographic Research, 66-141. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sep. 25: Parts I & II
 Observation

Task: Write a description of someone you know *or* someone with whom you are not familiar. Bring and submit your type-written, double-spaced description in class.

Objective: To describe this person as never before. Offer a description of this person such that your audience feels *as if* they knew them the way you do. The objective is akin to writing a eulogy for a funeral. Convey the essence of the person so that those, however far removed, leave knowing what life inhabited, what is otherwise for us, the dead.

Oct. 2: Part I
 The Interview

Sudman, Seymour and Norman M. Bradburn. 1982. "Asking Threatening Questions about Behavior," "Measuring Attitudes: Formulating Questions," "Order of the Questionnaire," "Format of the Questionnaire." In Asking Questions: A Practical Guide to Questionnaire Design, 54-87; 119-147; 207-260. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Example:

Laumann, Edward O., John H. Gagnon, Robert T. Michael, and Stuart Michaels. 1994. "Appendix C: The NHSLS [National Health and Social Life Survey] Questionnaire." In The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States, 606-677. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Part II
The Interview

Rubin, Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin. 1995. "Interviews as Guided Conversations." In Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data, 122-144. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Example:

Hermanowicz, Joseph C. 1998. "Appendix A—Interview Questions." In The Stars Are Not Enough: Scientists—Their Passions and Professions, 211-213. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Oct. 9: Parts I & II
 The Interview

Your Interview Questions: Today's class is devoted to discussing the set of interview questions you have developed for your term research project.

- Construct your own, complete list of organized interview questions. Refer to the example protocol for organization.
- Identify your research site(s) on the protocol.
- Remember on your protocol to include the following, as covered in class:
 - 20-30 main questions
 - Topical Headings
 - Probe Questions
- Turn in a type-written copy of your interview protocol at the end of class.

Oct. 16: Part I
 Case Studies

Platt, Jennifer. 1992. "Cases of cases...of cases." In Charles L. Ragin and Howard S. Becker (eds.), What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry, 21-52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Part II
Life Histories & Life Stories

Shaw, Clifford R. [1930] 1966. "History of Stanley's Behavior Difficulties," "Starting Down Grade," "The Baby Bandhouse," "The Lure of the Underworld," "Summary of Case and Social Treatment." In The

Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story, 24-32; 47-64; 79-102; 164-183. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

*Out-of-class: View Hoop Dreams in preparation for next week's schedule.

Oct. 23: Part I
Focus Groups

Stewart, David W., Prem N. Shamdasani, and Dennis W. Rook. 2007. "Introduction: Focus Group History, Theory, and Practice," "Focus Groups and the Research Toolbox," and "Recruiting Focus Group Participants and Designing the Interview Guide." In Focus Groups: Theory and Practice, 2nd Edition, 1-17; 37-68. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Part II
The Use of Film: Hoop Dreams. (View film before class date)

Sperber, Murray. 1996. "Hoop Dreams, Hollywood Dreams." Jump Cut 40:3-7.

Davis, Seth. August 30, 2006. "Still Dreaming." Sports Illustrated. www.SI.com. Date retrieved: October 9, 2007.

Coles, Robert. 1997. "The Tradition: Fact and Fiction." In Doing Documentary Work, 87-145. New York: Oxford University Press.

Oct. 30: Part I
Analysis of Qualitative Data & Telling About Society

Lofland, John and Lyn H. Lofland. 1984. "Thinking Units," "Asking Questions," "Being Interesting," "Developing Analysis." In Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis 2nd ed., 71-127. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Berg, Bruce L. 2007. "Writing Research Papers: Sorting the Noodles from the Soup." In Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, 6th ed., 340-363. Boston: Pearson.

Turabian, Kate L. 2007. "Revising Your Draft," "Writing Your Final Introduction and Conclusion," and "Revising Sentences." In A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 98-119. Revised by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams,

and University of Chicago Press Staff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Part II

Assessment of Quality in Qualitative Research

Ambert, Anne-Marie, Patricia A. Adler, Peter Adler, and Daniel F. Detzner. 1995. "Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research." Journal of Marriage and the Family 57:879-893.

Nov. 6: Projects—I

Nov. 13: Projects—II

Nov. 20: Projects—III

Dec. 4: Projects—IV

Dec. 11: Papers, Fieldnotes & All Supporting Materials Due
 Hard copy only
 Instructor's Mailbox—Baldwin Hall Mailroom
 No later than 5 p.m.