

## SOCI 3590: QUALITATIVE METHODS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

Spring Semester 2009

MWF, 9:05am – 9:55am OR 10:10am – 11:00am

**Instructor:** Nichole Arnault

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**Office Hours:** Friday 12:30pm – 2:30pm, or by appointment

### Course Description:

This course is intended to give you an overview of qualitative research methods in sociology. We will begin the course with a discussion of qualitative vs. quantitative research, approaches to social research, linking theory and data, and ethnical issues in social research. We then shift our attention to studying and engaging a number of types of qualitative research, with a focus on observation, interviewing, and content analysis. You will complete three independent research papers, intended to give you experience in data collection and analysis. In addition to these assignments, you will complete a number of short in-class and out-of-class qualitative research exercises. As you work on these projects, each of you will be expected to regularly analyze and discuss (1) the progress and findings of your research, and (2) your development as researchers.

### Purposes and Objectives:

As sociology majors who have chosen to focus your research interests on qualitative methods, I believe that it is important for each of you to:

- read and analyze current sociological, qualitative research
- understand basic qualitative research concepts and techniques
- demonstrate that you can produce well-thought out, academic writing
- be able to link research and theoretical concepts

Additionally, qualitative methods places a particular premium on writing and writing skills, so we will be working to develop those skills in the context of the class.

### Required Readings:

1. Esterberg, Kristin G. 2002. *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
2. Additional readings as listed in the schedule are available on WebCT. ALL readings require the password “qualmethods.” Additional materials may be added to the WebCT readings or handed out by the instructor.

### WebCT

I have set up a WebCT page for this course, located at [webct.uga.edu](http://webct.uga.edu). I will periodically post relevant material on this page including syllabus or schedule changes, readings, interesting websites, etc. To access WebCT, you must have a UGA MyID. (If you do not have one, go to [www.arches.uga.edu/myid](http://www.arches.uga.edu/myid) and follow the instructions.) Students will need to keep abreast of announcements made in class and/or via WebCT about any changes in schedules and assignments. NOTE: I strongly prefer to NOT use WebCT email as a method of communication. Please use my university email address provided on this syllabus.

### Course Grading

Your grades will be made up of the following components:

Open Notebook Quizzes =	75 points total	(5 quizzes x 15 points each)
Qualitative Papers =	135 points total	(3 papers x 45 points each)
Final Presentation =	15 points	
Active Participation =	75 points	(includes in-class and out-of-class assignments)
Attendance =	can have points added or deducted based on attendance (see below)	
Total =	300 points	

*Final Grades:*

A $\leq$ 282 A- = 270 - 281	B+ = 261 - 269 B = 249 - 260 B- = 240 - 248	C+ = 231 - 239 C = 219 - 230 C- = 210 - 218	D = 180 - 209	F = 0 - 179
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**Open Notebook Quizzes**

I assign a substantial amount of reading for this class. Not only do you have a text book that describes the basics of social research, but I also give you a number of good examples of published qualitative research. I will give you a series of questions with each reading assignment that should help to guide your reading and prepare you for class discussion. To encourage you to take good notes and to keep up with the readings, we will have a total of five open-notebook quizzes. No photocopied notes and no photocopies of the textbook are permitted... all notes must be your own, and I reserve the right to check and compare class notes. These quizzes are in lieu of tests and will be given approximately every two weeks. These quizzes should not be difficult provided that you have kept up with your reading, answered your reading questions, and attended class. Each quiz is worth 15 points of your final grade (75 points total) and should take no more than 25 minutes of the class period.

**Qualitative Papers**

You will complete three qualitative papers over the course of the semester that will each count for 45 points of your final grade (135 points total). A description of the papers is posted on WebCT.

**WARNING:** Each paper is a small project that requires substantial planning. These cannot be done last minute. You will need time to identify sources of data, gain access to research sites, make appointments with informants, and manage the data that you collect. Should you have a problem with an assignment, or foresee missing a class deadline, please *contact me immediately*. We can discuss solutions either in private or in class, where others may learn from your research experiences.

**Grading for Qualitative Papers:** I expect you to put significant time and effort into these assignments, and I want to warn you ahead of time that I will not grade them leniently. I do not expect to give many As on these papers (or in this course), as I intend to reserve these grades for those who have turned in exemplary work that not only meets my expectations, but exceeds them.

Each qualitative paper is worth 45 points of your final course grade; thus, the grades that you receive on your papers will be out of 45 points. If you earn grades that are within the B to B+ range (38-40), you are meeting all course requirements and are doing well in the class. If you receive a grade within the C range or below ( $\leq 34$ ), I reserve the right to ask you to rewrite the paper and/or redo your data collection. The rewrite will be due approximately one week after I return class papers, and the two paper grades will be averaged together to calculate your final paper grade.

**Attendance**

Attendance in this class is required (and *extremely* important) and you must be sure that you sign the class roll each class period. You are allowed three absences, **excused or unexcused**, without penalty. You may miss class for any reason that you see fit (illness, athletic event, hangover, mental health day, etc.), and I do **not** need to see documentation of your absences. After three absences, I will subtract 6 points per additional absence from your final grade. Thus, if you miss four classes and have 272 points in the class (an A-), your grade will be dropped to 266 points (a B+). After 5 absences, I reserve the right to administratively withdraw you from the class. **PLEASE NOTE** that under UGA regulations a drop occurring after the midpoint of the course will be recorded as a WF. The good news is that you can also receive bonus points for class attendance. Bonus points can be earned according to the following schedule:

0 classes missed = 6 bonus points added to your final grade
1 class missed = 3 bonus points
2-3 classes missed = 0 bonus points

**Arrive to class ON TIME.** Coming to class late is disruptive (and disrespectful) to your classmates and me. If you are more than 5 minutes late to class, you will be counted as tardy. Each tardy will count as 1/2 of an absence... these add up, so be careful!!!

## **Participation**

Participation will comprise a total of 75 points of your final grade. You are expected to participate fully in all class discussions and exercises. You are expected to conduct yourself in a mature and appropriate manner inside and outside (during research) of the classroom. Behaviors which are considered to be inappropriate in this classroom include sleeping, coming in late, packing up your things before class is over, working on coursework for other classes, reading the newspaper, interrupting others, and verbal behavior that is disrespectful to other students or myself. While conducting research, you are expected to abide by the American Sociological Association Code of Ethics (as found in the appendix of your text book and discussed in class).

You will also be asked to complete several out-of-class qualitative exercises. The due dates for these assignments are noted on the calendar. Please be sure that you follow all instructions, including due date and number of copies that you are expected to bring to class. None of these assignments will have a point value attached to them. I will read them, make comments on them, and give you a letter grade on each. This letter grade will give you an idea of how I view the quality and progress of your work. At the end of the semester, I will use these grades to help calculate your class participation grade. I firmly believe that you must complete all of the assignments to adequately participate in the class. Not completing assignments is the best indicator that you are not taking this class seriously... which will undoubtedly reflect on your final grade. Furthermore, **you are expected to keep track of these assignments throughout the semester and turn them in with your final paper. I strongly suggest that you buy a three-ring notebook to keep yourself organized.**

At the midpoint of the semester, I will post your participation grade up to that point. This is not a final grade. It is intended to give you an idea of how I view your level of class participation so that you may amend your class involvement as necessary.

## **Make-up information**

Make-up quizzes will be allowed only under circumstances of serious illness or emergency; written proof may be required before a request for a make-up is granted. You must contact me **in advance** of the class period or you will receive a score of zero on the quiz; I reserve the right to deny you the opportunity to take a make-up quiz. I also reserve the right to offer a different quiz than that offered during the normal quiz-taking period.

## **E-mail**

While e-mail is the best way to get in touch with me, I expect that you will use this method of communication wisely. Be sure that e-mail messages are well-thought out, respectful, and intelligently written. Please reference the guide posted on WebCT should you have any questions regarding format or tone. Remember that you are not instant messaging a friend, you are writing to your professor. Furthermore, like you, I enjoy taking the occasional evening or weekend away from school work. If a reasonable amount of time passes (2-3 days) and I have not responded, feel free to try to e-mail me again. If you have questions about an assignment, please feel free to contact me.

## **Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability and are registered with the LDC, please speak to me within the first week of class so that we can make accommodations needed to allow you to do your best in the class.

## **Academic honesty**

As do the vast majority of students at UGA, I take academic honesty very seriously and report all suspected infractions of the UGA honesty policy. If you are unfamiliar with UGA policies on academic honesty, you can access them through the University web page. Cheating will not be tolerated in any form. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, looking at other students papers during exams and submitting unoriginal, plagiarized assignments (typically from internet sources). You will need to understand the University policies regarding cheating and its consequences. All academic work must meet the standards contained in *A Culture of Honesty*. Each student is responsible for knowing those standards before performing academic work.

## **IRB Approval**

While we have blanket approval from the Institutional Review Board (commonly known as the Human Subjects Board) for the projects that the class as a whole will carry out, your individual project may require a separate application for approval from you. We will have a representative of the board speaking to the class early in the term, and she will clarify this process. Michael and I can also help you with forms and give you hints on what types of projects are apt to gain rapid approval versus what types may be more complex. Papers must be accompanied by a copy of your approved IRB form, if

IRB approval is needed for your project. They will not be graded or credited without this approval form. We will also use interview approval forms for class projects, which must be submitted with your final project.

### **Other Policies**

1. **NO laptops** in class. We are crowded, and many students find them distracting. I find them a disincentive to student participation and attention in class.
2. To facilitate the completion of assignments, I typically prepare a class list including contact information (addresses, local phone number, email) for each class member that is circulated to the class as a whole. If you have objections to sharing any or all of this information, please speak to me about it early in the class.
3. Finally, *please* leave cell phones and pagers, as well as laptops, at home when you come to class, or turn them off before class begins. All cell phones and other communication devices **MUST** be turned off and packed away during examinations to avoid any concerns about academic honesty.

### **Human rights statement**

All students should know that 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 of Georgia 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 this.
- 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 Human Rights Committee, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia.

The Human Rights Committee will have the responsibility of investigating all charges in accordance with the procedures on file in the Sociology office, 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 complainant and the instructor involved. The Department Head will review the recommendations and make a decision in writing, with copies to the student complainant and the instructor of staff member involved. Any appeal of that decision must be to the Dean of the college of Arts and Sciences.

The schedule below represents a tentative plan for the content and pace of the course. However, qualitative research is an emergent process, and alterations in content or pacing may be needed as we progress. These will be announced in class and/or posted on WebCT. It is the student's responsibility to stay abreast of any changes and also to make arrangements for coverage of any material missed due to absence. Please plan to read materials on the syllabus **before** coming to class each day.

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
		<b>1/9: Introductions, Course Overview/Expectations</b>
<b>1/12: What is Social Research?</b> Read: Chapter 1 (E)	<b>1/14: What is Social Research?</b> Read: Gills, "An Invitation to the Field"	<b>1/16: Strategies for Beginning Research</b> Read: Chapter 2 (E)
<b>1/19 MLK HOLIDAY</b>	<b>1/21: Strategies for Beginning Research</b> Read: Ferguson "Don't Believe the Hype" DUE: Turn in observation exercise	<b>1/23: Strategies for Beginning Research</b> Read: Lankenau, "Stronger than Dirt" DUE: By class, students should post list of at least two potential research topics  <b>QUIZ ONE</b>
<b>1/26: Ethical Issues</b> Read: Chapter 3 (E)	<b>1/28: Ethical Issues</b> Read: Humphries, "Tearoom Trade" DUE: By class today, you should have met with me (or contacted me) about your research topic	<b>1/30: Ethical Issues</b> Read: Taylor, "Observing Abuse" DUE: Turn in research plan
<b>2/2: Observation</b> Read: Chapter 4 (E)	<b>2/4: Observation</b> Read: Adler and Adler, "Observational Techniques" Read: Lofland and Lofland, "Getting In"	<b>2/6: Observation</b> Read: Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, "In the Field" Read: Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, "Writing Up Fieldnotes 1" DUE: Turn in first set of field notes (1 hour) with short analysis, bring three copies to class
<b>2/9: Observation</b> Read: Grant, "Helpers, enforcers, and Go-Betweens" Read: Malcom, "'Shaking it off' and 'Toughing it Out'"	<b>2/11: Observation</b> Read: Besen, "Exploitation or Fun" Read: Kidder, "Style and Action"	<b>2/13: Writing Mechanics</b>  <b>QUIZ TWO</b>
<b>2/16: Action Research</b> Read: Chapter 7 (E)	<b>2/18: NO CLASS – Work on your paper</b>	<b>2/20</b>  <b>FIRST PAPER DUE</b>

<p><b>2/23: Interviewing</b></p> <p>Read: Chapter 5 (E)</p>	<p><b>2/25: Interviewing</b></p> <p>Read: Hermanowicz, “The Great Interview”</p> <p>DUE: Turn in interview exercise</p>	<p><b>2/27: Interviewing</b></p> <p>Read: Sneizek, “Is It Our Day or the Bride’s Day?”</p> <p>DUE: Turn in interview questions, IRB form, and consent form</p>
<p><b>3/2: Interviewing</b></p> <p>Read: Mears and Finlay, “Not Just a Paper Doll”</p>	<p><b>3/4: Interviewing</b></p> <p>Read: Aries and Seider, “The Interactive Relationship Between Class Identity and the College Experience.”</p>	<p><b>3/6: Interviewing</b></p> <p>Read: McCorkel and Myers, “What Difference Does Difference Make”</p> <p>DUE: Turn in first interview transcript (with short analysis), bring three copies to class</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>QUIZ THREE</b></p>
<p><b>3/9: SPRING BREAK</b></p>	<p><b>3/11: SPRING BREAK</b></p>	<p><b>3/13: SPRING BREAK</b></p>
<p><b>3/16: Internet Research</b></p> <p>Read: Kendall, “Oh no? I’m a Nerd!”</p>	<p><b>3/18: Internet Research</b></p> <p>Read: Williams, “Authentic Identities”</p>	<p><b>3/20: Texts and Material Artifacts</b></p> <p>Read: Chapter 6 (E)</p>
<p><b>3/23: Texts and Material Artifacts</b></p> <p>Read: TBD</p>	<p><b>3/25:</b></p> <p>NO CLASS – Work on your paper</p>	<p><b>3/27</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SECOND PAPER DUE</b></p>
<p><b>3/30: Content Analysis</b></p> <p>Read: Davis, “Men as Success Objects and Women as Sex Objects.”</p>	<p><b>4/1: Content Analysis</b></p> <p>Read Massoni, “Modeling Work”</p>	<p><b>4/3: Content Analysis</b></p> <p>Read: TBD</p> <p>DUE: Content analysis exercise</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>QUIZ FOUR</b></p>
<p><b>4/6: Working with Concepts/Linking Ideas</b></p> <p>Read: Chapter 8 (E)</p>	<p><b>4/8: Working with Concepts/Linking Ideas</b></p> <p>Read: Becker, “Concepts”</p>	<p><b>4/10: Writing about Research</b></p> <p>Read; Rogers, “Just a Temp”</p>
<p><b>4/13: Writing About Research</b></p> <p>Read: Hoshchild, “Feelings Management”</p>	<p><b>4/15: Writing About Research</b></p> <p>Read: Chapter 10 (E)</p>	<p><b>4/17: Writing About Research</b></p> <p>DUE: Bring in outline of final paper, be ready to discuss your data and concept</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>QUIZ FIVE</b></p>
<p>4/20: Presentations</p>	<p>4/22: Presentations</p>	<p>4/24: Presentations</p>
<p>4/27: Presentations</p>	<p>4/29: Presentations</p>	<p>4/30*: Presentations</p> <p>*Note this is a Thursday, but we are meeting as though it’s a Monday class.</p>

FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE MONDAY, MAY 4<sup>TH</sup> by 5pm.

NOTE: Final papers are in lieu of a final exam.